

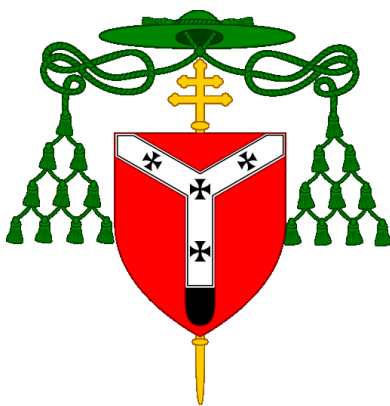
# SAINT PAUL'S HAREFIELD

## *A Monthly Miscellany*



*Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

Romans 8:31-35



## St Paul's Harefield

*His eminence John Carmel, Cardinal Heenan, Archbishop of Westminster, has this day canonically erected the above parish of Harefield, and dedicated it to Saint Paul, Apostle of the nations.*

*5<sup>th</sup> April 1967*

Parish Priest: Father James Mulligan

2 Merle Avenue, Harefield

UB9 6DG

07809 398171 01895 822365

Email: [harefield@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:harefield@rcdow.org.uk)

Mass daily at 9.15am ... Sunday Vigil Mass: Saturday 6.30pm

Sunday Masses: ... 9.00am and 11.00am

Holy Hour Monday: ... 9.45am - 10.45am

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament: ... Friday 8.30am, Saturday 8.30am

Rosary each weekday morning after Mass

Confessions: 6.00pm Saturday – or indeed any time that a priest is available

Online Morning Prayer: 8.00am

Online Night Prayer: 9.00pm

**Please note: St Paul's church is live-streamed 24 hours per day**

# SAINT PAUL'S HAREFIELD

## A Monthly Miscellany

June 2023

*“When June comes dancing o'er the death of May,  
With scarlet roses tinting her green breast,  
And mating thrushes ushering in her day,  
And Earth on tiptoe for her golden guest.”*

*A Memory of June ... by William Shakespeare*

## Feast Days and Saints' Days in June 2023

### Thursday, June 1, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/01/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [The Guardian Angel Prayer for Friends](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Justin Martyr](#), [more...](#)

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### Friday, June 2, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/02/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Prayer for Fathers](#)

Saint of the Day: [Sts. Marcellinus and Peter](#), [more...](#)

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### Sunday, June 4, 2023

[Trinity Sunday](#)

[Homily](#)

Daily Reading for [06/04/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [A Mother's Prayer to the Guardian Angels of her Children](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Francis Caracciolo](#), [more...](#)

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## Monday, June 5, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/05/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [The Prayer for Controlling Anger](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Boniface of Mainz](#), [more...](#)

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## Tuesday, June 6, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/06/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [The Nicene Creed](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Norbert](#), [more...](#)

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## Wednesday, June 7, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/07/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [A Guardian Angel Prayer for Friends](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Willibald](#), [more...](#)

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## Thursday, June 8, 2023

[Corpus Christi](#)

Daily Reading for [06/08/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Birthday Prayers #2](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. William of York](#), [more...](#)

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## Friday, June 9, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/09/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Promises Made by Our Blessed Saviour](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Ephrem](#), [more...](#)

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## Saturday, June 10, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/10/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Wife's Prayer](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Getulius](#), [more...](#)

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## Sunday, June 11, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/11/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Daily Acceptance Of Death](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Barnabas](#), [more...](#)

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## Monday, June 12, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/12/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Prayer to St. Gabriel, for Intercession](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. John of Sahagun](#), [more...](#)

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## Tuesday, June 13, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/13/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Saint Anthony of Padua](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Anthony of Padua](#), [more...](#)

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## Wednesday, June 14, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/14/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Prayer for America](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Methodius I](#), [more...](#)

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## Thursday, June 15, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/15/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Prayer for God's Blessing of One's Daily Work](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Germaine Cousin](#), [more...](#)

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## Friday, June 16, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/16/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Prayers before Holy Communion](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. John Francis Regis](#), [more...](#)

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## Saturday, June 17, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/17/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Prayer for Employment](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Emily de Vialar](#), [more...](#)

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## Sunday, June 18, 2023

### [Homily](#)

Daily Reading for [06/18/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Hail, Holy Queen](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Gregory Barbarigo](#), [more...](#)

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## Monday, June 19, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/19/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Glory Be to the Father](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Romuald](#), [more...](#)

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## Tuesday, June 20, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/20/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Prayer to Our Lady of Perpetual Help #7](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Vincent Kaun](#), [more...](#)

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## Wednesday, June 21, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/21/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Prayer for a Happy Death](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Aloysius Gonzaga](#), [more...](#)

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## Thursday, June 22, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/22/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Prayer to Live as a Child of God](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Thomas More](#), [more...](#)

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## Friday, June 23, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/23/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [A Marriage Blessing Prayer](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Joseph Cafasso](#), [more...](#)

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## Saturday, June 24, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/24/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Prayer to Our Lady of Lourdes](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. John the Baptist](#), [more...](#)

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## Sunday, June 25, 2023

### [Homily](#)

Daily Reading for [06/25/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [The Apostles' Creed](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. William of Vercelli](#), [more...](#)

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## Monday, June 26, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/26/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Blessed Mother](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Anthelm](#), [more...](#)

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## Tuesday, June 27, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/27/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Prayer for Personal Forgiveness](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Cyril of Alexandria](#), [more...](#)

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## Wednesday, June 28, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/28/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Blessing of Food](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Irenaeus](#), [more...](#)

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## Thursday, June 29, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/29/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [St. Peter](#)

Saint of the Day: [St. Peter](#), [more...](#)

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## Friday, June 30, 2023

Daily Reading for [06/30/2023](#)

Prayer of the Day: [Good Night My Guardian Angel](#)

Saint of the Day: [First Martyrs of the See of Rome](#), [more...](#)





SERIE CL. 228 SS. PIETRO E PAOLO

EGM&C 2010

**Thursday, June 29, 2023 ... Feast of Saints Peter and Paul**

## SAINT PAUL'S HAREFIELD WELCOMES YOU

We extend a special welcome to those who are single, thinking of marriage, married, divorced, widowed, well-heeled or down at heel or down and out.

We especially welcome wailing babies and excited toddlers or bored teenagers.

We welcome you whether you can sing like Pavarotti or Maria Callas or Roy Orbison - or just mime (lip synch) or hum quietly to yourself.

You're welcome here if you're 'just browsing,' just woken up or just got out of bed the wrong side or just got out of prison. Whether a high flyer or a plodder.

You'll fit in here if you are a classical music aficionado or a punk rocker. You're welcome whether you are a cool dude or not, if you are an Elvis fan, a Johnny Cash fan, a Heavy Metal fan or (God forbid) a fan of Barclay James Harvest.

We don't care if you're more Christian than Pope Francis or Saint Mother Teresa, or haven't been to church since Christmas twenty-five years ago.

We extend a special welcome to those who have come only to scoff.

We welcome keep-fit mums, golf widows, football dads, joggers, bikers, starving artists, tree-huggers, line dancers, latte sippers, vegetarians, vegans, bumper sticker philosophers, existentialists, logical positivists and junk-food eaters.

We welcome those who are in recovery or still addicted.

We welcome you if you're having problems, are down in the dumps or don't like 'organised religion' or have anger management issues.

We offer a welcome to those who believe in the Loch Ness Monster.

We welcome those who are tattooed, pierced, both or neither.

We offer a special welcome to those who took the wrong turning and wound up at Saint Paul's by mistake.

We welcome pilgrims, tourists, seekers, day-dreamers, doubters ... and you.

A Warm Welcome to you from Saint Paul's Harefield

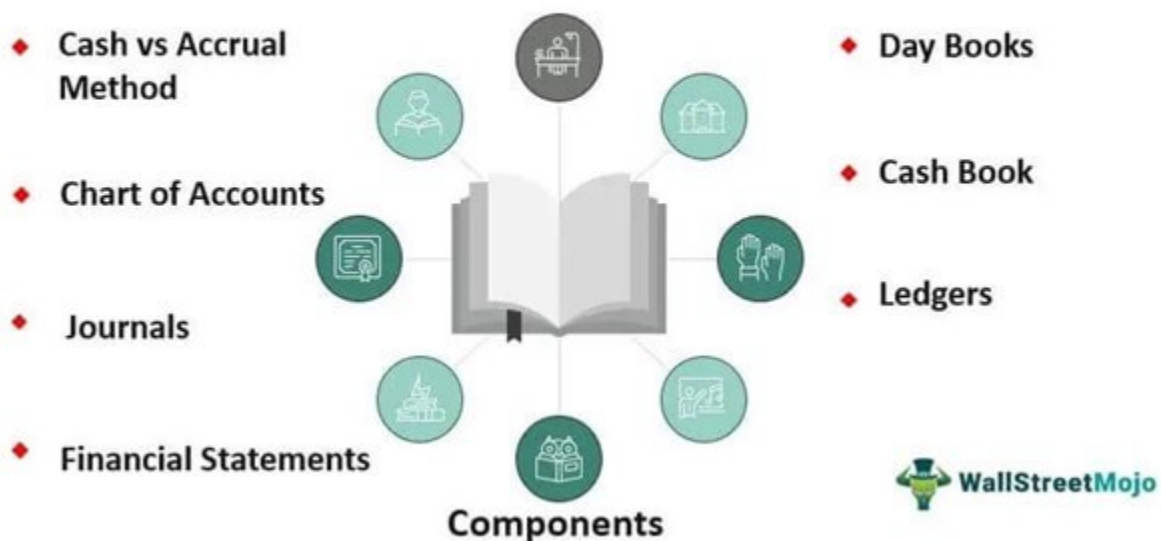
# The Ins and Outs of Bookkeeping

By

Theresa Anderson

Parish Bookkeeper to St Paul's

## Bookkeeping



It's just over ten years since I took over as the bookkeeper from Xavier Soares. He kept everything in a written ledger, which was becoming increasingly cumbersome as the Diocese asked for more and more details of transactions. Eventually it was decided that the records would have to be computerised, which is where I came in.

In my previous job as a school bursar, I had worked with computerised accounts and I offered my help. I was surprised at how basic the new system was and still is. Basically, the system records money coming in and money going out of the parish account. The only complex part is deciding which of the hundreds of budget codes to use!

I admit to being a bit of a hoarder and hadn't thrown away any paperwork since I started. The 'rules' state that audited records should be disposed of after six years so recently I started to spring clean the office starting with 2012. It's going to take a while because the

old records are so interesting. Recently it was handy to have all the records when an audit of the computer system showed that our accounts had been overstated since 2012, (despite having been audited three times) and I was able to prove that the error was down to the wrong code being used when the records were computerised. The computer is only as good as the information it receives – or rubbish in, rubbish out.

In 2012 our total income was £41,522.73 almost half of which (£20,590.53) was loose plate offertories. Some of you may remember a planned giving drive in 2013 which managed to double the offertory envelope income and reduce the loose change. The significance of the changes meant that we had more idea how much to expect in donations. When parishioners signed up to planned giving, they were also asked to gift aid their donations. This allowed us to claim 25% of their donation back from the Government.

Fast forward to 2022 and we received over £11,000 in tax refunds. Very few parishioners still use the envelopes as they pay by standing order or use the contactless machine. However, the loose plate is still over £150 a week. We have 47 people signed up to gift aid their offertories.

Looking forward- if you still put cash in the offertory could you consider changing to standing order or cashless? If you are a tax payer, would you also consider signing up to gift aid? Gift aid increases your contribution by 25% at no further cost to you. The relevant forms will be in the church porch this month.

This has been a very short version of the past 10 years! There might be more once I manage to sort through the remaining records to be shredded. Watch this space!

Theresa Anderson

# Laudato Si' week

As part of *Laudato Si'* week, celebrating the eighth anniversary of the launch of Pope Francis' encyclical, the Laudato Si' Research Institute (LSRI) hosted a book launch and discussion in Westminster Cathedral Hall on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2023.

Written by Farhana Mayer, *Praise Be to God, Lord of the Worlds: An Introduction to Qur'anic Ecology and Resonances with Laudato Si'* examines the resonances of Pope Francis' encyclical with the *Qur'an*.

According to the LSRI website, the book 'demonstrates significant common ground on perceptions of the natural world as a precious part of God's creation, the interrelatedness of all creation, the understanding of humankind as the being in whom earth and spirit are conjoined, the need for divine guidance, and others.'

It also 'dwells especially on the most beautiful names of God – the Compassionate, the Merciful, the Lord-Nurturer, the Kind, the Nourisher, the Guide – and on ethical and ecological principles for human action that can be derived from these.'

Following the presentation of the book, Bishop John Sherrington offered a response, looking at a number of resonances between the Christian and Muslim responses to the care of creation. 'At the centre of our enterprise is praise of God in which the whole creation joins,' he said.

He showed appreciation for the author's 'rich insight into the themes of praise, creation and the names of God, stewardship and mercy, the critique of technology and greed, moderation and virtues, and intergenerational solidarity, which all demand further reflection.'

Fr Damian Howard, Jesuit Provincial, who has lectured on Christian-Muslim relations and participated in Christian-Muslim dialogues at the Holy See, described Ms Mayer's approach as a 'close listening' to the encyclical, demonstrating 'incredible sensitivity'. He called the book 'a gesture of hospitality and bridge-building between Catholicism and Islam'.

Other participants in the panel included Rabiah Mali, a community organiser with Green Deen, Hajj Fazlun Khalid of the Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science, and Colette Joyce, Justice and Peace Coordinator for the diocese. This broad base, reflected in the make-up of the audience, demonstrates a commitment to interreligious dialogue, which as Bishop Sherrington explained, is vital 'at a time when we are summoned to care ever more urgently for creation and the human family'.

The book can be downloaded [here](#).

The full text of Bishop Sherrington's response:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the presentation. I thank Farhana Mayer for her scholarly and insightful work. As I listened to her presentation, I was pleased to hear the resonances with my own response. The launch of this work, as we celebrate the eighth anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, is timely and responds to the Pope's call for 'a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet,' and 'a conversation which includes everyone' (LS 14).

The opening verses of the *Qur'an*, St Francis' Canticle and the encyclical sing praise of God the Almighty. This song resounds in the title of the book, *Praise to God, Lord of the Worlds* (Q. 1:2). At the centre of our common enterprise is praise of God in which the whole of creation joins.

Farhana writes, 'Islam has a rich literary and spiritual resonance focussed on Islamic divine designations known as "the most beautiful names of God".' This leads to reflection on 'the natural world as a revelation of God', 'that nature too is a book of divine signs...As leading commentators note, creation is an expression of the divine names and qualities', for example, 'All-Gracious', 'the Merciful', 'the Equitable'. God manifests his care through his grace and brings forth fruits for the benefit of humanity. I welcome more reflection on the 'most beautiful names of God' and their relation to God's handiwork and his blessings, which I found very inspiring.

Central to this work is the theme of theological anthropology, 'There can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself. There can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology.' (LS 118). Farhana develops this theme from the Qur'anic perspective that God has endowed the human being with something of his own spirit, 'potentially even something of his own character or nature (*fitrat Allah* Q. 15:29 and 38:72)'. This dignity is reflected in LS 65, 'The Bible teaches that every man and woman is created out of love and made in God's image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26). This shows us the immense dignity of each person, 'who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons' (LS 65).

'The concept of *tawhid* (unity) conveys the Islamic perspective of creation as a unified combination of innumerable multiple elements, all created and held together by God in a divinely ordered balance'. This has a parallel with the integral ecology and interconnectedness at the heart of the encyclical. 'The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face.' (LS 233). Here we find, I believe, the first reference in a papal encyclical (footnote 159) to a Muslim poet and mystic, the ninth century Sufi spiritual writer Ali al-Khawwas who stresses from his own experience the need not to put too much distance between the creatures of the world and the interior experience of God.

In the reflection on LS, in reference to 'the gaze of Jesus' there are links made between the Face of God and I quote, 'Muslims who think of how all creation is an existential sign of God's presence through His qualities and action.' I would be interested to hear further how Muslims understand Jesus in this way.

A common theme is the critique of technology. Pope Francis refers to the technocratic mentality which manipulates nature, dominates economics and politics, and drives 'unlimited growth'. Such an attitude destroys the fragile relationships between human persons and creation and leads to a loss of moderation and the 'human use of nature accelerated into pure plunder' (Cf LS 82, & Chapter 3). The *Qur'an* recognises such an abusive use of power in 'associating partners with God (*shirk* – the sin of idolatry or polytheism)'. In Q 30:41, 'Corruption has appeared on the land and in the sea of what the hand of people have acquired [i.e. what people have done]; [this has been allowed by God] so that He makes them taste what they have done, that they might return [to doing what is good].'

Overcoming this attitude of dominance of nature leads to the themes of conversion and stewardship which maintain a proper balance between nature and human action. In Islam, the benchmark for human behaviour comes from the divine characteristics. The concept of *khalifah* (successor, viceregent, deputy, lieutenant) has strong connotations with the good stewardship (Q 6:165), which is central to *Laudato Si'*. Part of this stewardship relates to property and its use. Here we see parallels between the Catholic understanding of the universal destination of human goods and the limits to private property and the Qur'anic principle of wealth distribution that wealth should not be circulated only among the rich (LS 93) but is for God (i.e. for use of the good of all) and for the prophet, and for relatives and orphans, and the poor and the homeless.' Q. 59:7 The good steward is merciful like God reaching out to the poor. This echoes the call of LS 49 to 'hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.'

The Qur'an presents a rich understanding of *mizan* (balance or equilibrium) which demands one to 'act with moderation at all times'. The antithesis of moderation, *israf* (excessiveness) and *takathur* (the desire to accumulate more and more) are strongly criticised in Q: 102. This resonates with the virtues of justice and temperance which are the key hinges for ecological conversion in LS, 'Only by cultivating sound virtues will people be able to make a selfless ecological commitment...' (LS 222)

Qur'anic ethics considers intergenerational solidarity and responsibility (Q 17:23-24) and the care of the elderly. This resonates with LS 159 which widens the solidarity across the generations. 'Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us....The environment is part of a logic of receptivity. It is on loan to each generation, which must then hand it on to the next'.

In summary, Farhana has provided rich insight into the themes of praise, creation and the names of God, stewardship and mercy, the critique of technology and greed, moderation and virtues, and intergenerational solidarity which all demand further reflection. This book is a vital resource for interreligious dialogue at a time when we are summoned to care ever more urgently for creation and the human family. Thank you.

## THE JOSHUA TREE TALKS



**Olivia Soares delivers her talk: 'Hats off to Faith'**

**26<sup>th</sup> May 2023**



# HATS OFF TO FAITH

Hello, I am Olivia – Aaron and Aquino’s mum, but I am also a daughter a sister and a wife. It is strange how our titles change as we go along life’s journey.

I would like to break this talk up into different phases of my life or as I call them different hats in reference to my journey in my faith.

## **The Bonnet age.**

Born into a very strong catholic home – I was baptised on the 11th day. I am the second born in a family of five. As was the culture in the seventies our father was always working away from the family home and our mother ran the household. As also was the culture in India - (not so much now) the extended family i.e., the grandparents helped a great deal in looking after the kids along with neighbours who had children of the similar age. Example: school run, play time or even help with buying groceries.

The influence back then in Goa was very western but Indianisation was creeping in. for example – we had to have an Indian name as our first name - Hence I was baptised Sunita Olivia. Whereas in the 40’s every child had to have a western name as the first. My mum – Dores Sarojini.

Also, in India a family is not complete until a male is born as a lot of pressure is put on a couple until a male heir is produced and, in the process, the female child is either not educated or looked after. This is sadly the case in many remote areas.

All catholic boys and girls in my days went to one of two school categories. Boys attended the church school or the parocales as we called them. Girls were made to attend the convents. Some of the non-Catholic children were not as privileged. In villages where there was no convent or no church schools there were co-eds run by the nuns or the local priest.

My siblings and I grew up with three sets of authorities of discipline - our parents, our grandparents, and our schools. The metaphorical ball of religion was never dropped. It was amazing to note that all three sets worked in unison. One would support the other blindly. No questions asked.

My Mum has very rigid plan about home time. We would play with other children in the courtyards but had to come home by 6:00 p.m. or as she said when the birds went home. We would shut the many windows we had and light the lamp at the altar after which the Angelus would be said.

We had school from Monday to Saturday and Sunday school. All of which always had to be attended or we had to go for confession. Every first Thursday was dedicated to confession the nuns would line us up and watch us. None of us had the guts to do otherwise. First Friday mass was a mandatory.

Our uniforms used to be to in line with our knees and white sock came up to our knees. A simple test the nuns used to do, make us kneel and if the hem did not sweep the floor our hems used to be forced open. A well pushed slogan “girls must be seen not heard”. I think

the original is "Children must be seen not heard". Of course, we could not argue. The nuns made sure that modesty was inculcated to an extent that it burnt a space in our brain.

I finished school and went on to do my degree. Never missed Sunday school. After I finished my A levels, I became a catechist training many youngsters for holy communion. I also represented the young Catholics in our dioceses. I was well aware of the challenges we were facing as the hippy age was strongly taking its hold in Goa and I was in it. We had the Russian condo flights coming at the time to Goa. Goa was the destination for cheap holiday were booze and women were freely available.

By this time my elder sister had already moved out of home and was working in the metropolis - being a bit of the free spirit – I guess my parent thought they had to teach me responsibility. I left home at the age of twenty-one.

### **Until this time I was my parents' daughter.**

Now comparing this with the present – The discipline we have would be called abuse. The school taking up actual physical discipline - good heavens! In the present age the schools would close down, and the media would make a buffet out of it. I believe the present world exaggerates the term "abuse". We fail to look at the time in history when the event was in context. I might be politically incorrect, but I don't really care. Discipline was a fundamental requirement for the all-round growth into the woman I am today. My strong upbringing in faith has made me what I am today. And this is exactly the way I have stived to raise my two handsome boys.

### **The Cap age.**

Arriving Bombay (now Mumbai) was freedom. I again lived with the nuns. Some of whom had taught me in school. Of course, they respected our age. We thought we had a freedom to decide but in reality, any news would reach home before we could say boo to a goose. The nuns used "Chinese whispers" to communicate. Very effective! There were no mobile phones then. We had a land line, and the phone was strategically placed in front of the warden's office. They knew exactly who called you, how many times and the time you spent on the phone. Despite the illusion of freedom, it was good. A home away from home. I lived with the nuns in the working women's hostel for ten years.

This was integral to my formation as a young adult. I learnt to use Freedom, Money, time effectively. All the girls used to work and so money was not a problem, but with money comes competition for all material things (things did get ugly at times). We used to get breakfast and dinner in house, nothing fancy, but enough to look after the basics. We of course used to moan about the food but always ate it. The formation from my younger days of "waste not want not" would stare me in the face. I was favoured a bit as I was known to the nuns before and in the same way discipline with me was particularly strong.

The main door to the hostel would close at 10:00 p.m. and we had to make our way back to the dorms by then. The warden with a huge set of keys and her knitting needle was a clock watcher. Their simple principal was "early to bed, early to rise, made one healthy wealthy and wise".

We had our time playing with fire – I remember coming back having had one glass of wine too many. Sr. Erminia our warden at the time (God rest her soul) was in her office. There was a swing in my step so before she noticed I went straight to her and told her that I was three sheets to the wind and would not be able to come and sign. She ordered me to take a shower and go to bed. During the night she came and checked on me (so I was told by my room mates). The next morning, I got silent treatment. That was enough for me. I was actually taught how to handle my drink by my darling Uncle Oliver (God rest his soul) he taught me to nurse a drink and not to get nursed after a drink.

The nuns would encourage us a lot but of course did not enforce. I did attend Sunday mass without fail along with all the days of obligation. There was no one to monitor but that was my faith. If I did miss mass, I could feel my mums' eyes at the back of my neck. We did have daily masses in the nun's quarters which I did attend occasionally.

At this point the peer pressure and work commitment were huge. In fact, at this age, I did feel alone and missed direction in my life. I turned to religion and did also look at other faith. This phase of my life has stayed with me very strongly when I see the present age. We seem to have lost a congregation is the age group of 20 +. We see kids at Confirmation and then at Marriage (if they do decide to marry) inside our religion

I must stress here my foundation in the faith overruled any inhibition I had. This was the time when the catholic church in India branched off in different sects. I will not deny I visited/attended a few of these events to find answers. But I kept coming back to my faith.

### **I was then known by my Name "Sunita".**

Now comparing this with the present – There is a void – Are we doing enough to hold on to our mature youth? Yes, we have various activities planned but for what age group in mind. I am well aware of the internet age. This was fortunately missing during my time. The rest of the pressures are the same. I do not have an answer. But this something we need to think about. I attended a youth conference in Walsingham and was happily shocked to see the number of young adults, maybe we need to look at events like those and push out the age group. It is a vulnerable and busy age and if we lose a person in this age gap, we can very easily lose a family.

Not sure if you remember the riots. The Met police had out a heart-breaking request to parents to help ensure they know where the kids were.

### **The Veil age.**

As I got on in years - not normal for an Indian girl there was tremendous pressure to settle down. I must say here being alone with no responsibility was a happy time. I did what I wanted and when I wanted and the lifestyle in Bombay was cool. There were people to do cooking and cleaning. I had even the Hostel guard on my personal pay role to ensure I had a prime parking spot just outside the gate.

The only requirement my parents had insisted when looking for a life partner was that he had to be a practicing catholic. I met Ivan through a friend and before we knew it, we were engaged. As we were both from Goa we decided to get married in Goa.

Getting married in Goa was a mission. Since I was away for 10 years from my birth town and even though I visited often (Bombay is 40 mins on the plane) I was dealt with as an out caste by the church. I had to produce a certificate of practice and swear on the bible. Well, this is not the end.... I had to do the same with the civil authorities. One would think the church would open its arms to anyone committing.... But no... it was a long upward climb. This was the same with Ivan as well. And at some point, we told the parish priest that we had enough, and we would cancel the church wedding and live together in sin. Of course, after that, the church saw things move quickly and smoothly, and we eventually got married in the church.

The church in Goa has not changed with time. I am not too sure if it is good or a bad thing. There are a lot of rules one has to abide by some of them make no sense. E.g., the Bride and Groom cannot kiss in church following the vows. However, if you have a private nuptial the main celebrants are the family members than there are no rules. The nuptials are held in the groom's church. Today, I am not sure if the sacrament of marriage has the same significance to people as it did back in my day.

### **I was a wife.**

I arrived in the UK sixteen days after marriage and was shocked at life.... I had to cook, wash, and clean. Some things I had never done. It was difficult. I did not take on to the routine quickly but had to do so. We got busy making our home. Finding a job, getting a mortgage setting up a home had its own share of ups and downs. Something that both of us found very hard at times. In all faith prevailed. Our faith has always been the centre of all our dealing with life when we had loads or nothing at all.

We had/still have a place to pray in the house. Back home the alter always faced the front door so anyone who walked in our home knew our faith. Houses back home are mostly purpose built. The alter holds a prime place in all catholic home in Goa.

Ivan lost his nephew to cancer at the age of eight after about ten days of being diagnosed. A huge bow to all of us. Our lives were turned inside out. All of us shrunk in our own cocoons of grief. Life was difficult.

Can I say faith prevailed? No, it was difficult. I was worried about having a child after seeing the grieving parents. I could not accept the situation. Grief is very strange and never leaves you. Then one day at mass (we were leaving in Witton at that time) Fr. Seamus said, "if you want to humour God make plans" and that stayed with me. My faith took centre stage again.

I have wandered around and am not ashamed to say. But I always came back. This would down to my formation year I am not sure what the guidance is for young to be married or young married couple today. One thing I would like to say it that if God is not the centre than the circle of life is not complete.

### **The Sun hat or the Parasol age.**

As in Indian tradition red flowers can be worn in the hair only after marriage and so a hat could be worn only after marriage. Think in this country it is the tiara.

Aaron came along three years later and Aquino five years after that. I am a stickler when it came to our faith always attended church with the children. In fact, Aaron carried this first offertory when he was three years old, and Aquino served mass when he was four before receiving communion. I remember Aquino going up to Fr. Mallon to say he was baptised and so should be allowed, and he is catholic. And there is no rule in the canon law stating otherwise (the canon law issue is what we had discussed at home) Fr. Mallon had no choice but to agree to the little strong voice. Both mine and Ivan family had Priest and nuns in the family and the boys to exposed to strong debates at a very young age. I never allowed toys in church and always fed the kids before we arrived. The boys never ran around it the church as there would be a consequence for their bad behaviour. Also, one look from me was enough. We have a same with my Mum. The death stare did the trick. The Church for them was (I hope it is still) a sacred place. At a very early age we taught our kids all the prayers and told them stories about various saints and I am very proud that my boys can recognise images of saints. I did not read them bedtime stories instead we told them stories of saints. On our holidays when we visit a different country, we visit any church(s) we pass by.

I will brag a bit here- Sorry I thought the boys to be humble and considerate to fellow humans as all of us are God's creation. I was on a school run with Aaron on day when he was in junior school and as kids, they use to keep their bags to hold their place in the queue to enter. There were bags and lunch boxes on the floor and the kids were running around. As they did so some accidently kicked the bags but continued. My Aaron also did the same. However, I caught hold of him and told him off and made him put the bag back. Of course, Aaron was embarrassed. I was sent for by the head teacher as was told that the other parents were offended. Well, me being me I told the Headteacher to fly a kite. This brings me back the riot incident. The authorities have taken away our right to discipline. And for a few children its too late. I am of the belief that as a parent it is my responsibility not just to give birth but also to ensure they are raised to carry on their duty are responsible citizens.

I follow the same formation that I went through as I grew up. I hope and pray my two handsome boys carry on in faith and bring up their families that same way.

How did I achieve it.....

Well, we have an altar in our house where we can light a candle when we pray. I cannot say we pray together every day, but we do when time permits. We take blessing from anyone one older to us after the rosary. Aquino takes Aaron's blessing. So, Aaron is aware of his responsibility. We dress up for church. Jeans are forbidden to church once confirmed. This I might have to reconsider as I struggle a bit with my youngest son. Work in progress. We constantly talk about religion and its influence on our day-to-day life. We sit for meals together. We say our grace before meals and prayers for protection when we begin any journey. We visit holy places together. After any such visit, I always say to the boys that I hope they do the same journey with their family. Now that Aaron stays away from home, I check with him if he has been to church. I was very impressed in his first university year; he knew where the church was and the mass timings. I constantly remind him of this role as a catholic. Faith school also takes some of the pressure off. I also make up little things, so they remember events. For example, the four Sundays of advent, we make a Christmas cake. Each Sunday correlates to a task - soak, feed, bake, ice.

Is it easy.....

Yes, of course it is! And no, it is not! But it is in my hand as a mother. I still go back to my formation years. I tell the boys.... That is how it should be. I grew up and I have achieved, (I work as a logistic manager for a multinational company dealing with millions day to day and am also very know in my field) and I have no regrets. The only difference or my competition is now the media. Keeping the young minds busy is not a joke. I include the kids on all our social outings where they are allowed - they see and hear what I do, and it is no different. I have my share of "why?" like coming to church early... when I was small, I was told that my prayer would be first in the queue. Or we would get better seats. I cannot use this with my kids. So, we use a compromise.

I am grateful....

To God

To my family and the extended family

To my two lovely boys .... My reason to wake up every morning.

To my faith foundation

To the community around me our church

To the Catherians

To the school (Cardinal Vaughan)

**This is the phase of life where I am known as Aaron and Aquino's Mum.**

I could do with more help, encouragement (I know I get it) but how many others get it? Maybe the kids can be contacted to say we missed you today in church (I could do it with others) The bottom line is that we need continuity and need to help anyone that stumbles before it's too late. I have that support from our fellow parishioners. When I miss mass I get a call from Ann or Colin to ask if everything is ok and that we were missed. It is a good feeling. I know I can rely on all of you, and I am not afraid to ask for help. I was thought very young in life that "No man is an Island". Being a mother in the present age is not easy and I am sure the boys will say being a catholic in our age is not easy either. And we depend on your support we go along with God's plan.

And until I hit on my next phase of life

Maybe the **scarf age** where I will be known as someone grandmother. Although not too soon, I hope!

Thank you.

# A Masterpiece on the Immaculate Conception

Michael Pakulak  
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2021

Is it possible for a *memorandum* to be a *masterpiece*? A few paragraphs long, dashed off *ex tempore*, for a friend, not polished? Various columns in *TCT* have appreciated masterpieces – a poem, a painting, a musical work. But could a memorandum ever be accounted a “masterpiece”?

I have in mind Newman’s “[Memorandum on the Immaculate Conception](#)” – written off by the Cardinal,” his editor says, “for Mr. R. I. Wilberforce, formerly Archdeacon Wilberforce, to aid him in meeting the objections urged by some Protestant friends against the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.”

That’s it, “written off” – a memorandum is something written off, dashed off, tossed off.

Surely a master can “dash off” a masterpiece: witness the Gettysburg Address, a Shakespeare sonnet, a Scarlatti sonata. And so we look to Newman’s “Memorandum” without worries as truly a spiritual masterpiece.

Newman begins: “It is so difficult for me to enter into the feelings of a person who understands the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, and yet objects to it, that I am diffident about attempting to speak on the subject.” He adds, “I was accused of holding it, in one of the first books I wrote, twenty years ago. On the other hand, this very fact may be an argument against an objector – for why should it not have been difficult to me at that time, if there were a real difficulty in receiving it?”

Already, astonishing brilliance. He imagines someone raising difficulties, and his task would be to understand those difficulties and reply to them. But he can’t see any difficulties. Maybe he’s incompetent even to speak on the subject?

He turns this concern on its head. Many years ago, as a young Anglican minister, long before the pope’s definition, Newman had already come to hold that doctrine, naturally and easily. But he couldn’t have done if it had involved difficulties. So he has the requisite competence, which is to speak to the naturalness of the doctrine!

[Here is that earlier passage, from the \*Parochial and Plain Sermons\*:](#)

Who can estimate the holiness and perfection of her, who was chosen to be the Mother of Christ? If to him that hath, more is given, and holiness and divine favour go together (and this we are expressly told). . . . What must have been her gifts, who was chosen to be the only near earthly relative of the Son of God, the only one whom He was bound by nature to revere and look up to; the one appointed to train and educate Him, to instruct Him day by day, as He grew in wisdom and stature? This contemplation runs to a higher subject, did we dare to follow it; for what, think

you, was the sanctified state of that human nature, of which God formed His sinless Son; knowing, as we do, that “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and that “none can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?”



\*

Then come a series of devastating arguments as to why there are no difficulties in the doctrine. If there is no difficulty in saying that Eve was created without sin – if there is no



risk of turning *her* into a deity – what is the great difficulty in saying that Mary was created without sin? If we hold that John the Baptist was cleansed of original sin in the womb, then why not Mary from an even earlier point in the womb? If there is no difficulty in saying that you and I are cleansed from original sin at some later point in our lives by baptism – if our saying so in no way detracts from the merits of the Lord – then wouldn't Mary's being cleansed even earlier in her life make her even more dependent on the Lord?

We do not say that she did not owe her salvation to the death of her Son. Just the contrary, we say that she, of all mere children of Adam, is in the truest sense the fruit and the purchase of His Passion. He has done for her more than for anyone else. To others He gives grace and regeneration at a point in their earthly existence; to her, from the very beginning.

Newman then considers the antiquity of the doctrine. Why? Because “No one can add to revelation. That was given once for all; – but as time goes on, what was given once for all is understood more and more clearly.”

You might wish to copy out these lines as proof of what Newman meant by “development of doctrine.” It did not allow for any new revelation. What it means, rather, is this:

“The greatest Fathers and Saints in this sense have been in error, that, since the matter of which they spoke had not been sifted, and the Church had not spoken, they did not in their expressions do justice to their own real meaning.”

He focuses on the contrast between Mary and Eve in the earliest writings of the Fathers, and especially the proto-evangelion: “See the direct bearing of this upon the Immaculate Conception. . . . There was *war* between the woman and the Serpent. This is most emphatically fulfilled if she had nothing to do with sin – for, so far as any one sins, he has an alliance with the Evil One.”

Newman's masterpiece concludes: “I say it distinctly – there may be many excuses at the last day, good and bad, for not being Catholics; one I cannot conceive: ‘O Lord, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was so derogatory to Thy grace, so inconsistent with Thy Passion, so at variance with Thy word in Genesis and the Apocalypse, so unlike the teaching of Thy first Saints and Martyrs, as to give me a right to reject it at all risks, and Thy Church for teaching it. It is a doctrine as to which my private judgment is fully justified in opposing the Church's judgment. And this is my plea for living and dying a Protestant.’”

\*Image: *The Immaculate Conception* by Diego Velázquez, 1618-19 [National Gallery, London]

# Medjugorje

*St Paul's Parish Pilgrimage*

*September 2023*



Medjugorje ... The name means 'Between the mountains'



# Medjugorje

## & Dubrovnik [8 days by Air]

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### Package Price

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Your BA flights are protected by ATOL 76072. The ground arrangements (coach transports & accommodation) will be protected by our supplier failure insurance policy. Pilgrims are strongly advised to have their own travel insurance.

#### BA flights from London Gatwick to Dubrovnik

6 Sept 2023 > Gatwick to Dubrovnik depart 09:05 - arrive 13:00  
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**Day 1** [London - Dubrovnik] Pilgrims are to make their own journey to the airport. Our local rep will meet you at the airport in Dubrovnik. Guided tour of Dubrovnik Old Town and monuments, time for lunch and a free afternoon. Checkin the hotel and spend a night here with dinner.

**Day 2** [Dubrovnik - Medjugorje] After breakfast we travel to Medjugorje for 6 overnight stay on half board.

**Day 3** [Feast of Our Blessed Mother] Mass in the morning on the Birthday of Our Holy Mother. In Her honour, pilgrims are invited to join us to climb the Apparition Hill and spend time at the Blue Cross.

**Day 4** [Stations of the Cross] Today, pilgrims are invited to join us for a slow and steady climb of the Cross Mountain. It is a 3-hour climb to reach the peak. On our way up, we will be praying at the Stations till we reach the top. This programme is not recommended for those with limited mobility.

**Day 5** [Mostar Excursion] Join us for an included excursion to Mostar - visit the Church of St. Peter and Paul, the gallery, Tower of the Church 108 meters above the sea level, spend time in the Old Town of Mostar and see the Old Bridge return to the hotel for dinner and evening prayer at St. James'.

**Day 6** [Other excursions] In addition to our included excursion to Mostar, there are other excursions available. Our local rep will offer you availability.

**Day 7** [Free time] Pilgrims will have a free day for their own private devotional prayers, Sacrament of Reconciliation, Rosary prayers etc..

**Day 8** [Return to London] After breakfast, we transfer you to Dubrovnik airport for your return flight to London.

**Included :** Return flights + all taxes, ONE bag \* 20kg to checkin + ONE carryon bag, 3\* accommodation on half board, coach transfers to and from the airport in destination countries, guided tours and a daily religious programme.

**Extras :** Single room supplement **£120** for 7 nights, travel insurance, taxi fares in Medjugorje, gratuities & tips, entrance fees and optional excursions, any other costs of a personal nature.



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**RISEN SAVIOUR SCULPTURE  
MEDJUGORJE**

# *School daze ... my first day at school*

*Fr James Mulligan*

I started school on the 11th June 1951. Jack Moohan our cousin was detailed to take myself and my younger brother Eddie, who also started school that day, to our first classes in Moneyvriec Primary. Jack used to always call me 'Jimbo Laddo' by the way. Whether Jack stayed at our house overnight or came early in the morning from his home in High Street Ederney I don't remember...

The chestnut tree at the bend in Moneyvriec Lane, the lane leading up to our house, was in late flowering and the remaining pink and white chestnut blossoms were loosening and floating in the air with some falling on the remains of the pre-Famine millstone on the side of the lane. At the bottom of Rushe's brae, where Moneyvriec Lane met Tirmacspird Road, the pink plaster on Hugh Rushe's bungalow shone a rose colour in the morning sunlight—something that made it seem unreal. Fitting indeed as this day was unreal in terms of my previous young life. Along down Willard Ellis' brae the full-blooming hawthorn blossoms foamed a white froth over the roadside hedges. That glorious June morning did thrushes sing as sweetly as ever? No reason to think otherwise. Did swallows, sparrows and starlings swirl, sweep, wheel, swoop and twitter and tweet overhead? Undoubtedly. Did corncrakes crake or make whatever sound corncrakes make? It certainly was possible. Yes, all these things may have happened but I was oblivious as my mind was focused on the unknown, and in fear of the unknown.

We reached the intersection of Tirmacspird Road and the Castlederg Road and an old lady dressed in a black headscarf and a floral-patterned apron stood by the roadside and glowered with distain at the three of us. This lady's name I later learned was Alice McCarron and she lived alone in a strange house nearby on the Castlederg Road—a house that looked like a huge barrel placed on its side on top of a balcony of rough-cut stones. In the following years she always told me to go home every time she saw me. I initially thought I was being singled out for this hostility, but later I discovered Alice's misanthropy was dispensed equally on all the local children.

Across the Castlederg Road was the schoolhouse. We crossed over into the school yard. There, high on the front wall above a window, something was proclaimed on an inscribed slate. If I could have read at this stage I would have read: MONEYVRIECE Public Elementary School. I imagined that some young boy or girl was hoisted up there each morning to write something new, as I had been told by a local man, Eamon Kelly from Clonee, who sometimes worked on the farm, that when I started school I would learn to write on a slate.

We made our way through a door to the left and inside we confronted rows of desks, a sea of young faces, strange voices, strange instructions and imperious commands. Eddie and I were separated. I was placed in 'High Infants' Eddie placed in 'Low Infants'. Nothing seemed friendly. On the contrary, I'm sure we were extended the friendliest of welcomes but it is difficult, if not impossible, for a child of five to filter, arrange and construe correctly so many strands of seemingly conflicting information.

The teacher in charge was Mrs Nora O'Neill but another lady kept coming in and out. I can't remember who this lady was—perhaps it was Maria Kelly, later to be Mrs Maria Lilley. (And by the way what a stalwart of our parish did Mrs Marie Lilley become. First-ever female sacristan to serve in St Joseph's Church and, as I write this in 2016, with over fifty years as sacristan to her credit, still busy every day in this selfless service to the parish community.)



**Mrs Marie Lilley**

At one point the Headteacher, who I learned later was always called 'The Master', Mrs O'Neill's husband, Owen O'Neill, came into the classroom. He was tall and wore neatly ironed grey flannel trousers, a white short-sleeved shirt and a blue tie. This was strange as all the men who came to work on the farm wore shirts with sleeves rolled up and never wore ties. The Master came over and stood in front of my desk. He held in his hand what must have been a copy of my birth certificate or my baptism certificate. Reading from it he smiled and asked me if I was Mulligan Jim. Putting my surname first was his idea of a joke, but it was lost on me as I had never heard the name Mulligan applied to me before. Just the name Jim. Jim, which when I learned to read and write,

would always appear in my mind in emerald-green letters.



**Nora and Owen O'Neill**

Eddie cried all morning. To console myself I thought about Diamond and about Shepherd (Diamond and Shepherd were the horse and the dog on our farm) and wondered if it might be possible that they could accompany us to school in future.

Despite my discomfiture and disorientation I absorbed some detail of my surroundings which I carry with me to this day. There was a large glass vase with pink dog roses placed on one of the windowsills. One of the rose stems had fallen out of the vase and was lying flat on the windowsill. The walls of the classroom were painted blue and there was an oleograph of the Sacred Heart high on one wall. I recognised this because we had a larger version hanging at home. (This picture had frightened me when I was about two years old. It had been taken down from the wall and was propped against a chair as my mother had been cleaning it. I was able to see it close up. I was scared and ran away. Perhaps it was the open heart and the wounds in the hands of Jesus that frightened me.)

On the wall near my desk was an unframed picture of a young girl kneeling and looking up at a lady who stood high on a rock. I later learned that this was an illustration of the apparition to St Bernadette at Lourdes. Near the Lourdes picture, hung on a nail, was calendar with the page for the month of June 1951 displayed—I was able to recognise this, although I could not read, by familiarity with the various calendars hanging at home.

At lunchtime I announced I was going home and made for the front gate which led out onto the Castlederg Road. Jack Moohan was having none of this and hauled me back.

My second day at school? Absolutely no memory.



*Summer 2023 comes to St Paul's*



# Fatima's Sister Lucia's assessment of her character defects is one we can all use

by Barb Ernster –



Sister Lucia as a Dorothean nun

It's always refreshing to know that the saints or saintly people had a human side. Some, like St. Louis de Montfort and St. Damien of Molokai, both had angry temperaments that they had to conquer. Sister Lucia was known for her "rough" temperament and tendency towards impatience with others.

As a young Dorothean nun at Pontevedra (she was known then as Sister Maria das Dores), knowing the Rules for humility and docility regarding menial chores, she struggled with her temperament on more than one occasion. In one story as told by Father Robert Fox in his book *The Intimate Life of Sister Lucia*, Lucia was coming down the stairs carrying a mattress and a young novice asked if she needed help. Lucia replied curtly, "If you do not have anything to do, ask the Mistress of Novices for work." The young novice was rightly upset and took it to the Mistress of Novices, who told her, "Sister, don't consider Sr. Dores a saint just because Our Lady appeared to her. She has to work to be one."

Other third party testimonials refer to similar roughness in Lucia's character. The privilege of corresponding with an angel and the Blessed Mother was not enough for saintliness. She had to strive daily to conquer her defects and sins and conform to God's will, like everyone else. What helped her most in her early formation, was to surrender to her daily duties no matter what was asked of her, and to glorify God by offering them to Him as an act of love. This was the essential sacrifice Our Lady asked for at Fatima, because it is how we detach from ourselves and the earth. Once she surrendered to the frustrations of convent life, she began to grow spiritually. Her Mother Superior, in a letter to Lucia's spiritual director at the end of 1925, wrote "she continues in her saintly

simplicity and humility so much so that she enchants all of her companions. I have her set the meanest and humblest duties, but no matter what duty I have set her, it is always accomplished.” (*Intimate Life*, p 130).

Lucia also developed a profound awareness of her character defects, which caused her to sin. She compiled a list of these, which was written around 1934 and found later by her Mother Superior in the convent archives. It is one that we can all utilize in examining ourselves. Father Fox states that her level of self-awareness shows how much she grew in grace and holiness over those 10 or so years. The list is:

- Resentments which do not allow me to forget the defects of others.
- Faults against charity which these resentments lead me to.
- Egoism which leads me so many times to choose the best for myself.
- Self love which leads me to have my view prevail.
- Excessive propensity to be grieved with trifles.
- To remain quiet many times in order not to have my opinion rejected with people who I know beforehand have to win the argument, even without good reason.
- Lack of respect and disdain for those who contradict me.
- Sadness and weariness produced by wounded self love.
- Consenting to complaints of self love.
- Concentrating on the faults of others without seeing my own.
- Curt replies to the Sisters.
- Not valuing the work of others.
- In my eyes I think my work better than others.
- To want others to esteem my work.
- Resistance to grace.
- Distractions which diminish insights of faith and touches of grace.
- Curiosities.
- Useless words in moments of silence.
- Uncharitable thoughts and words.
- Omissions of charity.
- Carelessness in the practice of small sacrifices.
- Lack of patience in unforeseen events.
- Lack of an ability with others.
- Lack of respect for the opinion of others.
- Not valuing the others’ opinions.
- The difficulty in allowing others’ opinions prevail.
- Allowing myself on many occasions to be very happy or very sad.
- Not being punctual enough.
- Not taking correction willingly.
- Unwillingly to assume my own feelings.
- Being rude to those who displease me.
- Failing of devotion in my spiritual duties and visits to the Blessed Sacrament.
- Failing to be diligent in obedience.
- Failing to be pleasant with others.
- Failing to use ejaculatory prayers during the day to maintain my union with God.
- Failing to visit the Blessed Sacrament in my free time.

# THE POWER OF THE WRITTEN WORD

## Something I have read, appreciated and remembered

In this month's edition of *Monthly Miscellany* we introduce a new feature. Parishioners are invited to submit for publication a favourite piece of writing, fiction or nonfiction. Submissions should be in electronic form only. Please send your contribution to [harefield@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:harefield@rcdow.org.uk)

We begin with an extract from the wonderful novel *The Stranger* by Albert Camus, one of my own favourite novels.

Fr Jim

### From *The Stranger*

... I was wakened by an odd rustling in my ears. After having had my eyes closed, I had a feeling that the light had grown even stronger than before. There wasn't a trace of shadow anywhere, and every object, each curve or angle, seemed to score its outline on one's eyes. The old people, Mother's friends, were coming in. I counted ten in all, gliding almost soundlessly through the bleak white glare. None of the chairs creaked when they sat down. Never in my life had I seen anyone so clearly as I saw these people; not a detail of their clothes or features escaped me. And yet I couldn't hear them, and it was hard to believe they really existed.

Nearly all the women wore aprons, and the strings drawn tight round their waists made their big stomachs bulge still more. I'd never yet noticed what big paunches old women usually have. Most of the men, however, were as thin as rakes, and they all carried sticks. What struck me most about their faces was that one couldn't see their eyes, only a dull glow in a sort of nest of wrinkles.

On sitting down, they looked at me, and wagged their heads awkwardly, their lips sucked in between their toothless gums. I couldn't decide if they were greeting me and trying to say something, or if it was due to some infirmity of age. I inclined to think that they were greeting me, after their fashion, but it had a queer effect, seeing all those old fellows grouped round the keeper, solemnly eying me and dandling their heads from side to side. For a moment I had an absurd impression that they had come to sit in judgment on me.

A few minutes later one of the women started weeping. She was in the second row and I couldn't see her face because of another woman in front. At regular intervals she emitted a little choking sob; one had a feeling she would never stop. The others didn't seem to notice. They sat in silence, slumped in their chairs, staring at the coffin or at their walking sticks or any object just in front of them, and never took their eyes off it. And still the woman sobbed. I was rather surprised, as I didn't know who she was. I wanted her to stop crying, but dared not speak to her. After a while the keeper bent

toward her and whispered in her ear; but she merely shook her head, mumbled something I couldn't catch, and went on sobbing as steadily as before.

The keeper got up and moved his chair beside mine. At first he kept silent; then, without looking at me, he explained.

"She was devoted to your mother. She says your mother was her only friend in the world, and now she's all alone."

I had nothing to say, and the silence lasted quite a while. Presently the woman's sighs and sobs became less frequent, and, after blowing her nose and snuffling for some minutes, she, too, fell silent.

I'd ceased feeling sleepy, but I was very tired and my legs were aching badly. And now I realized that the silence of these people was telling on my nerves. The only sound was a rather queer one; it came only now and then, and at first I was puzzled by it. However, after listening attentively, I guessed what it was; the old men were sucking at the insides of their cheeks, and this caused the odd, wheezing noises that had mystified me. They were so much absorbed in their thoughts that they didn't know what they were up to. I even had an impression that the dead body in their midst meant nothing at all to them. But now I suspect that I was mistaken about this.

We all drank the coffee, which the keeper handed round. After that, I can't remember much; somehow the night went by. I can recall only one moment; I had opened my eyes and I saw the old men sleeping hunched up on their chairs, with one exception. Resting his chin on his hands clasped round his stick, he was staring hard at me, as if he had been waiting for me to wake. Then I fell asleep again. I woke up after a bit, because the ache in my legs had developed into a sort of cramp.

There was a glimmer of dawn above the skylight. A minute or two later one of the old men woke up and coughed repeatedly. He spat into a big check handkerchief, and each time he spat it sounded as if he were retching. This woke the others, and the keeper told them it was time to make a move. They all got up at once. Their faces were ashen gray after the long, uneasy vigil. To my surprise each of them shook hands with me, as though this night together, in which we hadn't exchanged a word, had created a kind of intimacy between us.

I was quite done in. The keeper took me to his room, and I tidied myself up a bit. He gave me some more "white" coffee, and it seemed to do me good. When I went out, the sun was up and the sky mottled red above the hills between Marengo and the sea. A morning breeze was blowing and it had a pleasant salty tang. There was the promise of a very fine day. I hadn't been in the country for ages, and I caught myself thinking what an agreeable walk I could have had, if it hadn't been for Mother.

As it was, I waited in the courtyard, under a plane tree. I sniffed the smells of the cool earth and found I wasn't sleepy any more. Then I thought of the other fellows in the office. At this hour they'd be getting up, preparing to go to work; for me this was always the worst hour of the day. I went on thinking, like this, for ten minutes or so; then the sound of a bell inside the building attracted my attention. I could see

movements behind the windows; then all was calm again. The sun had risen a little higher and was beginning to warm my feet. The keeper came across the yard and said the warden wished to see me. I went to his office and he got me to sign some document. I noticed that he was in black, with pin-stripe trousers. He picked up the telephone receiver and looked at me.

"The undertaker's men arrived some moments ago, and they will be going to the mortuary to screw down the coffin. Shall I tell them to wait, for you to have a last glimpse of your mother?" "No," I said.

He spoke into the receiver, lowering his voice. "That's all right, Figeac. Tell the men to go there now."

He then informed me that he was going to attend the funeral, and I thanked him. Sitting down behind his desk, he crossed his short legs and leaned back. Besides the nurse on duty, he told me, he and I would be the only mourners at the funeral. It was a rule of the Home that inmates shouldn't attend funerals, though there was no objection to letting some of them sit up beside the coffin, the night before.

"It's for their own sakes," he explained, "to spare their feelings. But in this particular instance I've given permission to an old friend of your mother to come with us. His name is Thomas Pérez." The warden smiled. "It's a rather touching little story in its way. He and your mother had become almost inseparable. The other old people used to tease Pérez about having a fiancée. 'When are you going to marry her?' they'd ask. He'd turn it with a laugh. It was a standing joke, in fact. So, as you can guess, he feels very badly about your mother's death. I thought I couldn't decently refuse him permission to attend the funeral. But, on our medical officer's advice, I forbade him to sit up beside the body last night."

For some time we sat there without speaking. Then the warden got up and went to the window. Presently he said:

"Ah, there's the padre from Marengo. He's a bit ahead of time."

He warned me that it would take us a good three quarters of an hour, walking to the church, which was in the village.

Then we went downstairs.

The priest was waiting just outside the mortuary door. With him were two acolytes, one of whom had a censer. The priest was stooping over him, adjusting the length of the silver chain on which it hung. When he saw us he straightened up and said a few words to me, addressing me as, "My son." Then he led the way into the mortuary.

I noticed at once that four men in black were standing behind the coffin and the screws in the lid had now been driven home. At the same moment I heard the warden remark that the hearse had arrived, and the priest starting his prayers. Then everybody made a move. Holding a strip of black cloth, the four men approached the coffin, while the

priest, the boys, and myself filed out. A lady I hadn't seen before was standing by the door. "This is Monsieur Meursault," the warden said to her. I didn't catch her name, but I gathered she was a nursing sister attached to the Home. When I was introduced, she bowed, without the trace of a smile on her long, gaunt face. We stood aside from the doorway to let the coffin by; then, following the bearers down a corridor, we came to the front entrance, where a hearse was waiting. Oblong, glossy, varnished black all over, it vaguely reminded me of the pen trays in the office.

Beside the hearse stood a quaintly dressed little -man, whose duty it was, I understood, to supervise the funeral, as a sort of master of ceremonies. Near him, looking constrained, almost bashful, was old M. Pérez, my mother's special friend. He wore a soft felt hat with a pudding-basin crown and a very wide brim – he whisked it off the moment the coffin emerged from the doorway – trousers that concertina'd on his shoes, a black tie much too small for his high white double collar. Under a bulbous, pimply nose, his lips were trembling. But what caught my attention most was his ears; pendulous, scarlet ears that showed up like blobs of sealing wax on the pallor of his cheeks and were framed in wisps of silky white hair.

The undertaker's factotum shepherded us to our places, with the priest in front of the hearse, and the four men in black on each side of it. The warden and myself came next, and, bringing up the rear, old Pérez and the nurse.

The sky was already a blaze of light, and the air stoking up rapidly. I felt the first waves of heat lapping my back, and my dark suit made things worse. I couldn't imagine why we waited so long for getting under way. Old Pérez, who had put on his hat, took it off again. I had turned slightly in his direction and was looking at him when the warden started telling me more about him. I remember his saying that old Pérez and my mother used often to have a longish stroll together in the cool of the evening; sometimes they went as far as the village, accompanied by a nurse, of course.

I looked at the countryside, at the long lines of cypresses sloping up toward the skyline and the hills, the hot red soil dappled with vivid green, and here and there a lonely house sharply outlined against the light – and I could understand Mother's feelings. Evenings in these parts must be a sort of mournful solace. Now, in the full glare of the morning sun, with everything shimmering in the heat haze, there was something inhuman, discouraging, about this landscape.

At last we made a move. Only then I noticed that Pérez had a slight limp. The old chap steadily lost ground as the hearse gained speed. One of the men beside it, too, fell back and drew level with me. I was surprised to see how quickly the sun was climbing up the sky, and just then it struck me that for quite a while the air had been throbbing with the hum of insects and the rustle of grass warming up. Sweat was running down my face. As I had no hat I tried to fan myself with my handkerchief.

The undertaker's man turned to me and said something that I didn't catch. At that same time he wiped the crown of his head with a handkerchief that he held in his left hand, while with his right he tilted up his hat. I asked him what he'd said. He pointed upward.

"Sun's pretty bad today, ain't it?" "Yes," I said. After a while he asked: "Is it your mother we're burying?" "Yes," I said again. "What was her age?" "Well, she was getting on." As a matter of fact, I didn't know exactly how old she was.

After that he kept silent. Looking back, I saw Pérez limping along some fifty yards behind. He was swinging his big felt hat at arm's length, trying to make the pace. I also had a look at the warden. He was walking with carefully measured steps, economizing every gesture. Beads of perspiration glistened on his forehead, but he didn't wipe them off.

I had an impression that our little procession was moving slightly faster. Wherever I looked I saw the same sun-drenched countryside, and the sky was so dazzling that I dared not raise my eyes. Presently we struck a patch of freshly tarred road. A shimmer of heat played over it and one's feet squelched at each step, leaving bright black gashes. In front, the coachman's glossy black hat looked like a lump of the same sticky substance, poised above the hearse. It gave one a queer, dreamlike impression, that blue-white glare overhead and all this blackness round one: the sleek black of the hearse, the dull black of the men's clothes, and the silvery-black gashes in the road. And then there were the smells, smells of hot leather and horse dung from the hearse, veined with whiffs of incense smoke. What with these and the hangover from a poor night's sleep, I found my eyes and thoughts growing blurred.

I looked back again. Pérez seemed very far away now, almost hidden by the heat haze; then, abruptly, he disappeared altogether. After puzzling over it for a bit, I guessed that he had turned off the road into the fields. Then I noticed that there was a bend of the road a little way ahead. Obviously Pérez, who knew the district well, had taken a short cut, so as to catch up with us. He rejoined us soon after we were round the bend; then began to lose ground again. He took another short cut and met us again farther on; in fact, this happened several times during the next half-hour. But soon I lost interest in his movements; my temples were throbbing and I could hardly drag myself along.

After that everything went with a rush; and also with such precision and matter-of-factness that I remember hardly any details. Except that when we were on the outskirts of the village the nurse said something to me. Her voice took me by surprise; it didn't match her face at all; it was musical and slightly tremulous. What she said was: "If you go too slowly there's the risk of a heatstroke. But, if you go too fast, you perspire, and the cold air in the church gives you a chill." I saw her point; either way one was in for it.

Some other memories of the funeral have stuck in my mind. The old boy's face, for instance, when he caught up with us for the last time, just outside the village. His eyes were streaming with tears, of exhaustion or distress, or both together. But because of the wrinkles they couldn't flow down. They spread out, crisscrossed, and formed a smooth gloss on the old, worn face.

And I can remember the look of the church, the villagers in the street, the red geraniums on the graves, Pérez's fainting fit—he crumpled up like a rag doll—the tawny-red earth pattering on Mother's coffin, the bits of white roots mixed up with it;

then more people, voices, the wait outside a café for the bus, the rumble of the engine, and my little thrill of pleasure when we entered the first brightly lit streets of Algiers.



**Albert Camus ... 7 November 1913 – 4 January 1960**

**Albert Camus was a French philosopher, novelist, dramatist, and journalist.**

**He was the recipient of the 1957 Nobel Prize in Literature at the age of 44.**



# THE ANNUNCIATION

by Marius Paul O'Shea

An Appreciation by Cecilia Eales



For centuries artists have been inspired to illustrate the story of “The Annunciation”, each version is different and reflects the artists own unique vision and understanding as well as representing the styles and influences of the times.

This version by artist and art historian Marius Paul O'Shea offers a contemporary perspective and interpretation.

Initially, we see a vast, open and planetary space in which two triangles make equal halves of a whole. Two different worlds but part of the same. One triangle is a deep shade of blue whilst the one that contains The Virgin Mary is a lighter, softer shade. Blue is a colour deeply rooted in Catholic symbolism, it represents Mary's purity and of course, a triangle symbolises The Holy Trinity. Our eyes are drawn to the small, diminutive figure of Mary, seen in profile at the bottom left corner of the painting. She stands against a wall at the vertex of the paler triangle, illuminated by a graphic sliver of light representing the Holy Spirit and alluding to the miracle of The Conception. There is a theatrical quality here and this young girl appears as though on stage in the spotlight. The light also falls at her feet, creating the appearance of a step or precipice. It is only now that we make out the shadowy figure of Gabriel opposite and contained within the deeper blue.

Traditionally, the manner in which an artist depicts Mary's posture is important as it offers us insight into her state of mind and emotional reaction to the presence of Gabriel. In this painting Marius Paul O'Shea gives us a fully alert, active and receptive young woman. She stands upright against the wall with one foot pressed safely against it, arms back but head tilting forwards, she is prepared to move forward and jump if she has to. She is neither shy or passive. Her body shows some uncertainty but there is courage and trust in this figure as she stands upright, the angle of her head indicating willingness, as if to say, "Here I am, Lord."

The figure of Gabriel is fascinating and has a transient, otherworldly quality. This is very different to the three-dimensional human figure with angel wings that we have been used to seeing throughout history. This figure is indistinguishable, appearing as though in the depths of her subconsciousness, reaching out to Mary, partly pointing, partly beckoning. An intangible and enigmatic presence. This is God announcing to Mary that she will bear his Son. It is an extraordinary moment depicting two compelling figures and perhaps closer to Mary's experience than other more famous and grander works in history, made all the more profound by its simplicity.

Cecilia Eales  
Illustrator

# ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

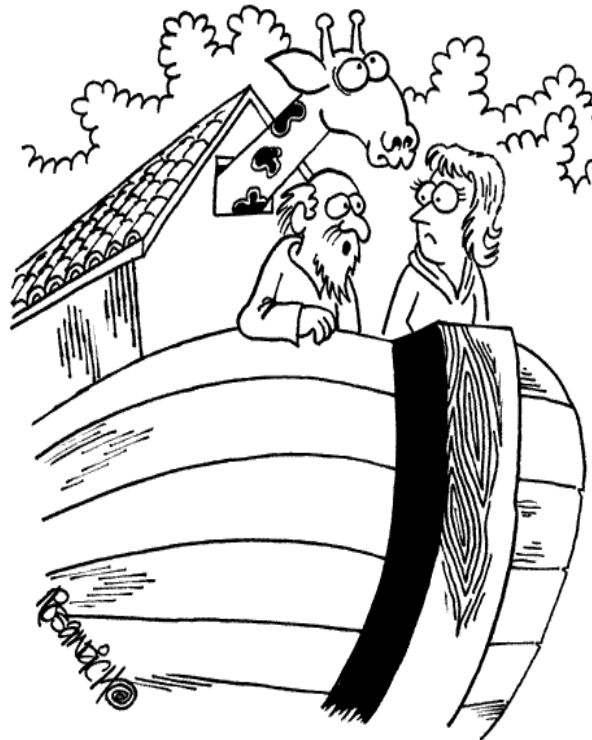
## *HOLY HOWLERS*

**Typos, misprints, inadvertent double entendre and all manner of infelicitous error published in church notices, bulletins and newsletters**

**At the Ladies' Liturgy Society this Thursday, Mrs. Smith will sing "Put Me In My Little Bed" accompanied by the pastor.**

**Next Sunday Mrs. Vinson will be soloist for the morning service. The pastor will then speak on "It's a Terrible Experience**

**Next Sunday's preacher can be found hanging on the notice board in the porch.**



**"Did you remember to water the lawn?"**