

## Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey Day 29 Lent week 5 Monday Passage 2008/2009

In December 2008 Sister Ellen completed her period as Chief Executive and took up new duties as a member of the Provincial Council of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. Sister Ellen was appointed to the board of trustees in March 2009. Following an external recruitment process, Mick Clarke was appointed as Chief Executive and took up post in January 2009. Mick wrote: -

The theme of The Passage's annual report this year is 'Taking Responsibility'.

I write this at a time of great economic uncertainty. The media is full of reports of the worst recession in years and of cuts to come. For those already marginalised and homeless, the recession makes it even harder to overcome the complex issues that they face. Charities working with those affected by homelessness find the demand for their services increasing, whilst funding decreases.

At The Passage we believe we have a responsibility to ensure that we will always be there for our clients; no matter what the economic climate. This feeling of responsibility is motivated by two driving forces: our founding values and our clients.

Our founding values demand that we work with the most vulnerable in society, treating them as individuals and with the respect and dignity they deserve, whilst finding innovative solutions to their complex needs. Our clients also inspire us by the courage they show when faced with often desperate situations, and the sheer determination they must carve out a better life.

The mission of The Passage is to provide resources which encourage, inspire and challenge homeless people to transform their lives. The challenging aspect is as important as the encouraging and inspiring. At The Passage we believe that unless you address the root causes that have led to someone becoming homeless, such as addiction issues, you will never be able to help them fully break out of the cycle of homelessness.

**Today at The Passage** we remain fully committed to these principles. As we come out of the pandemic, economic recession again threatens people with homelessness. — Through our No Night Out project we aim to avoid people spending one night out, because, even one night can have a devastating effect and make recovery and resettlement much more difficult. We will empower people to take responsibility to rebuild their lives. Can you support this initiative financially?

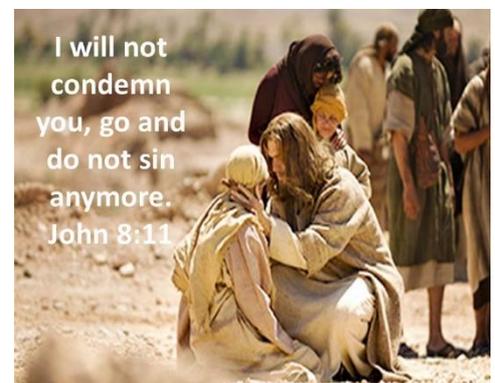
The Passage is running a campaign with the Big Give; this is an online matched giving scheme to raise the funds for No Night Out. Anything that you donate to The Passage via The Big Give website before noon on Wednesday 24 March will be doubled at no extra cost to yourself.

— Gift Aid can also apply, so a Gift of £20 is doubled to £40 and with Gift Aid a total of £45 is received. The campaign is accessed through the link <https://tinyurl.com/NoNightOut>

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.

Jesus straightened up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, sir.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.

**Lord grant us the grace of no longer accusing ourselves of sins that have been forgiven nor of condemning others for the sins that you have forgiven them. As receivers of your grace, we ask for help to be grace-givers in the week ahead. In the name of your son Jesus Christ. Amen.**



## Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey Day 30 Lent week 5 Tuesday Passage 2009/2010

This year marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of The Passage. Sister Ellen became chair of the board of trustees. A special annual report, 30 by 30 was produced. In addition to the normal reports there were entries from 30 people who had been involved in the work of The Passage: clients, trustees, staff, supporters, funders, and volunteers. Photographs were taken by thirty different photographers. There was also an exhibition of the photographs in a local gallery. All this was arranged by Chris Harlow who supported The Passage as a graphic designer for many years. Mick Clarke wrote: -

“I was 12 when The Passage was established; looking back over the subsequent 30 years I am sure you, like me, can recall many new phases, many trends, some progress and, of course, some false dawns. There is, however, something unique about The Passage; something that, despite the passage of time, has remained from that very first rallying call (made by the Daughters of Charity and Westminster Cathedral), to respond to the needs of the disadvantaged and homeless. That “something” is our values.

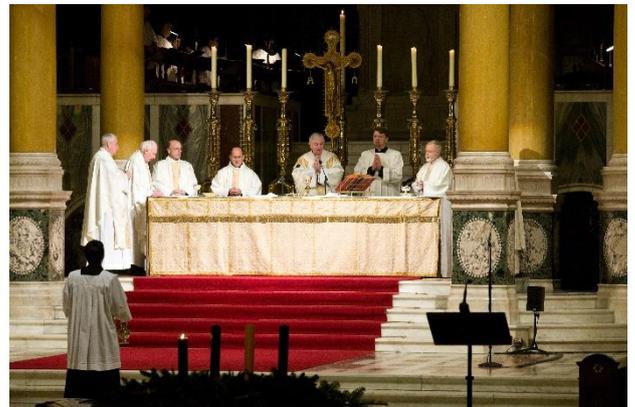
The past 30 years have brought so many challenges; none more so than the UK’s current economic situation. To ensure that it can manage each challenge, any organisation needs to be clear as to its purpose, its vision, and its mission.

For The Passage, this all comes from our founding values: transforming the lives of homeless people through Vincentian values in action. We seek to be an inclusive organisation, and to encompass a diverse and rich culture which comes from our clients, volunteers, staff, and supporters. Actively working across all aspects of society, having influence and being an advocate for homeless people, The Passage seeks to be a place of hope, aspiration, innovation, and systemic change for homeless people.”

**Today at The Passage** we continue in our 40-year tradition reflecting the more than 400-year tradition of the Vincentian Family of seeing the face of Christ in the poor. Strangely as the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary was in the shadow of a financial crash we mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the shadow of COVID.

We pray part of psalm 10 from the office of readings which has the antiphon: -

The Lord is just, he will defend the poor.



30<sup>th</sup> anniversary Mass in Westminster Cathedral

O LORD, why do you stand afar off, and hide yourself in times of distress? The poor are devoured by the pride of the wicked; they are caught in the schemes that others have made.

For the wicked boasts of his soul’s desires; the covetous blasphemes and spurns the LORD. The wicked says in his pride, “God will not punish. There is no God.” Such are his thoughts.

The eyes of the wicked keep watch for the helpless. He lurks in hiding like a lion in his lair; he lurks in hiding to seize the poor; he seizes the poor one and drags him away.

He crouches, preparing to spring, and the helpless fall prey to his strength. He says in his heart, “God forgets, he hides his face, never will he see.”

*The Lord is just, he will defend the poor.*

But you have seen the trouble and sorrow. You note it; you take it in your hands. The helpless one relies on you, for you are the helper of the orphan.

LORD, you have heard the desire of the poor. You strengthen their hearts; you turn your ear to give right judgment for the orphan and oppressed, so that no one on earth may strike terror again.

## Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey Day 31 Lent week 5 Wednesday Passage 2010/2011

The theme of the annual report was 'Do not cut here'. Against a background of public expenditure cuts and austerity, the grants from public authorities were reduced. With rising numbers of homeless people on the street, The Passage was fortunate that due to voluntary support it maintained its services.

"The contents of this report will leave you in no doubt that this has been a difficult year for The Passage, which only continues to steer its way through these times thanks to the support of all the readers of this report and many more compassionate and generous people who journey with us, and to Mick Clarke and our devoted staff and volunteers.

More importantly, however, this has been a significantly more difficult year for those living in poverty in Britain, and particularly people who are homeless. It is a great sadness in the way our society functions that, in times of economic crisis, the poorest bear greater burdens than most. One of the recognised causes of homelessness is the, sometimes sudden, loss of financial income and the rising figures of unemployment. For some, the situation appears to be heartless and hopeless.

The key words in The Passage's Mission statement - "encourage, inspire and challenge" - apply to everyone who is connected in any way with the organisation. The challenge in these dark times is for us to engage selflessly, reach out in loving compassion, call forth what is in the depth of our souls and shine like gold. Only in this way can we encourage and inspire each other. Light can shine brightly only in the dark.

Can we take this opportunity to bring out the best in ourselves and together ensure that the beacon of light continues to shine out from The Passage to all those who have need of it, and to all of us who work there and support it? Can we spend our spirit on this rather than "bemoaning these difficult times", while at the same time working to change the burdens our society places on people who are less fortunate?

These are the times we are made to live in: times of economic hardship, times of riots on our streets, times of preparation for the Olympics, times when courage pours forth from unexpected sources and people flock out in good will to clean up."

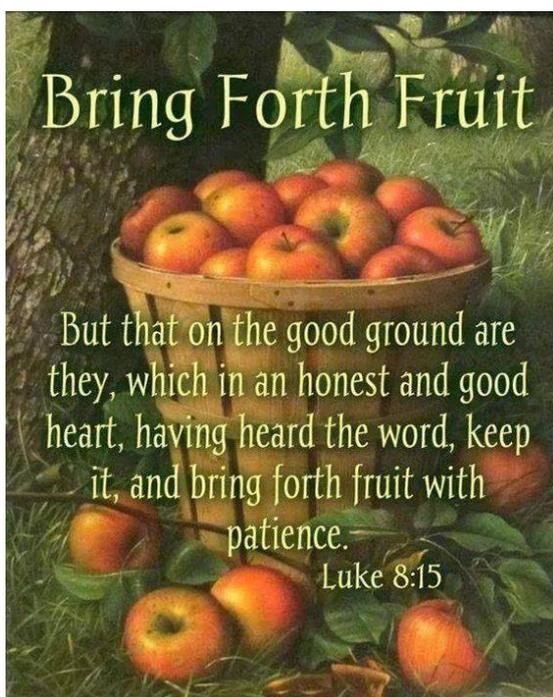
**Today at The Passage** we continue to depend on the generosity of our many supporters. To some extent for the first time in forty years we have not been in as close touch with parts of our community as we would like. Visits to parishes and schools have not been possible. Apart from

one collection in Victoria Station in October 2020 we have not seen the many friendly commuters who support us since March 2020. If you would like to be part of rebuilding community support do contact us.

**We pray Lord that your message will bear fruit in us this Lent, through prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Allow us to be a fruitful part of The Passage community being generous with our time and remembering those less fortunate than ourselves in our prayers. Amen**

The Gospel Acclamation

Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus!  
Blessed are those who,  
with a noble and generous heart,  
take the word of God to themselves  
and yield a harvest through their perseverance.  
Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus!



## Forty Years of The Passage a Lenten Journey Day 32 Lent week 5 Thursday Passage 2011/2012

2011/12 marked major building improvements to Passage House funded by a government capital grant. When Passage House was originally developed, the clients at the time had been consulted about the configuration. A number of older longer term rough sleepers wanted to move into a shared room, to some degree reminiscent of dormitory accommodation, although the large shared bedrooms were for four people each. A mixture of single rooms and 4-person shared rooms had been developed. Within ten years tastes had changed and the street outreach team had difficulty filling the shared rooms whilst the demand to move directly into a single room could not be satisfied. A major part of the improvements reconfigured the hostel as 40 individual bedrooms each with their own washbasin. Other issues that had arisen in the building over eleven years of use were addressed including improvements to the entrance. At the same time as we received a generous capital grant revenue funding from statutory sources fell by £¼million, balanced by a similar increase in voluntary donations and grants.

We reported on our work with a longer-term rough sleeper, George “As well as intervening quickly to get those arriving on the streets off them, we also never give up on those who, for complex reasons, have been homeless for some time. People like George.

George is an elderly gentleman and had been homeless for many years after losing his flat near Waterloo due to being unable to cope with everyday life and care properly for himself. This year, after many years being homeless, George will spend his first Christmas off the streets and in a Passage project.

George was well known to our street team. Due to his age and vulnerability, he has received a number of offers of care or hostel accommodation over the years. He was however unable to look beyond the possibility of moving back to ‘his’ flat and would definitely not move into a hostel. He remained street homeless, including the last two severe winters.

**Trust**, for us all, is a big thing and for George it was difficult to trust and indeed to accept help; particularly after many years of working and being able to look after himself. The Passage never gave up on George though. We were always trying to find creative ways to get him to come into the safety of one of our projects. Eventually he agreed to move into one of our residential projects that offers self-contained flats, on a trial basis. We knew that George finds it difficult to relate to new people, so our outreach worker who has known George for four years is visiting him regularly to make sure he is okay. Slowly George is learning to trust more and more, and slowly piecing his life back together in an environment that he now calls “home.”

**Today at The Passage** our Montfort House project continues to care for some of London’s longest term rough sleepers in self-contained accommodation but with 24-hour support on site.

Today 25<sup>th</sup> March the weekday is replaced with the Feast of the Annunciation. On this day, the Daughters of Charity make their annual renewal of vows. We thank God for the ministry of the Daughters and for the many sacrifices they have made without which there would be no Passage.

At the Annunciation we mark Mary’s acceptance of her mission to be the [Theotokos](#) Mother of God. Can we accept our calling to be part of The Passage’s mission to the homeless in whatever way is appropriate to us? Can we share this mission with our friends and neighbours and enable them to help too?



Mary do not be afraid; you have won God’s favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.’ Mary said to the angel, ‘But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?’ ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you’ the angel answered ‘and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so, the child will be holy and will be called Son of God.

‘I am the handmaid of the Lord,’ said Mary ‘let what you have said be done to me.’