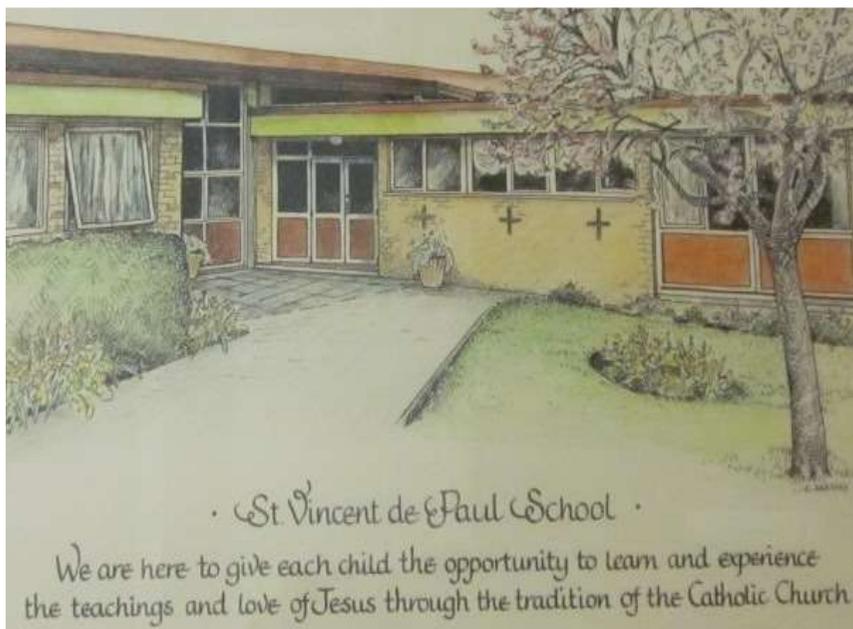


THE THREE PARISHES MAGAZINE



NEWS & VIEWS OF THE STEVENAGE ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISHES OF:
THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD, ST JOSEPH'S AND ST HILDA'S

Congratulations to St Vincent de Paul on its 25th Anniversary



Painting of St Vincent de Paul School in 1990s

Welcome to the Christmas edition of the 'TPM'! We work hard to put together a magazine that tells our congregations what is happening in the Parish and that provides parishioner's perspectives on a wide range of topics. We also like to highlight local groups and initiatives. None of this is possible without the valuable input from you, the parishioners! We would like to take this opportunity to thank those that have contributed and encourage more people to submit articles. There must be something you want to tell us about ! This is after all the '**Three Parishes Magazine**' and we do want it to represent all of you. So please do submit your articles, of 500 words or less (preferably by email), to your Parish Secretary.

Wishing you all a Happy and Peaceful Christmas and New Year!

Contents

- Message from Fr Michael
- Three Parishes – Now just one secretary /office administrator!
- Bethlehem
- St Vincent de Paul
- St Vincent de Paul School Celebrating 25 Years
- Laudato Si : Action by St Vincent de Paul School
- Will they get the point in Paris?
- Looking at Nativity Stories
- The Year of Mercy
- The Garden House Hospice
- Remembering our Stevenage Priests
- Our Thanks to the Stevenage Community Trust
- A Pilgrimage to Lourdes
- A highly recommended Catholic App!
- The Rosary: a prayer for all seasons
- The Living Room
- The Stevenage Haven
- Parishioner's Local Businesses
- Christmas Competition for Everyone
- Stevenage Parishes Information

Asylum seekers!

An angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying, Arise, and take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the child to destroy him

Who arose, and took the child and his mother by night, and retired into Egypt; and he was there until the death of Herod. .

Matthew: Ch 2 vs 13-14

Over the next 5 years, Stevenage Borough Council will be housing a number of families, totalling 20 individuals from Syria, who are seeking asylum from the tyranny of Dictator Assad!

Well Done Stevenage!

St Vincent de Paul School, Bedwell

A Great Catholic School Celebrates its Silver Jubilee

Fr Michael



On its feast day in September, St Vincent de Paul School had a wonderful celebration of its Twenty-Fifth Anniversary. Bishop John Sherrington, our Bishop in Hertfordshire, as well as the Chair of Education for Westminster Diocese, were present. Bishop John began his Homily, to a packed St Joseph's Church by asking this question of the pupils, "*what do we need to make a Catholic School.*"? The bishop expected to hear some of the essential elements we need to make up our Schools. So it was wonderful for all of us, and for Bishop John, when the first pupil with his hand up, Arinze Geoman, said "**Jesus.**"! Clearly St Vincent's pupils have their Catholic priorities well sorted out!

Since that Celebration, I have been taken on a tour of the School by Head Teacher, Peter Keane. It was a wonderful experience for me. That vibrant Catholic ethos which makes up our Schools, and which makes us so proud of them, was evident everywhere. That uniquely Catholic combination of education with discipline, enthusiasm and lively faith was demonstrated in classrooms, offices and even playground. It is all those things which make our parents so proud and very grateful to the staff and governors.

The School has very generously made itself available to help the parish when the long awaited enlargement of St Joseph's Church begins in the New Year. Many of the weekend Masses and some catechetics etc will take place in the School during the ten-months projected closure of the Church.

St Hilda's will also be helping to provide space for some of the functions of St Joseph's while the Church is closed. I ask parishioners of all three parishes to keep this work in your prayers. We pray that a wonderful enlarged Church will give more space to Fr Vincent and the people of Bedwell, especially at the highpoints of the year, Christmas, Easter and the major celebrations of the Sacraments of Holy Communion and Confirmation, as well as large funerals and weddings.

Overcrowding with which parishioners have been so patient for so long, will, we hope, no longer be an issue in the Church. And St Vincent de Paul School, which we all congratulate, should have a wonderful new "School Chapel" taking shape during its Silver Jubilee Year. *Ad Multus Anno*

Three Parishes – Now just one secretary /office administrator!



Lynne Gasston, who has been Secretary/Office Administrator for Bedwell and Shephall parishes for some time now, has recently been appointed to undertake the same role in the Old Town parish. She is therefore now responsible for managing and coordinating the offices in all three parishes.

Lynne was born in London in 1960 and in 1963 she came to live in Stevenage with her mum and dad. Her brother Alan was born in 1964 and her Brother Justin was born in 1970. After attending Bandley Hill and Barnwell schools, she spent two years at Stevenage College to obtain a Junior Secretary Certificate. There followed 18 years as a secretary at HSBC bank in Stevenage. She then became parish secretary at St Joseph's in 2001, and subsequently at St Hilda's in 2012. Lynne has also worked for the Good News Pre-School and as Receptionist at St Vincent de Paul School, whilst working at the both Churches.

Lynne is married to Richard and they look forward to celebrating their Silver Wedding in 2016. Their two children are Sam (22) who works at Stevenage Leisure Centre, and Emily (19) who is at University reading Criminology and Psychology. Lynne enjoys skiing with her family, walking and going to the gym.

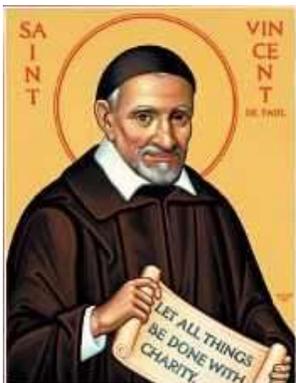
Bethlehem

Kathy Dickinson

*In Bethlehem of Judea
A boy child was born-
a star shone bright
Above the stable that night
And the door was left ajar-
Yes in that stable long ago
With ox and ass to keep him warm-
The Saviour of the Word was born.
It was the first Christmas morn*



St Vincent de Paul *Angelica Bacani, Mary Arceno & Rhea D'Souza*
(Yr 6 St Vincent de Paul School)



Vincent de Paul was born on the 25th of April 1581 in a village called Pouy, France to father Jean and mother Bertrande de Moras de Paul. He had three brothers -Jean, Bernard and Gayon- and two sisters – Marie and Marie-Claudine. He was the third child.

At an early age, he showed a talent for reading and writing but during his childhood, he worked as a herder of his family's animals. At the age of 15, his father sent him to a seminary, managing to pay for it by selling the family's oxen. For two years, Vincent received his education in a college in Dax, France. After finishing his studies from the University of Toulouse, Vincent became a priest at the age of 20.

At first, he was given an important position as the teacher of rich children, and he lived rather comfortably. But while he was travelling by sea from one city to another, he fell into the hands of Turkish pirates who sold him as a slave to wealthy people in Tunis.

Two years later Vincent was finally set free by one of his owners. Soon after, he was called to the side of a dying peasant. In front of many people, this man declared that all his past confessions had been bad ones.

Suddenly Father Vincent realized how badly the poor people of France needed both practical and spiritual help. Therefore he:

- started to take care of criminals who worked on sailing ships
- opened hospitals and homes for orphans and old people
- organised a group of women who became the Sisters of Charity to care for the needy
- collected large sums of money for the poor
- sent missionaries to many countries

Vincent de Paul died in Paris on September 27th 1660 and was canonised in 1737

St Vincent de Paul School

Celebrating 25 Years

Rosemary Sherry

We have a lot to be thankful for the past twenty five years and a lot of to celebrate together as a community. We are holding a number of events and activities throughout the year to mark our anniversary. Pupils and staff were surveyed last summer to generate a number of ideas with a lot of consensus about the important ways to celebrate this special year. It was most important that those who had shared the journey over the years should be involved too and so we began our year with a wonderful mass celebrated by Bishop John Sherrington on the feast of St Vincent de Paul (27th September) attended by past and current families, governors and teachers, followed by a reception in the school which celebrated the talents of the various community groups.

We have already produced a whole school anniversary calendar with each member of the community photographed with the others who share their birthday month. Anniversary bags are available for purchase from the PSA who we can also thank for their generous pledge of funds towards the newly erected building. We have invited Sister Mary Catherine to open this multi-purpose facility which is named after St Louise de Marillac, a follower of St Vincent de Paul who founded the Sisters of Charity community in Paris.

A whole school “street party”/ picnic is planned for the better weather as well as an official photograph of the 500+ members of the school assembled together. We will be opening our two millennium time capsules as part of our focus on the history of the school and the children will then be invited to contribute to a time capsule for the present day. Many photographs have been taken over the years and it is marvellous to be sharing our memories with the current generation.

As part of the pupils’ research into life in the 90s, we would love to gather some oral histories with pupils interviewing staff and pupils, past and present. Any volunteers would be most welcome to get in touch to be part of this project. Please contact the school on 729555 or via email (admin@stvincent.herts.sch.uk) if you would like to share some memories.

What did the stamp say to the Christmas card?

Stick with me and we can go places!

***Laudato Si* : Action by St Vincent de Paul School Mary Hewitson**

Since the new Papal encyclical, *Laudato Si*, was published in May, we have been planning a whole school-focussed week on the encyclical. Prior to the start of the week, all staff received training on Catholic Social Teaching and *Laudato Si*. Visitors contributing to activities during the week were briefed about the encyclical and given copies of the document. There was also considerable discussion before the week about how the Pope's message could best be shared with our young audience.

The week began on the Monday morning with a whole school assembly led by Senior Leaders. The 'Mini Vinnies' group and the ECO warriors also contributed so that there was whole school awareness of the scope of *Laudato si*. A wide range of activities were organised and all class teachers were asked to plan cross-curricular learning opportunities within the theme.

KS1 pupils focused on **Recycling** and saving **Water**. They also enjoyed assemblies focussing on *Laudato Si* led by a Science teacher from our local Catholic High School and also one led by our school linked CAFOD volunteers. Half way through the week a story teller (a past teacher) led a session for every EYFS and KS1 class. She told a wonderful story about saving penguins and 'performed' for the children wearing a colourful hat and cloak, with lots of recyclable items attached. The children were enthralled.

The children also enjoyed exploratory activities outside and in nearby outdoor spaces – appreciating the beauty of God's world and the need to take care of our common home. A very special highlight of the week was when our Head teacher delivered to (KS1) a very large gold envelope containing a letter from the Pope! (a KS1, child friendly, version of the Pope's message).

At KS2 Each year group adopted one of the CAFOD themes – Water, Climate Change, Food, or Picture my World. Teachers were encouraged to use resources from the CAFOD website to enhance their teaching and to support the cross curricular tone of the week.

A number of extra activities were also organised. Tania from CAFOD's Latin America team (recently back from working for CAFOD in Peru) delivered a lesson to each of our classes in Years 5 and 6. The sessions were inspirational and helped the children view the world's resources as God's treasures that He shares with us. The children were engaged in a scavenger hunt, which helped them appreciate the beauty and

value of the objects they brought back to the classroom. Tania also led an assembly for pupils in Years 3 and 4 and dressed as a globe she really captured and held their attention!

Each of our 8 KS2 classes spent a half day working outside with a conservationist who, although not of any religious persuasion, commented in an email "*I feel nearer to this Pope than any other before in my life and I was very impressed by the children's responses in the assembly*". Working with the conservation team, lower KS2 learnt about the beauty of God's world through trust games, bug-collecting, camp-fire lighting etc. Upper KS2 went off-site and explored conservation projects in the nearby park and lake area.

What was most impressive about the week's activities was the way in which our 'visitors' who were leading these sessions had really researched the content of *Laudato si* so that they were able to weave this knowledge into their teaching, frequently referring to what the Pope says. The week concluded with an assembly led by one of our Year 6 classes, based on resources from the CAFOD website.

We are now inspired to plan the next steps for our school community.

Will they get the point in Paris?

Michael Downing

This is being written on the first day of the Paris environmental summit. By the time you read it you will know whether the summit has been a triumphant success setting out a universally agreed pathway to an environmentally sustainable future, a total flop with no real shift by powerful vested interests, or some kind of cobbled-up compromise showing goodwill but leaving all the difficult issues in the air.

There is one important new factor in the equation since past summits on this topic, in that there is a powerful intervention by the Catholic Church in the form of Pope Francis's latest encyclical on the environment '*Laudato Si.*' This is not the first time a church leader has spoken out on this subject. Pope Paul VI, for example, warned in 1971 that '*by an unconsidered exploitation of nature, man risks destroying it*'.

These words have been echoed by all his successors but '*Laudato Si*' marked a break with the past. Traditional thinking about the environment saw the resources of the world, (animal, vegetable and mineral) as there to be exploited, and there seemed plenty of biblical authority for this. Even Vatican II did not go far in questioning this assumption.

Pope Francis seems to be breaking new ground, although, as he points out, Francis of Assisi, (the inspiration for his adopted name), represented a very different approach, and one from which he draws his inspiration.

The importance of '*Laudito Si*' is that it provides a detailed and systematic argument that a new approach to the environment is an essential component of Church social teaching and action, rather than a desirable extra to be abandoned as unaffordable in difficult economic times. On the contrary, the argument is that we cannot afford not to take this action, and that it is the poorest whose livelihoods are most threatened by climate change.

Catholics involved with CAFOD (which has been campaigning on this issue for over a year) participated with many others in demonstrations across Europe on the eve of the Paris summit. Perhaps the battle will only be won when campaigning, and public education, have made this something that political leaders can only ignore at their cost. will the battle All our futures are at stake.

CAFOD have produced an excellent Study Guide which can be got from : cafod.org.uk/encyclical The encyclical itself is available from the CTS

Post Script (13th December.) Contrary to most peoples' expectations (including mine) an agreement has now been signed in Paris which has been hailed as 'historic.' The advantage of having a generally pessimistic outlook is that you sometimes get pleasant surprises. However, it is not quite time to open the champagne. Many scientists and environmental activists remain doubtful both about the effectiveness of the measures agreed in Paris and the long term political will to carry them out. They are not due to be implemented until 2020! If they are not to go the way of the Kellogg and Locarno pacts of the 1920s (when international statesmen eagerly agreed to abolish war), pressure will have to be intensified on those in power to live up to implement and develop further the Paris agreements. CAFOD and like-minded groups will do this but they need the active support of Catholics and others to succeed. Our futures are still at stake!

Looking at Nativity Stories

Audrey Murphy

Only two of the gospel writers mention the Nativity, **St. Matthew and St. Luke.** Luke gives us information about the census which required the long journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem '*since he was of David's*

house and line.’ He also gives us the information ‘*laid him in a manger*’, and ‘*no room in the Kataluma*’. Luke does not say ‘in the ‘Inn’!

In this context, Kataluma’s actual meaning is the ‘guest room’. The shepherds mentioned ‘*the babe lying in a manger*’, and everyone who heard all these things was astonished at what the shepherds had to say.

With St. Matthew, we move on two more years after the event when Jesus was a young child ‘*When Jesus was born in Bethlehem ... there came wise men from the East – ‘we have come to worship he that is born King of the Jews’... ‘they followed the star’ ... ‘and when they were come into the house they saw the young child with Mary his mother and they opened their gifts*’. There was no mention of an ‘Inn’ an ‘Innkeeper’, or even a ‘stable’.

The two gospels contribute ‘a young child’ and ‘Kataluma’ as a guest room. St. Luke when he tells the story of the Good Samaritan uses the word ‘**Pandocheion**’ showing clearly that he knows the difference between a guest room and an Inn !

Archaeologists contribute a study of Bethlehem in which they discovered that caves were used against houses giving space on the ground floor which could be kitchen/workshop by day and a place where animals could be brought by night. Three Hundred years later, a cave that was supposed to be Jesus’, was being visited by pilgrims, but there is mention of an earlier tradition of pilgrimage.

So – if we put these data together we have a somewhat different scenario:-

Joseph is taking Mary to Bethlehem expecting to stay in the family ‘guest room’ but it is already full of other family members on the same errand. Some of them are women who, maybe, have experienced childbirth themselves and are eager to help when they see Mary’s condition. The men may well be asked to take the animals outside where they can guard them and leave the women their privacy. The women sweep the floor, scrub out the manger and prepare swaddling clothes as Mary goes into labour. I find it easier to imagine a noisy and excited scene inside the house and possibly outside as well. Have you ever wondered how useful the Angels’ directions were? For example ‘***You will find the babe lying in a manger***’. Do the shepherds go round knocking on doors in the middle of the night asking this unlikely question? Surely not! They see a man or a number of men out in the street with their animals, and lights instead of darkness in the ground floor of the house and possibly neighbours who had come to

help – ‘*Everyone who heard all these things was astonished at what the shepherds had to say*’.

Now, St Luke writes the best Greek of any of the Gospel writers and was of course aware of the hospitable arrangements of Jewish homes. ‘*Kataluma*’ was a word which could also mean an Inn or any other word indicating a place of shelter for the night. Early translators did not have much knowledge of Jewish practices to guide them in their choice of word and settled on ‘**Inn**’. By the time scholars were in a position to correct this, centuries of artistic endeavour had supplied an inn with an innkeeper and a stable with animals breathing over a new born baby with a halo, three Kings with a retinue and, usually, some highly decorative angels!

When one publishing house – in America, I think – ventured to change from ‘Inn’ to ‘Guestroom’ it was quickly persuaded not to confuse people. **Does it matter?** Well – anything that edges towards a fuller and more realistic image of the truth of history seems to me to be valuable in itself. It also challenges newspaper headlines such as ‘*Professor X says the nativity story is a myth*’. “Historical embroidery” is a better term. It is still interesting and may well have truth behind it. And it shows, at the very least, a prayerful imagination !

The Year of Mercy

Fr Chris Connor

Earlier this year Pope Francis issued a Bull of Indiction called ‘*Misericordiae Vultus*’ (the face of mercy) and proclaimed an extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy for the Church commencing on December 8th this year (the feast of the Immaculate Conception) and finishing on November 22nd 2016, the feast of Christ the King. The opening words of the document were these: - “*Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy*”.

These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in Him. Mercy has been a constant theme of Pope Francis's pontificate, but in the document he acknowledges the contribution of Pope John Paul II whose second encyclical was called “*Dives in misericordiae*” (Rich in Mercy). In this, he lamented the eclipse of mercy in today's world. Pope John Paul II died in 2005 on the vigil of the Feast of Divine Mercy, a feast which he himself established in the year 2000.

The year of mercy begins after the second Sunday of Advent. In the Gospel for that day John the Baptist appears "*preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins*". The Hebrew word for repentance is "**teshuvah**", a word which means "**to turn**". It involves a 180 degree turn spiritually from focusing on self to focusing on God. The God that we turn to is a God of mercy. Pope Francis emphasises that mercy is a two-way street; if we wish to receive mercy from God then we need to repent and practise it ourselves. He writes "*It is my burning desire during this Jubilee that Christians on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.*"

Let us rediscover these corporal works of mercy; **to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned and bury the dead.** And let us not forget the spiritual works of mercy:- **to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offences, bear patiently those who do us ill, and pray for the living and the dead**".

Those two works are not in separate compartments, of course. They overlap because we are a body/soul unity. Pope Francis wrote:- "*I am especially thinking of the great apostle of mercy, Saint Faustina Kowalska*". Saint Faustina was canonised by Pope John Paul II on 30th April 2000. Like the Pope, she was from Poland and both stressed that this present age was one of mercy from God and the need for mankind to repent and avail of that divine gift. There is an urgency in this **Jubilee year of Mercy**. This is an extraordinary year of grace for us all. It will not come again in our lifetime. This Advent, in particular, would be a lovely time to avail of the Sacrament of Mercy - **Confession!**

The time to repent is **NOW!** The time for mercy is **NOW!**

The Garden House Hospice

Dr Paul Vooght

Isn't it depressing working at the Hospice? No! It has its sad times but generally it is up-lifting. If you read the newspapers and watch the news you could get depressed by all the violence, murder, wars and evil in the world. But stepping into the hospice you are in another world. People remark how peaceful, warm, welcoming and loving the atmosphere is.

It is refreshing to meet such wonderful people who our patients, their friends and families meeting great adversity and suffering in a very brave, stoical, and heroic way. There are so many edifying examples of

generous, loving, supportive, faithful, compassionate care that families give to their loved ones. It is our privilege to welcome them into the hospice and look after them all.

Why do we have to wait for a disaster (war/illness) before we recognise our neighbour in need and put their needs first or appreciate the great gift of life?

Yes, working with those who have a terminal illness has taught me to take each day and make the most of it. Many patients have told me that they have only started living. How can they say that? They reply *'I don't worry now, I wake up in the morning and thank God for another day. I don't worry about things and don't put things off! Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a present, make the most of it!'*

Tony was 52 when he was diagnosed with terminal cancer at the Lister Hospital. He was devastated. He couldn't sleep at night and was sitting on the edge of his bed and, as the dawn broke, he could see the motorway with the commuters driving past. He thought to himself, *'I'm lucky really, at least I have time to get my affairs in order and say my thank you's, I love you, I'm sorry'* Some of these people don't realise it, but it's their last day, they might have a car crash, heart attack etc This cancer won't beat me, even if it takes to the cremation, I'll burn the blooming thing out!

Natalie was 39 and her sister had died in the hospice 2 years before about the same age. Natalie told me that she wasn't like her sister, who buried her head in the sand and ignored that she was dying. *What are you doing then? I asked her: "I have told all my family including my children that I am dying!"* Her young son (about 7 years old) visited her and she asked him *"have you cleaned your teeth?" "Yes!"*. She looked in his mouth and said *"no you haven't! Go in there (bathroom) and clean your teeth. When I'm in Heaven I'll be watching you!"*

Yes, (a mother's) love never ends!

There was an elderly lady dying who requested her parish priest to place a dinner fork on her coffin at her funeral. Why? the priest asked her. *Well, Father you know at those parish do's when we have a meal and take our plate back after the first course, we are told to keep our forks because there's something better coming!*

Death can indeed be frightening and something of a taboo subject even with Catholics. Woody Allen was asked if he was scared of dying and he replied "No but I don't want to be near when it happens!"

Mandy was a young student nurse with advanced cancer and felt isolated. She pleaded – *‘visit me, I don’t expect you to have the answers, just be with me.* What a privilege it is to visit the sick. For Our Lord said- *whatsoever you do to the least of My brothers, you do unto me. When I was sick you visited Me’*

“Fear not!” Our Lord said (365 times in the Bible). We always pray for a happy death. In the Hail Mary we pray: **“pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death”** but do we trust that our prayer will be answered? St Joseph is the patron of a happy death, and we too pray that we will have Jesus and Mary with us as we breathe our last.

The Garden House Hospice

Situated in Letchworth Garden City, the Garden House Hospice serves the towns and villages in North Herts. Garden House is a registered charity offering hospice care and support to patients with a terminal diagnosis. Services are offered free of charge to patients and families needing support. A contract with the East and North Herts Primary Care Trust contributes towards the day- to-day running costs but it is dependant on voluntary donations and fundraising activities to raise in excess of £1million per year in order to maintain its services.

The Hospice has two shops in Stevenage. One in the High Street, and one in the Town Centre. They welcome saleable items and all those who call in to look around and, perhaps, buy something !

Dr Paul Vooght is a member of St Hilda’s parish and has lived in Stevenage since 1957. After leaving school with just two O levels, Paul then did voluntary work in various hospitals and in a Cheshire Home. He became a porter at Lister Hospital, then an auxiliary nurse, a student nurse and, eventually, a staff nurse at Lister. After obtaining the requisite O and A levels at Stevenage College, he was admitted to UCH Medical School in London. He graduated in Medicine in 1987 and served initially as a Junior Doctor at Lister Hospital. After a further 3 years training, he qualified as a GP in 1992. He has served as Company Doctor at MBDA and EADS Astrium in Stevenage, and since 1992, as part-time GP and Associate Specialist at the Garden House Hospital.

Paul and his wife, Pauline, have a family of nine children and six grandchildren.

Paul hopes his success *“can help others to live out their dreams”* but says *“ I couldn’t have achieved it without my darling wife and my faith”*

.....



*Fr Ormiston with Cardinal Griffin
Parish Confirmation in 1947*

We are deeply grateful to all those priests who have dedicated part of their lives to serve us in one of the parishes in Stevenage. We invite you to tell us of your memories of a priest, who served here at one time, but has now passed on to his eternal reward. Here are memories of just one of them

Fr Walter Hugh Ormiston MC: War Hero and Stevenage Priest (1945-1957)

Fr Ormiston came to serve as Parish Priest at Transfiguration in 1945; it was the only Catholic church here in those days. He had previously served in Homerton, Uxbridge, Perivale and Somers Town parishes.

One aspect that always intrigued me was that, in the Diocesan Year Book, he had the initials 'MC' after his name. I thought it probably stood for 'Military Cross' but, when I asked him about it, Fr Ormiston would always turn to another subject. He clearly didn't want to discuss it!

I have only recently discovered, through the kind auspices of the Diocesan Archivist (Fr Nicholas Schofield), that Walter Hugh Ormiston was indeed awarded the Military Cross in the First World War. It was for *'conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty'* near Moeuvres (Northern France) during active operations against the enemy in 1917. He would have been just 19 years of age and was serving as an officer in 13th (County of London) Battalion. The official citation for his Military Cross reads: - *'When his platoon was held up by hostile machine-gun fire he rushed forward to a gap in the wire but, being left with only five men, he withdrew and brought them safely back. Though slightly wounded and badly shaken by a bomb, he remained at his post until the battalion was relieved two days later'*.

Walter Hugh Ormiston was not then a Catholic, but he was received into the Church in 1918. He then trained for the priesthood at St Edmunds Seminary near Ware, and was ordained in 1924.

When I first attended Transfiguration in 1957, the Latin 'Tridentine' mass was still said with the priest, for most of the time, facing away from the

congregation. After the consecration, at that first mass I attended, Fr Ormiston turned to the congregation to raise the consecrated host. He looked to the back of the church where a line of men were standing. He said he would not proceed until they came to kneel in the (then) wooden pews to show proper respect for the Sacred Host. They came forward sheepishly and knelt down. Most were young Irish lads helping to build the New Town. We noticed, as time went on, that every week they would stand outside the church until a moment before mass began and then come in quickly and stand at the back. Fr Ormiston obviously did not approve of this practice. He was a strict disciplinarian in regard to behaviour in church. He would also never allow anyone to speak to him inside the church unless it was a very urgent matter such as someone dying. But outside the church, he was always most welcoming and helpful.

At the end of that first mass at Transfiguration, Fr Ormiston held up a piece of paper and said *“This is our electricity bill, but I’ve no money to pay it!”* So somebody went and got the offertory plate again and it was sent round for another collection. This was a regular feature in those days. The parish had a heavy debt from the 1937 extension, the income was very small (less than 90 parishioners) and the Diocese also demanded a substantial annual amount for the ‘Schools Fund’. The parish was broke! Fr Ormiston actually placed a regular advert in the Stevenage local paper reading ***“Can someone help use pay our debt? Contributions should be sent to the Catholic Rectory, Stevenage”***. I suspect that he did not receive many offers!

As well as his WW1 experiences on the battlefield, Fr Ormiston had lived through the worst of the bombing in central London in WW2 and had again suffered very stressful times administering to the dead and wounded civilians. He said he had been sent to Stevenage for a ‘rest’, since it was then, supposedly, a ‘peaceful country parish’. But nobody had told him of the financial problems at Transfiguration which must have given him more stress. There was no Parish Finance Committee to support the priest in those days!

By early 1958, Fr Ormiston had become quite unwell and he left suddenly to retire to a Catholic care home. Sadly, we never even had the opportunity to say to him, as a Parish, *‘Goodbye Father, and Thank-you for serving us so well’*. But I would like to do that now, retrospectively. We never heard of Fr Ormiston again. He died in June 1961 at the age of 63! His burial place is not known to me.

May his soul, and the souls of all our deceased Priests, Rest in Peace

Our Thanks to the Stevenage Community Trust

Fr Michael

Following a recent grant awarded to St Hilda's from Stevenage Community Trust, we were so pleased to install a beautiful new kitchen. St Hilda's has managed with the same kitchen for over 50 years and we now feel thoroughly spoiled! I would like to take this opportunity to thank Stevenage Community Trust for their generous contribution and for the support they provided to all those in need in Stevenage.

A Pilgrimage to Lourdes

Below are the reflections of two young altar servers from St Joseph's Parish (**Lucy Farrow and John Arceno**) on their experiences during the Diocese of Westminster's Pilgrimage to Lourdes in 2015. St Joseph's Parish supported these two young people and one of our Parishioners, Veronica Farrow, was part of the medical team that joined the Pilgrimage. She was able to observe both of the young pilgrims in action and was very impressed by both. Lucy and John are both now looking forward to returning and are already planning fundraising. They hope to take other senior altar servers with them next time.

Lacey Farrow writes:-

Working in Lourdes gave me such a vast insight into how such a large pilgrimage takes place successfully; it showed me just how much effort every member, volunteer and even pilgrims puts into the pilgrimage to make it such a joyous and life changing religious experience.

Originally, I believed the role of the 'Redcaps' was limited to pushing wheelchairs and accompanying the pilgrims to their destination for the day. This was changed completely after I was able to bond so well with my assisted pilgrim. It was amazing listening to their past experiences of the pilgrimage, learning that most of them had been numerous times; learning about the flood a few years back as well as their lives before Lourdes and the changes that it had on them. Being in Lourdes myself enabled me to have my own religious journey, teaching me so much about myself as well as clearing my thoughts and making me aware of what was really important and what I ought to do from now on.

Coming back, I have been trying harder to be selfless, caring and more willing to help people regardless of the situation. It helped me with school and education as well as my personal motivation; I want to go on and do great things so I can come back to Lourdes and use my knowledge

of both Lourdes, and what I have done back in England, to give back to the pilgrimage working in St Frai, helping the nurses and pilgrims that might need extra assistance.

“The experience changed my outlook on life and made me a more religious person. God will be there to help you so long as you’re willing to keep him close to you!”

John Arceno writes:-

Growing up as a Catholic, you are told Lourdes is the place where Mary appeared to Bernadette and today it is where millions of Catholics gather each year for a pilgrimage. Fortunately, this year Lacey and I were given the opportunity, with the amazing support of the St. Joseph’s parish, to join the Westminster Diocese’s annual pilgrimage to Lourdes. When we arrived at Stansted airport at the crack of dawn on Sunday morning, all you could see were volunteers and pilgrims smiling and laughing. My first duty as a ‘Redcap’ was to push the wheelchair of Sister Carmel. What I didn’t know was that Sister Carmel was also travelling with Cardinal Vincent Nichols. Unfortunately, in the training they give you as a Redcap, there’s no booklet on ***‘How to make small talk with the Cardinal’!*** However, the Cardinal was genuine and extremely helpful.

From the outset, Lourdes seems like an ordinary town, there are people buying and selling and people in restaurants. This is until you reach the Domain. When I took my assisted pilgrim to the Domain I was blown away. There were many people of different races, languages and cultures, which made me proud to be Catholic. The Domain is where the Grotto is located; the iconic symbol of Lourdes. ***When I touched the stone walls of the Grotto, I got chills. It felt supernatural. Before Lourdes, I was still questioning my faith; however the trip has changed the way I view my life.***

.....

A highly recommended Catholic App !

Have you tried ‘**Universalis**’ on your ipad or other tablet? It provides, the full liturgical calendar, prayers for every feast, Liturgy of the Hours, daily mass readings, the Order of the Mass, the readings at every mass and more. Cost is **£9.99** but there is a free trial period. Go to www.universalis.com

We are all familiar with the structure of the Rosary. Starting with the Apostles Creed, Our Father, three Hail Mary's, Glory Be, Our Father, ten Hail Mary's and so on. However there can be at least three interpretations for the first three Hail Mary's. Traditionally, as Catholics, we offer them for the Holy Father's intentions, but they can be offered for Faith, Hope and Love or for God the Father who made Mary, God the Son who redeemed Mary and God the Holy Spirit who was poured out upon her so that she became the greatest of God's creatures; and for Our Lady's tears.

The Hail Mary is a very ancient text, perhaps only second to the third century *prayer* – *We fly to thy Patronage O Holy Mother of God, despise not our prayers in our necessities but deliver us from all dangers, O glorious and ever blessed Virgin.*

The Hail Mary is split into two parts – praise and petition. This is the same as the intercessions for Morning and Evening Prayer. Thus Morning Prayer (praise) *You are the true light that enlightens all men, you are the glory of your church,* and Evening Prayer (petition) *unite our offerings to yours in the sacrifice of the Church, bring us now your wisdom fresh understanding and new vision.*

The first part of the Hail Mary (praise) is biblical and the second part (petition) is added by the Church. Thus: ***Hail Mary full of grace the Lord is with you*** - are the words spoken to Mary by the angel Gabriel – and ***Blessed are you among women and Blessed is the fruit of your womb*** – is the greeting to Mary from Elizabeth. They are both greetings of praise. Indeed all scholars are united that *Ave Maria* does not mean a simple 'Hi Mary' or even a polite 'good day', but should be 'Rejoice Mary' confirming the realization of God's plan for salvation. Thus the Hail Mary is not so much a devotion as an expression of faith in the Incarnation. For Mary had always been part of God's plan for salvation, had always been full of grace and the Lord had always been with her. When she conceived, and walked to see her cousin, this act is described by Blessed John Paul II as perhaps the first *Corpus Christie* procession.

The second part of the Hail Mary (petition) ***Holy Mary Mother of God,*** was finally codified at the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD. When we say Mother of God, we profess our faith that God became man without losing his divinity and that the Word of God and the Son of Mary are one and the same.

Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. I'm not sure when *pray for us sinners* was added, but it appears that *now and at the hour of our death* was added in the thirteenth century. The importance of this phrase is twofold. First the **now**. Quite often people say please pray for me almost as a casual statement. But if someone were to say please **pray for me now** there is a greater sense of urgency. Also we invoke Mary so that she is present **now** and in every moment of our life. Secondly, ***at the hour of our death.*** For now **is** the hour because we live continuously passing from this world into the next. And so every time we pray the Hail Mary we are closer to the hour of our death.

We come to the point where I believe the Rosary can be a useful method of *lectio divina*. Sometimes, the Rosary is prayed as though there is a great rush to be first. Before the mystery is announced someone is already into the Hail Mary and before the word Jesus someone else is always halfway through 'pray for us sinners'. There is often too much familiarity with the words, almost a sense of excitement "hey I know this" and no time for the mystery. For me each mystery needs to be announced slowly and should be followed by a short readings or particular intention.

There are many other means of meditation using Rosary Beads. In addition to the now traditional twenty mysteries, it is possible to use the Rosary in any form of *lectio divina* you may choose. Hugh Clarke O Carm a long time ago suggested 'The Mysteries of Spiritual Childhood' 'The Apostolic Mysteries' 'The Merciful Mysteries' and 'The Eucharistic Mysteries'.

Other examples of meditation and petition are: A Rosary for Life, Meditations for the Mentally Ill, A Rosary for Vocations and A Rosary Around Walsingham. There is the Dolour Rosary, the chaplet of Divine Mercy and the Chaplet of the Infant of Prague along with many others. The opportunities for prayer and meditation are limitless.

If you would like a copy of my rosary examples based on 'The Presentation' using existing meditations and readings from a variety of sources, please contact the Editor

.....

The Living Room

The Living Room is a Stevenage based Charity promoting access to quality treatment for those with addition issues. They also support their affected families and friends. For more information or support please contact them direct on 01438 355649.

Stevenage Haven was the initiative from local Church groups led by Chris Foster at All Saints and was started in 1980 to raise awareness of the issue of homelessness and associated problems. Under the Chairmanship of Chris Foster and with support from various agencies such as the social services, the police and Stevenage Borough Council, the Stevenage Haven opened in November 1992 as the Winter Haven. The new facility provided night shelter for a period of three months.

In 1995 the project was relocated to “The Lodge” in Frobisher Drive. The following year “Crisis” under the National Open Door Scheme provided funding for 3 years allowing the shelter to remain open through the year. Due to its residential location it continued only to offer overnight accommodation and a hot evening meal and breakfast. In 2001 core funding was provided through an initiative known as “supporting people”. A property refurbished by Stevenage Borough Council became available in Ditchmore Lane which enabled the Haven to provide daytime opening. Key workers were taken on to provide support services to address client’s issues and develop their skills. The new Hostel was opened by the Mayor of Stevenage and named Chris Foster House.

Through their dedicated team of staff, Trustees and Volunteers they operate two separate hostels, **The Haven** in Stevenage, and **The Sanctuary** in Hitchin. They also manage 11 ‘move-on’ properties, transforming the lives of around 150 people every year. The scale of their operation will be significantly increased with the recent opening of a brand new Hostel (located next to the existing premises). This wonderful new facility will provide an increased capacity from 18 beds to 40 and provide an additional move-on property. The Haven exists to provide shelter and support for single people experiencing homelessness in Stevenage and North Herts. We salute the dedication of the Staff – Trustees – Volunteers and if there is any way you can help then please make contact by ringing **01438 354884**.

And finally, please remember in your prayers, the Director, Barbara Howard and all her Team, the Trustees, the Volunteers and all the clients.

What did Adam say to his wife on 24th December? *“It’s Christmas Eve”*

Why do you never see Santa in the Lister? *He has private ‘elf care’!*

What is the favourite carol of young parents? *Silent Night!*

What carol is sung in the desert? *Camel you faithful!*

What’s the best Christmas present? *A broken drum, you can’t beat it!*

Parishioner's Local Businesses

We like to promote parishioners local businesses, where appropriate, but we cannot make any formal endorsements. Please do contact the businesses themselves for information. If you have a business you would like to advertise, please contact the Parish Office.



ASK Physio Private Physiotherapy clinic in Stevenage Old Town (near Waitrose). Chartered and HCPC registered Physiotherapists. For the treatment of aches and pains in the body. We treat a wide range of conditions. If you're not sure if we can help you, why not call for some free advice over the phone? Tel: 01438 488579 Website: www.ask-physio.co.uk

**10% off initial consultations for members of the RC Stevenage Parishes.
Please mention when booking.**



Seasons Interiors opened recently at **57 High Street**. Sited opposite Waitrose, its two floors offer a wide range of homeware, gifts and furniture. Mother and daughter owners, Caroline and Faye Cowen, pride themselves on stocking unique items at affordable prices.

Seasons aims to ensure there is something for everyone!
Come in and have a look around!

Seasons is open Mon- Sat 10.00 – 5.30 and Sundays 11.00 – 3.00



MCR Studio is a highly versatile practice based in Stevenage Old Town. Offering the following services: Architectural Design, Space Planning, Master Planning, Interior Design, Project Management, Drawings for Planning and Building Control Applications. For enquiries please call Ruth on Tel 01438 352119 Website: www.mcrstudio.co.uk

Christmas Competition for Everyone!

What do you see! Words, or Sayings, are hidden in each of these 'Dingbats' in a cryptic way. Try and interpret all 10. All correct answers will be entered in to a draw. Prize of £20.00 for first complete correct answer to be drawn on 2nd February.

Send entries with name and tel.no to your parish office by 30 Jan.

SUN
NOTHING NEW

Wolf
Wolf
Wolf
Wolf

Wolf

JOan**B**

MIND
MATTER

Aston Villa 4 - 1 Charlton
Arsenal 4 - 1 Everton
Liverpool 4 - 1 Bradford
Manchester United 4 - 1 Chelsea
Sunderland 4 - 1 Leicester

West Ham 4 - 4 Tottenham

THE COVENANT

RO **UND**

sight love
site
cite

OR QUILTS
OR QUILTS

LISTEN! WAIT!
START! STAND! JUMP!
Go! FETCH!
STOP! LOOK! SIT!

Stevenage Parishes Information

St Joseph's

Fr Michael Doherty SDS (Parish Priest)

Fr Vincent Dike (Priest in residence)

Sunday Mass: (Sat, 6pm), 10am, 12noon, 6pm

Weekday Mass: Mon, Thurs, Fri, 9.15am, Wed; 7.00pm

Holyday Mass: 9.15am

Confession: Sat. 10.00am, 5.30pm

Rosary/Benedicn Fri. 6.00pm

St Hilda's

Fr Michael Doherty SDS Parish Priest (Resident)

Sunday Mass: (Sat 6.30pm), 9.30am (sung), 11.00am

Weekday Mass: Mon, Tues, Fri, Sat 9.30am; Thu 8.0pm

Holyday Mass: 9.30am; 8pm

Exposition: Thurs 7-8pm, Fri 10-11am (with Benediction)

Confession: Sat. 10.00am, 6.00pm

Transfiguration

Fr Michael Doherty SDS (Parish Priest)

Fr Christopher Luoga SDS (Priest in residence)

Sunday Mass; (Sat 6.00pm), 11.00am

Weekday Mass: Tues, Wed, Thurs, Fri 9.30am

Holyday Mass: 9.30am

Confession: Sat. 5.15pm

Contact information

St Joseph's: Bedwell Crescent, SG1 1NJ Tel.01438 351243

Email: stevenagebedwell@rcdow.org.uk

Website: www.rcdow.org.uk/stevenage

St Hilda's: 9 Breakspear, SG2 9SQ Tel.01438 352182

Email: stevenageshephall@rcdow.org.uk

Website: www.rcdow.org.uk/stevenageshephall

Transfiguration: 4 Basils Road, SG1 3PX Tel. 01438 226857

Email: stevenageoldtown@rcdow.org.uk

Website: www.parish.rcdow.org.uk/stevenagetransfiguration