

# SAINT PAUL'S HAREFIELD

## A Monthly Miscellany

March 2023

### Feast Days in March 2023

1

St. Suithbert

2

St. Agnes of Prague

3

St. Katharine Drexel

4

St. Casimir

5

**2nd. Sunday of Lent**

St. John Joseph of the Cross

6

St. Colette of Corbie

7

Sts. Perpetua & Felicity

8

St. John of God

9

St. Dominic Savio

St. Frances of Rome

10

Forty Martyrs of Sebaste

11

St. Eulogius

12

**3rd. Sunday of Lent**

St. Theophanes the Chronicler

13

St. Euphrasia

St. Roderic & Salomon

14

St. Matilda

15

St. Louise de Marillac

16

St. Heribert of Cologne

17

**St. Patrick**

18

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

19

**4th. Sunday of Lent**

{St. Joseph}

20

**St. Joseph (Solemnity)**

(Transferred from March 19)

St. Herbert

21

St. Nicholas of Flue

22

Bl. Clemens August von Galen

23

St. Turibius de Mogrovejo

24

St. Catherine of Sweden

25

**The Annunciation (Solemnity)**

26

**5th. Sunday of Lent**

St. Margaret Clitherow

27

St. Rupert of Salzburg

28

Pope St. Sixtus III

29

St. Barachisius and Jonas

30

St. John Climacus

31

St. Benjamin



**Annunciation ... Leonardo da Vinci**

# THE JOSHUA TREE TALKS AND WORKSHOPS

*And how these came to be so-named*



**Workshop creations: Advent/Christmas wreaths**



Very soon parishioners of St Paul's will see notices go up in church advertising the forthcoming venture of The Joshua Tree Talks and Workshops, and so I would like to explain the ethos behind this venture, encouraging those to come forward to attend and for those who would like to contribute.

**SO WHAT ARE THE TALKS AND WORKSHOPS ALL ABOUT?** Well they aim to give an eclectic range of topics in given Talks or to provide Workshops to encourage people to get involved in creative pursuits. The latter could be, for example: painting, poetry (including poetry performance groups), floristry, introduction to knitting/crocheting or quilt-making and anything else which is up for discussion. Our first Workshop was held in Advent last December when Theresa Anderson held an excellent Workshop for people to make advent candle wreaths or Christmas wreaths for their front doors. It was well attended and very enjoyable. It was a opportunity to do something you like, do something you've never done before, whilst enjoying fellowship and refreshments (and even a glass of Prosecco, or two)!

The main reason behind the Talks/Workshops is to educate, edify and entertain. It is also about giving people a voice which could cover something they are passionate about, or to simply share their hobbies, experience or wisdom. It can be high brow or low brow and even if you have an idea but are not sure how to present it, then please seek me out so we can discuss how to shape the Talk or Workshop.

As Fr Jim has often reminded us, the two biggest fears in life seem to be death.....and public speaking. On the latter I would like to say that there are tips to help with this, and all Talks need not be from the lectern in the main church, but could be conducted less formally in the hospitality suite. If you know your subject and practise your talk beforehand, these things can help, yet many public speakers can still be nervous and not sure how their talk will be received until its over - so there's a bit of faith involved, yet if you love what you are talking about, you'll want to share it.

**SO HOW DID THE NAME COME ABOUT?** Well in sharing information via Talks or Workshops, you share knowledge, and metaphorically we think of the 'tree of knowledge'. The Joshua Tree in particular is known for its ability to grow amongst harsh and unforgiving terrain and has long been a symbol of love, hope, and faith, demonstrating that beauty and life can still flourish in the most challenging of times and environments. It has spiritual significance and its branches appear like someone stood with outstretched arms in prayer. It is a protected tree and has had to adapt in the current climate change, whereby its roots have risen to taken in much needed water for its survival in the desert which is its natural habitat.

We have all lived through some extraordinary times, what with the Covid Pandemic and the current cost of living crisis, etc. Some are still scarred by the fall out of the former and, like the Joshua tree, we need to adapt to a new or altered way of life. Again, this is symbolic of what we are trying to do here at St Paul's. We acknowledge that everyone has a voice and a talent or knowledge to share and we would like to encourage this is an uplifting and safe environment, and let's face it, every day (they say) is a 'school day'. However, and on a more practical level, it offers people a place to go socially - and there are many lonely people out there, even in our own parish.

So please consider coming along. Bring your friends and family. It is open to all parishioners and their guests, as well as outside visitors. We also hope to have visiting speakers on a number of subjects and so aim to offer something for everyone.

We would like also to hear from the young in our parish. What is it you are passionate about, what matters to you in life? It can be matters of the secular world or how you live by your faith, or how you view the current climate crisis. We are interested in your studies, in your aspirations - how you even managed to learn remotely during the pandemic perhaps.

**Subjects on Talks, for consideration by anyone, could be:**

What it is to be young and keep hold of faith in the world we live in  
What growing old means and how to manage new challenges  
How to cope (and tips) in the cost of living crisis  
Retirement - what that means and how to go about it  
Testimonies of faith  
Film appreciation and actors you admire  
Favourite authors (or poets) and their life story  
Travel stories  
Pilgrimages embarked on  
How you overcame a major challenge in life

**Up and coming Talks people have committed to already are as follows:**

A Matter of Life and Death (and everything in between) - Shirley Miles (Registrar and Civil Funeral Celebrant) (Note: this isn't as grim as it sounds, I promise)

The American Civil War and how women played their part - Marjorie Ward

A Passion for Sculpture - Fr Jim

From Home Kitchen to Co-Op Shelves (a testimony of hard work and faith) - Mariae Hackett

Classical Recordings Review - Tony Faulkner

Art, Faith & Poetry - Victor

More ideas are being formed as these Talks are being put together but our first Workshop will again be hosted by Theresa who will be guiding us through making an Easter wreath. This will be on Friday 24th March, with the first Talk being held on Friday 28th April - so please keep an eye on the church newsletter.

All future Talks and Workshops will be held on the last Friday of the month with a cost of £2.00 per entry (with an additional cost for workshops). Refreshments will be provided. Please join us, we would love to see you there; it could be a lovely way to kick-start the weekend. (Start time to be confirmed).

***Shirley Miles***

# *St Paul's Church Harefield*

**Wreath Workshop for Easter**

**Led by Theresa Anderson**

**Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> March**

**6.30pm**

**Pease sign up on booking sheet in church entrance**



# Anna Mary Robertson ("Grandma") Moses

(1860-1961)



Anna Mary Robertson was born on September 7, 1860, in Greenwich, a small community in upstate New York about thirty miles northwest of Bennington, Vermont. Her father, Russell King Robertson, was a farmer and also operated a flax mill. While Anna Mary's five brothers helped their father at the mill and on the farm, she and her four sisters were taught to master a variety of domestic duties. At the tender age of twelve, Anna Mary went to work as a "hired girl" on a neighbouring farm, helping a wealthier family with the household chores. She was to pursue this sort of work for the next fifteen years until, at the age of 27, she met a "hired man," Thomas Salmon Moses, whom she married.

The year was 1887, and Thomas had been told that the Reconstruction-era South was a land of opportunity for Yankees such as himself. Within hours of their wedding, the couple was on a train headed for North Carolina, where Thomas had secured a job managing a horse ranch. However, he and his bride never made it beyond Staunton, Virginia. Here they stopped for the night and were persuaded to take over as tenants on a local farm. Anna Mary immediately fell in love with the beautiful Shenandoah Valley—her chilly New York State home (albeit mountainous) would forever after seem a "swamp" by comparison. Life was not always easy, though. Anna Mary, who believed in pulling her weight, bought a cow with her own savings and supplemented the family income by churning butter. Later, when times were tough, she made and sold potato chips. She gave birth to ten children, of whom only five survived infancy. Still, the family prospered, eventually earning enough to buy their own farm.

Anna Mary Moses, known by then as "Mother Moses" to many of her neighbours, would happily have spent the rest of her life in Virginia, but Thomas was homesick. In 1905, he persuaded his wife to return North. "I don't think a bit has changed since we left," Anna Mary commented, "the gates are hanging on one hinge since I went away." She and Thomas bought a farm in Eagle Bridge, not far from her birthplace. They named it "Mount Nebo"—prophetically, after the

Biblical mountain where Moses disappeared. It was on this farm, in 1927, that Thomas Moses died of a heart attack.

Anna Moses was not one to sit idle. Though all her children were now grown, there was still plenty of work to be done on the farm. Later she would joke, "If I didn't start painting, I would have raised chickens." Or, upon further reflection, "I would rent a room in the city some place and give pancake suppers." In 1932, Moses went to Bennington to take care of her daughter Anna, who was suffering from tuberculosis. It was Anna who showed her mother a picture, embroidered in yarn, and challenged her to duplicate it. So Anna Mary Robertson Moses began stitching what she called "worsted" pictures and giving them away to anyone who'd have them. When Moses complained that arthritis made it hard for her to hold a needle, her sister Celestia suggested she paint instead. In this casual manner, the career of Grandma Moses began.

Soon Moses had more paintings than she could realistically make use of. She sent some to the Cambridge country fair, along with her canned fruits and jams. "I won a prize for my fruit and jam," she sardonically noted, "but no pictures." Here Moses' painting career might have foundered. For much as she loved art, Anna Mary Robertson Moses was above all a sensible woman, and to pursue art for art's sake alone would, by and by, have come to seem a petty indulgence. But then, in 1936 or '37, Caroline Thomas, the wife of the druggist in the neighboring village of Hoosick Falls, invited Moses to contribute to a women's exchange she was organizing.

Moses' paintings sat in the drugstore window, gathering dust next to crafts and other objects created by local homemakers, for several years. Then, during Easter week of 1938, a New York City collector named Louis Caldor chanced through town. Caldor traveled regularly in connection with his job as an engineer for the New York City water department, and he was in the habit of seeking out native artistic "finds." The paintings in the drugstore window caught his eye; he asked to see more and ended up buying the whole lot. He also got the artist's name and address and set off to meet her in person.

Moses' family clearly thought Caldor was crazy when he told their Grandma he'd make her famous. And indeed, for the next few years, it seemed the family was right. Caldor brought his trove of Moses paintings to New York City and began doggedly making the rounds of museums and galleries. Even those who admired the work lost interest when they heard the artist's age. Turning 78 in 1938, Moses hardly seemed worth the effort and expense involved in mounting an exhibition; her life expectancy was such that most dealers felt they would never reap a profit on their initial investment. Still, Caldor persisted, and in 1939 he had his first limited success: the collector Sidney Janis selected three Moses paintings for inclusion in a private viewing at the Museum of Modern Art. However, this exhibition, which was open only to Museum members, had no immediate impact.

Finally, in 1940, Caldor stopped at the Galerie St. Etienne. Recently founded by Otto Kallir, a Viennese émigré, the Galerie St. Etienne specialized in modern Austrian masters such as Gustav Klimt, Oskar Kokoschka and Egon Schiele. But Kallir, like many of the pioneers who championed modernism in the pivotal decades between the two world wars, was also interested in the work of self-taught painters. In Europe, this trend had been established when Picasso "adopted" the painting toll collector Henri Rousseau, and was furthered by the published writings of the Russian-born Expressionist Vasily Kandinsky. Essentially, these artists and their various followers believed that the work of self-taught artists was purer and more original than that of trained painters. In tandem with a concerted effort to renounce academic tradition, the contemporary avant-garde looked to the example of those who, for whatever reason, had been denied formal training.



Anna Mary Robertson Moses made her public debut at the Galerie St. Etienne in October 1940. Otto Kallir had titled the exhibition *What a Farmwife Painted*, thinking that the artist's name, completely unknown, did not merit attention. It was only some months later that a journalist, interviewing friends in Eagle Bridge, came upon and then popularized the local nickname "Grandma Moses." The St. Etienne exhibition, though well publicized and well attended, was only a modest success. What really got Moses' career rolling was a Thanksgiving Festival organized by Gimbel's Department Store shortly after the St. Etienne show closed. A substantial group of paintings was reassembled at Gimbel's, and the artist was invited to come to New York. In her little black hat and lace-collared dress, accompanied by the proprietary Caroline Thomas, Moses (perhaps remembering her experiences at the country fair) delivered a forthright public address on her jams and preserved fruits. The hardboiled New York press corps was delighted, and the legend of Grandma Moses was born.

In defiance of every precedent, Grandma Moses became a superstar. She did not do so willfully or suddenly, but she did so nonetheless. Her talk at Gimbel's in 1940 brought a burst of publicity, and Moses was soon something of a local celebrity, but her renown was confined to New York State. She exhibited at a number of upstate venues and began to be besieged by vacationers seeking artistic souvenirs. For some years, Moses resisted signing a formal contract with Kallir, believing she could manage matters herself. Finally, in 1944, frustrated by the seasonal nature of her tourist-oriented business and by the difficulty collecting payment from some of her customers, she agreed to be represented exclusively by the Galerie St. Etienne and the American British Art Center, whose director, Ala Story, had also become a steady buyer of Moses' work.

The events that established Moses as a national and then international celebrity followed in quick succession. Kallir and Story immediately launched a series of traveling exhibitions that would, over the ensuing two decades, bring Moses' work to more than thirty American states and ten European nations. In 1946, Kallir edited the first monograph on the artist, *Grandma Moses: American Primitive*, and oversaw the licensing of the first Moses Christmas cards. Both projects proved so successful that the following year the book was reprinted and the greeting card license taken over by Hallmark. In 1949, Moses traveled to Washington to receive a special award from President Truman. The next year, a documentary film on her life, photographed by Erica Anderson, directed by Jerome Hill, and with narration by Archibald MacLeish, was nominated for an Academy Award. Her autobiography, *My Life's History*, was published in 1952.

The dawning age of mass communications gave the public unprecedented access to Grandma Moses and her work. In addition to traveling exhibitions, books and greeting cards, people could enjoy posters and even mural-sized reproductions, china plates, drapery fabrics and a number of other licensed Moses products. By live-remote broadcast—then a technological marvel—Moses' voice was beamed out from her home in Eagle Bridge to the larger world. A rare use of color television was made to show Moses' paintings when she was interviewed by Edward R. Murrow in 1955. Lillian Gish even portrayed the artist in one of the first televised "docu-dramas."

The rags-to-riches saga of the elderly painter captured the American imagination. Facing the harsh realities of the Cold War era, the public took heart in a real-life tale that seemed to prove the old adage, "it's never too late." The media seemingly never tired of repeating Moses' fairy-tale story. In 1953, she was featured on the cover of *Time Magazine*; in 1960, *Life* sent noted photographer Cornell Capa to do a cover story on the artist's 100th birthday. That birthday—declared "Grandma Moses Day" by New York's governor, Nelson Rockefeller—was celebrated almost like a holiday in the nation's press. The fanfare was repeated the following year, when Moses turned 101. Everyone rejoiced at the artist's longevity. Grandma Moses passed away several months after her 101st birthday, on December 13, 1961. Her death was front-page news all over America and throughout much of Europe



Paintings by Anna Mary Robertson ("Grandma") Moses

# Meat Free Fridays

**For centuries, Catholics around the world have honoured the age-old observance of abstaining from eating meat during certain times of the year.**

**Ash Wednesday and Good Fridays are dedicated as days of fasting, while it is tradition for Catholics to refrain from eating meat on all Fridays during Lent, in honour of Christ, who sacrificed His own flesh for us on Good Friday.**

**Abstinence is first and foremost a form of penance and an act of self-denial, helping us to answer our Christian call to live more simply. But did you know that reducing our meat intake can also have a positive impact on the environment? According to Greenpeace, over a quarter of the world's landmass is used to graze animals or grow food for farm animals – food that could be eaten by humans in the first place. Accommodating this has led to mass deforestation, pushing the Amazon in particular to tipping point.**

**As well as contributing significantly to global warming through emissions and loss of trees, it is destroying countless habitats, and is responsible for a huge abuse of human rights and land-grabbing.**

**By reducing our meat intake, or opting for more sustainable and ethical meat options, we can have a big impact on our planet; protecting lives and livelihoods around the world, in addition to beautiful corners of creation and supporting biodiversity – not to mention cutting carbon emissions.**

**So, this Lent, why not think about extending your meat-free Fridays, or extending your abstinence past Lent to help care for our common home?**

## No-Buy Lent Challenge

**During this holy season in which we pray, fast, and practice almsgiving, we could all give up buying non-essential items in order to make space for the sacred and to give the planet a rest.**

**To find out more... Join: [igsol.net/nobuy](https://igsol.net/nobuy)**



# The Feast of the Annunciation

## 25<sup>th</sup> March



**The Annunciation 1908 by Luc Oliver Merson**

*The encounter between the Angel Gabriel and the Blessed Virgin Mary changed human history forever. It provides the setting of the Incarnation, when “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14) The sheer profundity of this meeting taxes superlatives both with respect to the remarkable circumstances in which the event took place, and the seminal significance of the Incarnation and what it meant for human history.*

### **A HOMILY FOR THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION**

On **this solemnity** which celebrates the high-water point in the history of salvation, permit me to explore with you three Latin expressions.



1. *Verbum caro factum est* [The Word became flesh]. We find this line, of course, in the Prologue to St. John's Gospel, and the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus is God's last and definitive Word – a word spoken in the flesh. The doctrine of the Incarnation is the central teaching of Christianity; however, if one were to survey Catholics leaving churches on Sunday mornings by asking, "When did the salvation of the world occur?" the vast majority would give the Protestant answer by saying, "Calvary". And they would be wrong, as are Fundamentalists and many other Protestants today, because our salvation began at the Annunciation when "*Verbum caro factum est.*" Indeed, the whole Christ-event is salvific: From His conception in the womb of His holy Mother to His ascension to His heavenly Father's right hand. We are saved by the flesh, the Body of Christ. As we heard in today's Second Reading, "a body you have prepared for me." Therefore,

2. *Caro cardo salutis* [The flesh is the hinge of salvation], as Tertullian informs us. What saved the world once continues to do so. The body is good because it was created by God and even more clearly so since the divine plan made it the very means of our redemption. Because of that, the body – and all material reality – takes on even greater significance. The Father made it good, indeed, very good. And Jesus His Son made it holy. Hence, all that has been redeemed – the entire universe – can be marshaled into the on-going work of redemption. A "catholic" instinct, if you will, then, explains our use of water, bread, wine, oil, and natural things to lead us to experience the supernatural. Similarly, man's creative genius, especially in the arts, gives us access to the holy. So,

3. In the Creed, we profess our faith in the "*communio sanctorum*," usually translated as the "communion of saints," but that is only one meaning. The Latin phrase is deliberately "multivalent" – like any good symbol. So, it means "communion of saints," yes, but also "communion in holy things" [that is, the sacraments]. In other words, our membership in the mystical Body of Christ on earth ["*communio sanctorum*"] is initiated, sustained and brought to completion by that "*communio sanctorum*" which is the Church's sacramental life. And that leads to the consummation of it all in the "*communio sanctorum*," which is a participation in the beatific vision for all eternity. That participation will still be an embodied/incarnate participation. Remember: Our Lord and Our Lady presently have bodies – glorified bodies – in heaven, and so will we. Therefore, the mystery of the Incarnation continues into eternity.

What are some attitudes we should form as a result of these truths of faith?

1. Catholics are not Gnostics or Manichaeans or Albigensians or Jansenists who, in various times and places, have made it the heart of their religious convictions to despise the human body. We realize the profound insight of the glorious *Te Deum* which charmingly almost reminds the Son, *non horruisti Virginis uterum* [Thou didst not disdain the Virgin's womb]. The Eternal Word of the Father took His flesh from that of the Blessed Virgin Mary, thereby declaring all flesh sacred. At the same time, we are not libertines who do what we please with our bodies. We cannot forget that our bodies are just what

St. Paul said they are, “temples of the Holy Spirit,” bodies destined for eternal glory. Abuse of the body, then, spits in the face of the Incarnate Word, putting the lie to our theological conviction.

2. Catholics are not Puritans, either sexually or artistically or sacramentally. If the material universe has been brought into the great dialogue of redemption, everything human must form a part of that dialogue. The old pagan Roman poet Terence understood this in a very Christian way when he asserted, “*nil humanum mihi alienum est*” [nothing human is foreign to me]. Because the Puritans had a truncated appreciation for the mystery of the Incarnation, they were terrified of that part of man which is so bodily and so human – sexuality. But true Christians are proud and happy to share in the inheritance of the Song of Songs, which celebrates human love in the covenant of marriage, as Pope John Paul II never tired of teaching the Universal Church for nearly three decades. Nor are true believers in the Incarnation skittish about harnessing man’s creative energies to produce beautiful art, music and architecture to adore the God of all beauty and to help raise our minds and hearts to Him, Who gave such magnificent talents to human beings. And, most especially, Christians recall that when Jesus worked His wonders, He did not hesitate to use even spittle to heal; how much more, then, should we value those works of creation to which He has assigned a saving meaning in His Church – the sacraments, those signs that creation is graced by the Triune God and the promises that our participation in them graces us, too.

3. As we think back on how the greatest event in human history occurred, we stand in awe of the fact that the omnipotent God wanted and awaited human cooperation. God the Father made His plan for our salvation contingent on a human being’s saying “yes”. And so, Our Lady stands as a constant reminder of the great things that can happen when the human person cooperates with the divine initiative. But what she did and what God did through her was not a kind of one-day sale; the Lord intends that this happen in the life of every believer. As St. Augustine put it so powerfully, “the God Who created you without you will not save you without you.” Our participation is crucial for our salvation. We don’t buy into that Reformation notion of “imputed righteousness,” which holds that God “makes us right,” even though we really aren’t. No, God makes us right because we want to be right, because we respond to His grace to become right, and therefore, do in fact become right in His sight. The Mother of the Word Incarnate is our model in this endeavor, but also our faithful intercessor before the throne of her Divine Son.

We also learn how to cooperate with the Lord from the Church, which is – as Sacred Scripture teaches – both Christ’s Bride and our Mother. Holy Church, like Holy Mary, always says “yes” to her Bridegroom; good children always follow their Mother’s good example.

4. Last but not least, today’s solemnity etches into our consciousness an indefatigable conviction on the sanctity of human life – from conception to natural death. God began the work of our redemption at the very moment when the Holy Spirit overshadowed the Virgin Mary as the Eternal Word began His life on earth in her womb, “pitching His tent among us,” as St. John poetically has it. This fact of life and

faith makes Christians a people of life, ready to promote the cause of life at every turn and equally ready to do battle with a culture of death. Those who want to kill babies in their mothers' wombs and those who want to kill the sick and the elderly cannot know the meaning of the Incarnation and cannot hope to benefit from its saving effects.

Today's celebration, then, stands at the center of the drama of salvation. Without today, no cross and resurrection; without today, no Church or sacraments; without today, no eternal life on high with God. In a marvelous even if fanciful recreation of the Angel's visit to Our Lady, St. Bernard of Clairvaux caught the essence of what was really at stake on that first Annunciation Day: The whole of creation was waiting to be redeemed, hanging on the response of the Virgin of Nazareth. He says:

You have heard, O Virgin, that you will conceive and bear a son; you have heard that it will not be by man but by the Holy Spirit. The angel awaits an answer; it is time for him to return to God Who sent him. We too are waiting, O Lady, for your word of compassion; the sentence of condemnation weighs heavily upon us.

The price of our salvation is offered to you. We shall be set free at once if you consent. In the eternal Word of God we all came to be, and behold, we die. In your brief response, we are to be remade in order to be recalled to life.

Tearful Adam with his sorrowing family begs this of you, O loving Virgin, in their exile from Paradise. Abraham begs it, David begs it. All the other holy patriarchs, your ancestors, ask it of you, as they dwell in the country of the shadow of death. That is what the whole earth waits for, prostrate at your feet. It is right in doing so, for on your word depends comfort for the wretched, ransom for the captive, freedom for the condemned, indeed, salvation for all the sons of Adam, the whole of your race.

Answer quickly, O Virgin. Reply in haste to the Angel, or rather through the Angel to the Lord. Answer with a word, receive the Word of God. Speak your own word, conceive the divine Word. Breathe a passing word, embrace the eternal Word.

Then St. Bernard speaks even more urgently: "Arise, hasten, open. Arise in faith, hasten in devotion, open in praise and thanksgiving." That same encouragement is given to each of us as well – to be true sons and daughters of the woman who enabled God to become Man. She said, "*Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*" [Let it be done to me according to thy word]. With what result? *Verbum caro factum est*. If we take seriously this foundational doctrine of our holy Faith – as we must – and live its implications to the full, we can do no less than to echo our Mother's response of loving cooperation,

“Let it be done to me according to thy word.” And the mystery of the Incarnation is repeated all over again in our lives and in our world.

# *The Magnificat*

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,  
for he has looked with favour on his lowly servant.*

*From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
the Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his Name.*

*He has mercy on those who fear him  
in every generation.*

*He has shown the strength of his arm,  
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.*

*He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,  
and has lifted up the lowly.*

*He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.*

*He has come to the help of his servant Israel  
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,  
the promise he made to our fathers,  
to Abraham and his children forever.*

*Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen*





## **ANNUNCIATION**

**Marius Paul O'Shea**



## Fra Angelico – “The Annunciation” – 1450, San Marco, Florence



*By Nicholas Jenkins and Catherine Jenkins*

God delights in good deeds done quietly and unspoken acts of love and obedience to Him. In Matthew’s Gospel, our Lord commands when almsgiving to “not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing”. Not only should we keep our good deeds hidden from the world, but we should even try to hide our good deeds from ourselves. In his letter to the Colossians, St. Paul writes that we must live a “life hidden in Christ”. Elsewhere Christ exhorts us to “receive the Kingdom of God like a child”. That is like a small and unassuming person. Smallness, lightness, quietness: all these qualities carry glory, at times imperceptibly and never loudly, this side of eternity. This is the great spiritual truth: what is hidden shall be revealed, what is small shall be magnified, “whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted”. G.K. Chesterton wrote: “Humility is the mother of giants. One sees great things from the valley; only small things from the peak.”

The Mother of God was quiet and humble, God’s lowly-hand maiden, who helped accomplish for God His great rescue plan for His creation. Mary was unwavering in her quiet trust in God. To trust a beloved is to know how much they love you. This is what I, and maybe you, do not always grasp about God, that which is his essential quality: His goodness. To be good is to wish good onto others and to act accordingly. He does not just want us to be happy ultimately, but he wants us to be gloriously happy.

Paintings are by definition silent. Yet, if paintings could speak, the one I have chosen to discuss today would be very quiet indeed. The fresco was painted by Fra Angelico for the convent at San Marco where he was a friar outside the cells where the friars dwelt. It was intended to aid their devotion. The fresco depicts the Annunciation, a very quiet announcement of a very important plan and a meeting of an Angel of God with the lowly Virgin.

My mum got the opportunity to see the fresco when she visited Florence with my dad earlier this year. She was pleased to find the museum at San Marco was not overrun with crowds of tourists. Appositely, it was quiet, hidden and unsought for. This fresco itself refuses to dazzle, and this is linked to its intended audience, as she notes:

“Fra Angelico followed the traditional typology, depicting the Virgin seated in an enclosed space on the right and the Angel Gabriel entering on the left. It is interesting to compare this relatively late Annunciation with an earlier version on wood, painted by Fra Angelico in 1426 for an altar in the convent church of San Domenico in Fiesole. The two paintings were both intended to inspire spiritual devotion, but in very different settings. The San Domenico altarpiece faced the congregation and was accessible for the feast of the Annunciation on 25th March. The San Marco fresco, by contrast, was only accessible to the friars, who would recite prayers before it at prescribed times during the day.”

She moves on to explain:

“Father Timothy Verdon suggests that the key theological message Fra Angelico wanted to give through the image of the Annunciation is about inwardness and attentiveness to the word of God. In the San Domenico altarpiece, the colours used and the materials evoked are richer than the San Marco fresco – for example the gold on the robes of the Angel, the cloth of honour behind the Virgin, the blue starry ceiling and the marble floor. The overall effect is of heavenly light and beauty intended to stir delight in the beholder and help them come closer to God. This highly illuminated effect was intended for the laity and is in strong contrast with the starker spirituality of the San Marco Annunciation, painted for fellow friars to contemplate. In that painting, the space is much simpler with the Virgin seated on a wooden stool wearing a simple dark robe like a Dominican habit. The symbolic and supernatural features of the 1426 Annunciation have largely disappeared (for example the hands of God sending out the dove of the Holy Spirit on a beam of gold light). Instead of looking down, the Virgin is looking directly at the Angel in loving acceptance of God’s will.”

We view the Virgin through a colonnade of columns which as mum explains “evoke the enclosed space of her womb”. Fra Angelico’s “architecture” is “solid and realistic in scale”. However, “Fra Angelico’s figures continue to be idealised and heavenly, delicately moulded like relief sculpture rather than solid and three dimensional.” It is the lightness and lack of solidity in his figures that perhaps most impresses me about Fra Angelico. G.K Chesterton described brilliantly how Fra Angelico’s represented his angels like “birds or almost like butterflies”. The friar had a deep and inspired understanding of humility.

I shall leave the final encomium to my very knowledgeable mother:

“Fra Angelico was an innovator. The San Domenico altarpiece, as well as being a first in using linear perspective may also be the earliest example of a single field square altarpiece (pala). However, as a churchman, Fra Angelico was also able to resist some



modern innovations; for example, he retained a medieval colour scheme and some of the ethereal idealisation of the Byzantine style. The naturalism of Renaissance art was a double-edged sword. On the one hand it could bring images alive and help the worshipper emotionally connect. On the other, it could secularise sacred art and attract the love of the viewer for surface appearance only. In the San Domenico Annunciation, Fra Angelico used rich symbolism and jewel-like colours to evoke the heavenly realm for the congregation.

In the San Marco Annunciation, his style is more naturalistic, using simpler colours and a more ordinary looking, realistic setting. Rather than presenting the Virgin as Queen of Heaven, Fra Angelico emphasizes her humanity, perhaps inviting his fellow friars to identify with her. However, unlike the High Renaissance masters such as Leonardo and Raphael, Fra Angelico does not end up ‘psychologising’ and humanising his message. If anything, the spirituality of the painting is intensified – there are no trappings between the message of God and the Virgin’s frank acceptance of it.”



The Annunciation, San Domenico, Fiesole



# Why Christians (and Muslims) Flock to the House of the Virgin Mary in Ephesus

What role do the saints, and above all Our Lady, have in drawing Muslims closer to the Son of God?



Pilgrims line up to enter the House of the Virgin Mary in Turkey

[Zubair Simonson](#) Blogs February 9, 2023

On Mount Nightingale, near the ruins of Ephesus, is an old stone house. This single-story house is a shrine, called *Meryemana Evi*, translated as “the House of Mother Mary” in Turkish. It’s widely believed that this house is where St. John had cared for the Mother of God during her final years on Earth, that the Assumption took place there.

There is a fountain, and a wishing wall, just outside and below the house. Visitors commonly take water from the fountain, and leave their written petitions in one of the many crevices of the wishing wall (a pre-Islamic Turkish tradition). And yes, the nearby souvenir stand does take Visa.

**I recently had the privilege** of visiting Turkey.

Turkey is itself a very peculiar country, culturally far too European to be fully considered Middle Eastern, and far too Middle Eastern to be considered European, having lands that span both. Tattoos, considered to be *haram* (forbidden) in Islam, were a surprisingly common sight. The dress commonly found on the streets of more conservative cities, such as Konya, leave just as much to the imagination of any would-be gawkers as it would in countries such as neighboring Iran.

The *adhan* (Muslim call to prayer) blasts through the speakers of Istanbul's beautiful mosques five times each day. Bars are easily spotted just around the corners, or down the streets, from a good number of those mosques. Popular beers such as Efes (which is quite decent) are indigenously brewed there. Raki, which I'd only recommend to someone who enjoys the taste of licorice, is Turkey's national spirit. A mere glance at the laws and culture regarding booze reveals much about any Muslim country.

Officially, the Republic of Turkey is a secular state, ruling over a Muslim-majority population. Imams there are considered civil servants, educated and hired by the Directorate of Religious Affairs (called the *Diyanet*), which does much to curb potential radicalization of the population. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, a military hero and founder the republic, who could hardly be considered any kind of religious figure, still retains demigod status throughout the land. And yet active leaders, from time to time, do resort to measures asserting Islamic identity, as illustrated by President Erdogan's decision to revert the Hagia Sophia back into a mosque (Istanbul alone already had roughly 3,000 mosques!) in 2020, thus testing the bounds of the republic's secular status.

The history of the land is very impressive, and also with a fair share of troubling episodes. The Christian heritage of Asia Minor, where several Apostles themselves had set foot, and of

Constantinople, the historic center of Eastern Christianity, is very much astounding. Cappadocia, where volcanic rock formations reach up like hands trying to grasp the heavens, contains caves in which countless monks had sought seclusion throughout the ages.

Hardly any Christian monks, and only a small token population of Christians, live in Turkey today. Policies of forced repatriation, conversion, exile and also massacres, which occurred during the years of the Ottoman Empire's collapse and the republic's birth, finalized what remains the demographic situation today. The Christian heritage of Turkey today is largely the domain of curious archaeologists, historians, tourists and pilgrims.

**For two weeks, I myself was numbered** among the tourists, having had glimpses of life there. The people I'd met there were friendly, as were the stray dogs and cats that were kind enough to pose for many of the pictures I'd taken there. I'd gathered from seeing so many bald heads covered with blood-red dots, fresh hair plugs that is, that medical tourism thrives in Istanbul. But most importantly, my trip included a visit to the House of the Virgin Mary.

My tour group stayed for a night in Selçuk, the town containing the ruins of the Basilica of St. John, built over the traditional burial site of the Apostle himself. We'd gotten into the bus in the morning hours, and rode to *Meryemana Evi*. We were instructed along the way to remain respectfully silent while at the site. A large statue of Our Lady, crowned and with open hands, greeted us near the entrance.

We poured out of the bus and followed Dilek, our tour guide, along the stone path that led to the ancient house. As we stood there before the house, each with an earpiece so that Dilek wouldn't need to raise her voice, she told us the very strange tale of Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich and the finding of the house.

**Emmerich, an invalid and stigmatist German nun**, was said to have had many visions during the early 19th Century. These visions included glimpses of the Virgin Mary's life on Earth. Emmerich claimed that St. John had taken Our Lady to live in a house near Ephesus, with descriptions even including the surrounding area's topography, although she herself had never been to Asia Minor. These purported visions were written down by Clemens Brentano, a man



who'd interviewed her, and published after Emmerich's death in 1824. *The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (1852) was among the books published.

In 1881 a French priest, having read *The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, put Emmerich's visions to the test. Father Julien Gouyet found a house which conformed to the descriptions, and obviously was in a state of disrepair, having used the book as a guide. Most people didn't believe him. Most people have tremendous difficulty believing that our world can be as strange as it truly is.

**A decade later Servant of God Marie de Mandat-Grancey**, a French nun, had been working at a hospital relatively nearby in the city of Smyrna (now Izmir). She urged two Lazarist missionaries, Fathers Eugène Poulin and Henri Jung, to help her find that very same house. They did so in 1891, having used the same book as Gouyet for their guide.

Sister Marie, who'd come from a noble family, secured the purchase of the house. She also made sure that the mountain on which the house stood was purchased as well. For a Catholic nun to have done so in the Ottoman Empire was no easy task, but she was practical, as well as persistent. As Foundress of Mary's House, a position given to her by the Church, she took up the task of restoring and preserving the site.

The House of the Virgin Mary remains under the Church's care to this very day. Pope Leo XIII gave his blessing upon the house in 1896, and Pope St. John XXIII granted plenary indulgences upon it in 1961. Popes Paul VI (1967), St. John Paul II (1979) and Benedict XVI (2006) have each paid visits in the years since.

**Our Church has documented countless miracles** throughout the ages. A knowledgeable Catholic is easily familiar with cases of Marian apparitions, visions, stigmata, exorcisms, incorruptibility and a host of other anomalous occurrences that have been confirmed in the Church's investigations. What impressed me the most about Dilek's telling us of how Emmerich's visions led to the House of the Virgin Mary's finding was how matter-of-factly Dilek herself, a Muslim, had spoken it.

Her own conviction was enough to make me wonder: What role do the saints, and above all Our Lady, have in drawing Muslims closer to the Son of God?

The Mother of God is the true Ark, and also a bridge. She's so many marvelous things all at once.

My time inside of the house itself was rather brief. The house has only three rooms. The Queen of Heaven would never have asked for a palace. A statue of Our Lady of Lourdes stands above an altar in the larger room. An atmosphere of peace permeates the very air.

After stepping out of the house, I briefly chatted with a Franciscan friar whom I'd found lingering outside, and mentioned to him that I myself was a Third Order Franciscan. Dilek overheard this. "Wait, you're a priest?" she asked me.

I grinned while the friar kindly explained to her about Lay Orders.

I filled an empty bottle with the water from the fountain just below the house. I wrote down a petition on a piece of paper, and placed it in one of the wishing wall's crevices. After that, I went on to purchase an icon and a scented rosary at the souvenir stand, which fortunately took Visa.

**Dilek told us yet another story as we were leaving.** In 2006 a fire destroyed nearly 3,000 acres of forest in the surrounding area. It continued to spread, until three sides of the *Meryemana Evi* were surrounded, and a burning tree had fallen on the roof. The house's destruction appeared to be imminent. The flames had gotten to within a meter of the house, and then somehow ceased to go any nearer, as if being barred by Providence. The House of the Virgin Mary was spared from the destruction.

My tour group boarded the bus, and left to visit the nearby ruins of Ephesus. Included among them are the ruins of the Church of Mary, considered to be further circumstantial evidence (along with the Basilica of St. John's ruins) that Our Lady had indeed resided in or around Ephesus during her final earthly years, rather than in Jerusalem.

Were the visions of Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich true?

**It's alleged that Clemens Brentano himself** took many liberties while editing the books reporting her visions. It's rather difficult to discern which words were indeed Emmerich's visions and which of them were his fabrications. Brentano's questionable character and methods had even led to the delay (in 1928) of Emmerich's cause for several decades (re-opened in 1973). Pope St. John Paul II ultimately beatified her in 2004, the same year that Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (which was heavily influenced by the works attributed to her) was released. Her beatification had been based upon her piety, rather than any writings associated with her.

Still, the rather strange circumstances which had led to this house's finding are far too peculiar for anyone to just blithely dismiss as being among Brentano's many fabrications. There are many fraudsters in the world, and yet miracles do still occur.

Whether *Meryemana Evi* is indeed the house in which Our Lady had lived has neither been declared, nor denied, by the Church. The Church, in her prudence, requires *much* evidence before declaring that any miracle took place, or that any person is indeed a saint, or that any site is indeed a holy place. Such a process protects us from taking the word of any Joe Schmo, who claims to have performed some miracle, more seriously than we ought to. And it's because our Church's prudence that we can know for certain that any recognized miracle, any canonized saint, and any recognized holy place, is indeed the real deal.

We may very well have to wait for several decades, or even centuries, until any formal declaration, either way, gets made. But in the meantime, the House of the Virgin Mary is visited by millions of Christian pilgrims, as well as many Muslims, each year. The facts and the rumors are still being sorted out. But a rumor alone, that the Mother of God may have set foot anywhere, is still enough to draw the faithful from all over the world. God fully knows the intentions of any pilgrim's heart. And we know that no land which Our Lady has ever touched will ever escape her loving embrace.





A pilgrim places her prayer petition on the “wishing wall” at the House of the Virgin Mary in Turkey



**Zubair Simonson** Zubair Simonson, O.F.S., is a convert who was raised Muslim. He grew up in Raleigh, North Carolina, and has also lived in New York. He received his B.A. at the University of Michigan, majoring in Political Science. He is a professed member of the Secular Franciscan Order. He is a contributing author for the website the Catholic Gentleman. The story of his conversion was included in the book *My Name is Lazarus*, published by the American Chesterton Society. He has several books available on Kindle, including *The Rose: A Meditation*, a narrative guide through the mysteries of the Rosary, and *Stars and Stooges: A Christmas Tale*, a humorous take on the three wise men. His website is [zubairsimonson.com](http://zubairsimonson.com). Follow on Twitter at [@ZubairSimonson](https://twitter.com/ZubairSimonson).

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# Pope Francis' five tips to improve the Mass



***The Pope gave some tips to those who help organize liturgies in dioceses. They can be helpful to all those who assist or attend Mass.***

**On January 20, 2023, Pope Francis met diocesan liturgical leaders who had come from all over the world to attend a formation course in Rome called “Living Liturgical Action Fully.” It was held at the Pontifical University of St. Anselm from January 16-20 and focused on helping participants deepen their understanding of the liturgy.**

**The course was inspired by Pope Francis’ Apostolic Letter *Desiderio Desideravi*, published in June 2022. In it he reflected on the reform of the liturgy proposed during the Second Vatican Council, and what these celebrations, and how they are done, mean for our spiritual life.**

In fact the Pope's speech was addressed to "masters of ceremonies," meaning those responsible for organizing the liturgy in a diocese. They especially focus on assisting parishes when the bishop comes to celebrate there or arranging the liturgy in larger churches or cathedrals. However, the Pontiff's tips can be useful for all who attend and assist in Mass.

## **1. The importance of silence**

"I urge you to cultivate silence" especially before the celebrations as that is when people usually socialize, Pope Francis emphasized.

"Silence helps the assembly and concelebrants to concentrate on what is to be done. [...] It is silence that enables you to prepare for the mystery, it permits its assimilation, and lets the echo of the Word that is listened to resound. Fraternity is beautiful; greeting one another is beautiful, but it is the encounter with Jesus that gives meaning to our gathering, to our coming together. We must rediscover and cherish silence!" the Pope said.

## **2. Wonder means encountering God**

Pope Francis says that it is important to "accompany the faithful" during the liturgy so that they can be "astonished at what happens in the celebration under [their] very eyes." Rather than focus on "aesthetic joy" or "pleasure," those assisting and organizing the Mass should leave space for the "wonder" that the faithful can experience during the ceremony. "Only the encounter with the Lord gives you wonder," he explained.

## **3. The priority should always be serving the people of God**

The Pontiff emphasized that the master of ceremonies' "primary objective" is to "foster the fruitful participation of the people of God."

"We must always keep the good of the communities, the pastoral care of the faithful before our eyes, to lead the people to Christ and Christ to the people. It is the primary objective, which must be in first place also when you prepare and guide the celebrations. If we neglect this, we will have beautiful rites, but without strength,

without flavor, without meaning, because they do not touch the heart and the existence of the people of God. [...] ‘A celebration that does not evangelize is not authentic’ (*Desiderio desideravi*, 37). It is a ‘ballet,’ a beautiful ballet, aesthetic, beautiful, but it is not an authentic celebration,” the Pope warned.

A master of ceremonies also should never replace the bishop or priest as presider of the liturgy, the Pope insisted. “The more hidden the master of ceremonies is, the better. The less he is seen, the better.”

## **4. Learning by living the liturgies**

Pope Francis also emphasizes that the best way to learn how to celebrate the Mass is simply “by celebrating” it.

“How did we learn how to serve Mass as children? By watching our older friends do it. It is that formation from the liturgy that I wrote about in *Desiderio desideravi*,” the Pope explains, citing his Apostolic Letter. “Decorum, simplicity and order are achieved when everyone, gradually throughout the course of the years, attending the rite, celebrating it, living it, understand what they must do. Of course, as in a large orchestra, each person must know their own part, [...] then the liturgy can be a symphony of praise.”

In fact, Pope Francis urged the masters and liturgical leaders to get involved in schools of liturgical practice in cathedrals or seminaries in order to teach future priests “how to celebrate well.” The Head of the Catholic Church also encouraged the masters to learn from the communities themselves by observing whatever “celebratory style” is lived in each parish.

“It is pointless to put on a nice ‘parade’ when the bishop is there, and then to return to how it was before. Your task is not to arrange the rite for one day, but to propose a liturgy that is imitable, with those adaptations that the community can embrace in order to grow in the liturgical life. [...] Indeed, going to the parishes and saying nothing in the face of liturgies that are a little slapdash, neglected, badly prepared, means not helping the communities, not accompanying them,” the Pope explained.



## 5. Good and short homilies!

Finally, the Pope had some emphatic advice for priests giving homilies:

“Please, the homilies: they are a disaster,” the Pope lamented, while strongly encouraging all priests to put effort into their preaching.

“At times I hear someone [say]: ‘Yes, I went to Mass in that parish ... yes, a good lesson of philosophy, 40, 45 minutes ...’

“Eight, 10 [minutes] no more! And always a thought, a sentiment and an image. Let people take something home with them,” the Pontiff said. “The homily is not a conference, it is a sacramental. [...] It is prepared in prayer, it is prepared with an apostolic spirit.”



# ***The Journey to Emmaus***

***By Fr James Mulligan***



The road to Emmaus ... photograph taken in the early 1900s

One of the most treasured gospel passages is Luke's account of the appearance of Jesus (incognito) to two disciples on the road to Emmaus on the evening of that first Easter day.

The passage only appears in the Gospel of Luke and Luke identifies one of the disciples by name - *One of them, named Cleopas* (Luke 24:18). We do not know the identity of the companion of Cleopas.

It has always, it seems, been taken for granted that both disciples were men. That is the way it has been depicted in art over the centuries – although Rembrandt's 'Supper at Emmaus' shows only a man and a woman present. When this passage is written about or preached upon it is always assumed that the Emmaus-bound disciples were men. But could they have been man and wife?

In the Gospel of John one of the women at the foot of the cross has a husband named Clopas.

*Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala* (John 19:25).

Furthermore, there is evidence from the dialogue Jesus has with both, that Cleopas' wife may have been the second disciple:

*What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.*

At this point it seems Cleopas ceases to speak and another voice takes over:

*Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.*

Mary, the wife of Clopas, is included with the women who were at the foot of the cross. Some of those women went to the tomb. This then may be Mary, the wife of Clopas, relating to Jesus how women from her group found the empty tomb.

The two disciples invited Jesus into their home: *Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them.* (Luke 24:29). This does indeed sound like a married couple inviting Jesus to their home.



Of course, it does not really matter whether the disciples were two men or a married couple. What is important is that Jesus revealed himself to them in the 'breaking of the bread'.



**The Supper at Emmaus by Rembrandt**

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# Ten Types of Hospital Visitor

Charles Causley

1

The first enters wearing the neon armour  
Of virtue.  
Ceaselessly firing all-purpose smiles  
At everyone present  
She destroys hope  
In the breasts of the sick,  
Who realize instantly  
That they are incapable of surmounting  
Her ferocious goodwill.

Such courage she displays  
In the face of human disaster!

Fortunately, she does not stay long.  
After a speedy trip round the ward  
In the manner of a nineteen-thirties destroyer  
Showing the flag in the Mediterranean,  
She returns home for a week  
- With luck, longer -  
Scorched by the heat of her own worthiness.

2

The second appears, a melancholy splurge  
Of theological colours;  
Taps heavily about like a healthy vulture  
Distributing deep-frozen hope.

The patients gaze at him cautiously.  
Most of them, as yet uncertain of the realities  
Of heaven, hell-fire, or eternal emptiness,  
Play for safety  
By accepting his attentions  
With just-concealed apathy,  
Except one old man, who cries  
With newly sharpened hatred,  
'Shove off! Shove off!  
'Shove... shove... shove... shove  
Off!  
Just you  
Shove!'

3

The third skilfully deflates his weakly smiling victim  
By telling him  
How the lobelias are doing,  
How many kittens the cat had,  
How the slate came off the scullery roof,  
And how no one has visited the patient for a fortnight  
Because everybody  
Had colds and feared to bring the jumpy germ  
Into hospital.  
The patient's eyes  
Ice over. He is uninterested  
In lobelias, the cat, the slate, the germ.  
Flat on his back, drip-fed, his face  
The shade of a newly dug-up Pharaoh,  
Wearing his skeleton outside his skin,  
Yet his wits as bright as a lighted candle,  
He is concerned only with the here, the now,  
And requires to speak  
Of nothing but his present predicament.

It is not permitted.

4

The fourth attempts to cheer  
His aged mother with light jokes  
Menacing as shell-splinters.  
'They'll soon have you jumping round  
Like a gazelle,' he says.  
'Playing in the football team.'  
Quite undeterred by the sight of kilos  
Of plaster, chains, lifting-gear,  
A pair of lethally designed crutches,  
'You'll be leap-frogging soon,' he says.  
'Swimming ten lengths of the baths.'  
At these unlikely prophecies  
The old lady stares fearfully  
At her sick, sick offspring  
Thinking he has lost his reason -

Which, alas, seems to be the case.

5

The fifth, a giant from the fields  
With suit smelling of milk and hay,  
Shifts uneasily from one bullock foot  
To the other, as though to avoid  
Settling permanently in the antiseptic landscape.

Occasionally he loses a scared glance  
Sideways, as though fearful of what intimacy  
He may blunder on, or that the walls  
Might suddenly close in on him.

He carries flowers, held lightly in fingers  
The size and shape of plantains,  
Tenderly kisses his wife's cheek  
- The brush of a child's lips -  
Then balances, motionless, for thirty minutes  
On the thin chair.

At the end of visiting time  
He emerges breathless,  
Blinking with relief, into the safe light.

He does not appear to notice  
The dusk.

6

The sixth visitor says little,  
Breathes reassurance,  
Smiles securely.  
Carries no black passport of grapes  
And visa of chocolate. Has a clutch  
Of clean washing.  
Unobtrusively stows it  
In the locker; searches out more.  
Talks quietly to the Sister  
Out of sight, out of earshot, of the patient.  
Arrives punctually as a tide.  
Does not stay the whole hour.

Even when she has gone  
The patient seems to sense her there:  
An upholding  
Presence.

7

The seventh visitor  
Smells of bar-room after-shave.  
Often finds his friend  
Sound asleep: whether real or feigned  
Is never determined.

He does not mind; prowls the ward  
In search of second-class, lost-face patients  
With no visitors  
And who are pretending to doze  
Or read paperbacks.

He probes relentlessly the nature  
Of each complaint, and is swift with such  
Dilutions of confidence as,  
'Ah! You'll be worse  
Before you're better.'

Five minutes before the bell punctuates  
Visiting time, his friend opens an alarm-clock eye.  
The visitor checks his watch.  
Market day. The Duck and Pheasant will be still open.

Courage must be refuelled.

8

The eight visitor looks infinitely  
More decayed, ill and infirm than any patient.  
His face is an expensive grey.

He peers about with antediluvian eyes  
As though from the other end  
Of time.  
He appears to have risen from the grave  
To make this appearance.  
There is a whiff of white flowers about him;  
The crumpled look of a slightly used shroud.  
Slowly he passes the patient  
A bag of bullet-proof  
Home-made biscuits,  
A strong, death-dealing cake -  
'To have with your tea,'  
Or a bowl of fruit so weighty  
It threatens to break  
His glass fingers.

The patient, encouraged beyond measure,  
Thanks him with enthusiasm, not for  
The oranges, the biscuits, the cake,  
But for the healing sight  
Of someone patently worse  
Than himself. He rounds the crisis-corner;  
Begins a recovery.

9

The ninth visitor is life.

10

**The tenth visitor  
Is not usually named.**