

THE
VENERABILE
2021





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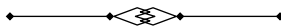
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The Venerabile **2021**

VOL. XXXVII



NO. 2

GANGEMI EDITORE[®]
INTERNATIONAL

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Publisher: Gangemi Editore SpA, Via Giulia 142, 00186 Roma

The Editorial Team welcomes articles for publication on College life past and present, the Catholic faith, the priesthood, the formation of priests, and other issues of interest to Catholics.

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Front cover: Painting of the Martyrdom of St Thomas of Canterbury in the Martyrs' Chapel of the College. Photo: Piotr Włynanski

Back cover: Palazzola

Please visit our websites: www.vecrome.org and www.palazzola.net

Printed in Italy – ISBN 978-88-492-4145-7

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Editorial

JOSEPH O'BRIEN

The last twelve months have been a strange time, to say the least. It has been said by many that language and human society are intimately linked, and one needs only to look at the jargon of the coronavirus pandemic to see how much our society has been changed and shaped over the last year. “Covid-19”, “social distancing”, “lockdowns” and “pandemics” to mention but a few. Our lives have changed drastically because of the invisible threat of Covid-19, a disease of which none of us had heard two years ago.

Our own venerable institution has had to change and to adapt dramatically in the course of the last eighteen months. The College community was lucky enough to return to Rome this past academic year and to continue its life after a break of several months referred to as the ‘Fourth College Exile’ in the previous issue of this magazine. Nevertheless, the College, like the world around it, found its life adjusted and limited because of the pandemic, in order to protect the health of its inhabitants.

Life in College, and in the Church and the world, as always, goes on. Far from being a time of complete change, the College this year has also managed to find itself rediscovering old traditions. International travel much curtailed by the pandemic, those of us unable to travel home at Christmas found ourselves celebrating the Nativity of Our Lord at Palazzola and then the feast of the patron of our College church, Saint Thomas of Canterbury, in Rome – the first time the College had done so in several decades.

This year’s issue of *The Venerabile* I see as a fruit of that dynamism: as we move forward as a society from the hardships of the pandemic and return to what might be called ‘the new normal’, the life and traditions of the Church and College can provide us with a sense of that normality for which we are all seeking. This year’s articles provide exactly that: a look at the great history and traditions of the College and perspectives old and new on the life of the community, as well as reflections on pastoral ministry and the life of the Church today.

As has become in recent years a tradition of *The Venerabile*, our opening article is a homily, taken from the College’s Mass on the aforementioned Solemnity of Saint Thomas of Canterbury. A happy coincidence it has been that this should have coincided with the 850th anniversary of Saint Thomas’ martyrdom, which has been the inspiration for this year’s cover image. Several more of this year’s articles have a certain recourse to College’s history. Our second article, the fruit of Covid-19, is a reflection given by Mgr Mark Langham for a virtual gathering of priests to mark the feast of the College Martyrs. The College was saddened to hear of Mgr Langham’s death earlier in the year, but it is my honour to be able to share his reflection in his memory. This year’s *The Venerabile* lacks a Schola or Sports Report, a sign of the continuing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Yet I hope that the publication of this issue can be another sign of hope as we move forward from another difficult year.

I am indebted to all of the contributors this year, and to all those who have helped to publish *The Venerabile 2021*, not least my team: Elliot Hanson, James Finnegan and Mathias Ledum, as well as Fr James McAuley, Academic Tutor, for all his unfailing help and support. I owe a special word of thanks also to Mgr Philip Whitmore, our out-going Rector, firstly for having entrusted me with the responsibility of being this year's Editor and also for his assistance and guidance throughout the year. I, along with the whole community, wish him the very best as he undertakes his sabbatical and prepares to return to parish ministry. A word of welcome also to Fr Stephen Wang, our new Rector, as he takes on the role of leading and guiding our community.

As we continue to overcome the coronavirus pandemic, and in whatever hardships we may have to face in the future, may we, like Saint Thomas and all those who have gone before us, continue to fight the good fight, finish the course, and keep the faith.

Our Lady, Health of the Sick, pray for us!
Saint Thomas of Canterbury, pray for us!



JOSEPH O'BRIEN is a fourth-year seminarian for the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, studying theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University.

Mgr Philip Whitmore, Rector of the Venerable English College 2013-21

FR JOHN FLYNN

Mgr Philip Whitmore leaves the College after eight happy years as Rector. The shipping costs were not high for his arrival at the start of the 2013/2014 academic year: he only had to drag his trunk and trundle his piano twenty metres into the VEC from the College flat he had occupied since his 1999 arrival in the Eternal City.



As an Official of the Congregation of Bishops (1999-2004) and then of the English Language Section in the Secretariat of State (2004-2013), Philip had already been well known to the College community. Living next door meant that he could easily pop round for Schola rehearsals (held in various places over the years between the crypt and the roof; the now-defunct music room next to the *portineria* loo was an early venue). He held the role of Schola Master from 2000 to 2013, during which time he produced a couple of CDs (*Veni, Creator Spiritus* and *Te Deum Laudamus*), thus allowing the venerable sounds of the Schola to be appreciated near and far. His ‘Saints and Singers’ (*The Venerabile* XXXII, no. 2, 2001) gives an insight into some of the musical expertise in our part of Rome over the centuries. In his own small way, as Schola Master Philip himself contributed to this history, and with much dedication and expertise. On becoming Rector, swapping Fauré for formation, Costantini for constancy and Hassler for hassle, he resigned the post and moved into Via di Monserrato, 45.

Born in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1959, Philip is proud of his northern roots. With a glint in his eye and a BBC accent, he often likes to tell men hailing from around Durham or Sunderland, “I’m more northern than you”. In 1963 his family moved to Altrincham, where he was schooled. Those years saw him as a Saturday pupil at the Junior School of the Royal Northern College of Music, where he studied piano and violin. He went up to Oxford in 1977, reading Music at Magdalen College. A year of research followed in Vienna from 1980 to 1981, where the German that he mastered would stand him in good stead for later translation work in the Roman Curia. Back in Oxford, he wrote a DPhil on ‘The Cadenza in the Classical Keyboard Concerto’, which was eventually published in 1991. He became Senior Scholar at Merton College between 1983 and 1985 and was awarded a Prize Fellowship back at Magdalen College, which he held from 1985 to 1986.

Academic accomplishments and future career possibilities notwithstanding, Philip decided to apply for the Diocese of Westminster, for which he was accepted as a seminarian at Allen Hall in the Autumn of 1986. He arrived in Rome for theology, starting at the VEC in September 1988. Various articles and diary entries in *The Venerabile* recount the extent of his stage and musical expertise as a student, at a place whose friendships and traditions he grew to love. In July 1993 he was ordained a priest in Westminster Cathedral by the late Cardinal Hume. The Cardinal asked him to be Chaplain and Precentor at

Westminster Cathedral, posts which he held until he left for the Roman Curia. Once there, he became well known for his hard work and commitment to the task. One former colleague has noted that, “*La dedicazione con la quale il Whitmore lavorava è leggendaria*”.

Philip’s twenty-two years in Rome between 1999 and 2021 have given him the right to apply for Italian citizenship, which he has duly done. In a speech to the College community marking the occasion, he wryly and amusingly noted that he was about to “swear at some bureaucrats” for the privilege. He can now enjoy a well-deserved dual citizenship and possible shorter airport queues.

Philip has been a fantastic Rector. He has sometimes remarked that there is no how-to book for the role, each incumbent having to find his own way. From the start, he wanted to get the basics right: Philip’s *spirito di impegno* impelled him to work on the College’s foundational documentation. Solid foundations make for a solid life, as the Gospels remind us. The result of these labours is plain for all to see. The College Statutes are now well established and accessible, there is a Rule of Life, and students and staff have constant access to a Formation Handbook. The Rule of Life is notoriously difficult to get amended, since it needs to pass through various degrees of officialdom at the Congregation for Clergy for an *imprimatur*, so it was important to get this one right. Philip wanted to involve the student body in its production: a mark of his catholic approach in decision-making. This meant that the Congregation eventually received a document that detailed as far as is possible what can be expected of men training to be priests in the twenty-first century. Meanwhile, the Formation Handbook is more easily changed than the Rule of Life, and it is revised each year as student cohorts come and go.

One aspect of the formation process introduced by Philip has been the Formation Tutorial. A student meets a designated member of staff about once a month in order to discuss progress. The four ‘strands’ of formation (spiritual, intellectual, human and pastoral) are discussed in these meetings, and a student is encouraged to set goals and work on various questions that his personal discernment brings to light. These meetings provide a helpful context for the Formation Tutor and student to get to know one another, and the relationship of trust that can often be established enables questions to be discussed in a safe and constructive manner. In recent years, the focus in the Formation Tutorial has very much been on helping seminarians to see themselves as “disciples” and “conformed to Christ” before engaging in a “vocational synthesis” upon leaving formation (*cf.* Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, December 2016).

Philip is known for his love for the students. Always available, he has been appreciated by many for his consistency, fairness and gentlemanly approach. With the staff, too, Philip has shown constant courtesy and encouragement. Staff meetings have been conducted with precision, depth and not a small dose of humour.

Philip’s prayer and preaching have been the engine room for his leadership: many a time he has been found alone at prayer in the College church or Martyrs’ Chapel; although it should be noted that sometimes his knack of suddenly appearing out of nowhere could startle any unsuspecting supplicant. In any case, the community has been blessed by his insights gleaned from hours in front of the Blessed Sacrament.

The re-launch of the College and Palazzola websites has taken place under Philip’s watch, and a website dedicated to the Archives has been produced in recent years. Communication among the community often takes place through digital means, and Philip has been

enthusiastic in allowing this to happen, especially since, “It is possible that my notices in the Common Room are not being read”. Lunch is now usually a community event, meaning that student presence is expected. This has helped engender a spirit of cooperation and fraternity; it has also increased the noise in the refectory, where, early in his time, Philip introduced round tables and clear glass panes for the windows. The garden has been re-ordered and re-planted under Philip’s tenure, making it a welcoming and comfortable place to recreate and pray. A splendid fresco was uncovered in 2016: a Pozzo study in perspective on the wall next to the tank which can be admired from the garden door. Philip’s enthusiasm for such projects has been enthusiastically received by the community and visitors alike since these contribute to the well-functioning routine and welcoming atmosphere at the College that he leaves behind.

Safeguarding plays an essential part in modern priestly formation, and the policies for the College and Palazzola, for which Philip has had oversight, are robust and sensible. At the time of going to press, the Catholic Standards Safeguarding Agency (CSSA) are taking over responsibility for safeguarding training at the VEC, and they act as a referral body in case of necessity.

The English College is famous for its Archives. Until recently throughout the Church, heritage matters have not been considered an integral part of the mission of seminaries in the formation of priests: as a consequence, the College Archives have not always received the support they need. That situation has now changed. Thanks to the donations of some generous benefactors, it is now becoming possible to think big in terms of developing the College’s heritage collections. It is hoped that outside scholars, students and staff will have the possibility of consulting the treasures that have hitherto been inaccessible. Philip’s role here has been essential.

In 2013, the VEC Trust had commissioned an independent report on the potential development of the Archives. Professor Maurice Whitehead of Swansea University undertook the task. After reading Maurice’s report soon after his arrival as Rector, Philip invited him to take up a three-year position as Schwarzenbach Research Fellow, from February 2015. Since then, Philip has overseen many projects relating to the Archives. A highlight has been the April 2018 exhibition, symposium and concert, ‘Memory Martyrs and Mission’, to mark the 900th anniversary of the birth of St Thomas of Canterbury, the 450th anniversary of the founding in 1568 of the English College in Douai as the first seminary for England and Wales, and the bicentenary of the re-opening of the VEC in 1818.

In 2018, Philip approved the conversion of the former College bar into the Schwarzenbach Reading Room (opened on 2 April 2019 by Urs Schwarzenbach), and the creation of new washroom, cloakroom and locker facilities, the first of their kind specifically for scholars visiting the Archives.

In 2018, the Archives’ Appeal Committee was formed, with the support of Archbishop Bernard Longley. Shortly afterwards, Philip created the North American Friends of the Venerable English College (NAFVEC), whose remit is to raise funds for the College, and particularly for the Archives.

In 2019, Philip hosted the exhibition ‘John Henry Newman: a Saint in Rome’ on behalf of the British Embassy to the Holy See, and on the occasion of Newman’s canonisation. Prince Charles’s second visit to the VEC took place over that momentous weekend (the first having been in 2017 during his tenure – and recorded in *The Venerabile* of that year).

The last eighteen months of Philip's tenure have of course been marked by the Covid-19 outbreak and subsequent pandemic. In early March 2020, when it became clear that the situation in northern Italy was getting serious, Philip took the decision – in consultation with the other members of the formation team – to allow students who wanted to go back to their home countries to do so. At the time, only Italy seemed to be affected by the virus in any serious way, so the decision may have seemed precipitate to people back home. It proved to be the correct decision, however, since with the virus spreading inexorably, borders were very soon closed, and all remaining students, along with two members of staff, had to leave a week after the initial exodus. The Rector stayed on at the College with the Vice Rector and Academic Tutor. Very soon a system of remote formation was in place, and students coped amazingly with the demands of online lectures, formation tutorials and house meetings. Philip kept everyone in the community updated with a daily email. One unhappy consequence of the virus has been the closure of the College to outside guests. We look forward to a time when guests can be welcomed back among the VEC community.

The academic year 2020/2021, meanwhile, has been a strange one in the light of the virus: various measures were put in place after painstaking investigation and discussion among staff and with outside experts. The year will of course be one to remember for the huge losses experienced by so many people. Philip's deft management of the situation has left nobody in doubt that his primary concern has been the safety of the community and its ongoing flourishing, despite the extraordinary and tragic circumstances. Hand gel, social distancing and *mascherine* have become the norm; it remains to be seen what the future holds. Members of the College community have often remarked how they have appreciated the measured manner with which protocols have been introduced. This has largely been due to the Rector's equanimity (and attention to detail) in the face of the emergency. In all, there have been three cases from the College this year, but there could easily have been more.

Another key interest of the Rector has been Palazzola. The virus – with the concomitant decline in guest numbers – has provided an opportunity to look at how Palazzola is run. We hope that as Covid-19 recedes and guest numbers pick up again, the place will build on its reputation for being a pleasant and welcome refuge for pilgrims, groups, families and individuals. We also hope to open Palazzola to the Italian market. Philip's ongoing concern for the survival and flourishing of Palazzola has been an important aid for the extensive work currently underway to make the place better than ever.

The College community is sad to see Philip leave, yet it remains immensely grateful to him for his fatherly presence and the work – often completely unseen and unrecognised – that he has carried out on behalf of so many people, starting with seminarians. We hope and pray that Our Lord will enable him to continue to enable others to see Jesus, just as his apostolic namesake wanted for so many people (*cf.* Jn 12:21-22).

Ad multos annos!



FR JOHN FLYNN is a priest of the Diocese of Salford and is Vice Rector of the Venerable English College.



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(above) The Basilica of St Francis in Assisi
(below) 'Prato della Valle'
the famous square of Padua



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Saint Thomas of Canterbury: a great College patron

A homily given in the College church

on the Solemnity of Saint Thomas of Canterbury, 2020

FR JOHN FLYNN

Two hundred and two years ago today, the VEC formally re-opened. The French had occupied the city for twenty years, famously using this church as a stall for horses. Their departure did not signal a magic moment of instantaneous rebirth for the College, nor for the English presence in Rome. The church was in a deteriorated state with the roof mostly gone, and it would not be for another 70 years that its total rebuild would be complete. But 29 December 1818 offered a glimpse of better days to come. Nine cardinals and the pope's own choir provided colour amid the gloomy surrounds of the deteriorating church. Presiding over the vicissitudes of this tumultuous period was our patron, Saint Thomas Becket. Victim of one of the most famous murders in history, he was slaughtered 850 years ago today.

Every seminary needs a patron. And while we quite rightly look to 'the 44' for our models and guides, Becket needs to get more than just a look-in. Patron of this church along with none other than the Blessed Trinity, his exalted place high above the lectern is deserved and, more to the point, of vital importance for each of us. I think there are three reasons why Thomas needs to be listened to and followed: the way he lived, the way he died and the way he is revered.

It's worth just highlighting some of the main points of this saint's life. Thomas was born in London in 1118 or 1120, not far from where Saint Thomas More would be born. He rose through the ranks of the court, becoming Henry II's chancellor. He had a large retinue and led a lavish lifestyle, famously once leading a troupe of 200 horsemen to France just to negotiate a marriage alliance. A decisive moment came in 1162 when Thomas, who was not yet a priest, was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury by the king. Henry may have thought that such an appointment would work to his advantage, but divine providence had its say, as it does in all our lives; working against the run of play, it tends to have its way in the end. And we see this in a supreme example in Thomas who, to the immense surprise and absurd irritation of the king, became a staunch defender of the rights of the Church. As a result, Henry alienated and exiled him. On his eventual return, Thomas refused to renounce his opposition to various royal infringements on ecclesiastical rights. For his pains he was brutally murdered in his own cathedral, on 29 December 1170. That a bishop should be assassinated in his own cathedral shocked the whole of Europe. A cult immediately developed, and Thomas Becket was canonised in 1173.

In the first reading we hear Saint Paul "bearing it all for the sake of those who are chosen" (2 Tim 2:10). Thomas's life can be seen in much the same way. He was no plaster-cast saint. He divided opinion in life. Was he a defender of the faith, or was he

just defending some spurious papal claims in a troubled period? Was his conversion a genuine one, or did he have something to prove? Was he a defender of the truth or just a meddlesome priest, and a traitor to boot? And yet despite what we might want to say about the details of Thomas's colourful life, in the end, here is one who, like Saint Paul, "bears it all." Puts up with it. Gets on with it. Upholds the demands of conscience and truth rather than of fashion and opinion. Saint Paul speaks about his own predicament with great lucidity: "you know my faith, my patience and my love; ... all the persecutions I have endured; and the Lord has rescued me from every one of them" (2 Tim 3:10-11). That's the point. It is tempting, precisely when things are difficult, to think that the Lord has taken a back seat while he leaves us to work out the direction of our lives on our own. But Saint Paul and Saint Thomas Becket show us that this is not the case: through our "bearing it all," Christ bears it with us. Becket was nothing if not a realist: and he could see that, by taking on the chin the attacks – in the end, quite literal attacks – that came his way, he was actually being purified for a great reward. So that's the first reason to emulate Saint Thomas: his life is a model of forbearance.

The second reason to look to Thomas, I would say, is the manner of his death. Here was a man who constantly tried to negotiate. His appointment as papal legate whilst in exile gave him the perfect opportunity for a colloquy with the king. But his appeals were never really heard. And he paid the price: while trying to get on with his priestly duties of celebrating vespers, four knights struck him down mercilessly. Sometimes, we too need to open up to negotiating with others even if we know it might cost us, if not our lives, then at least our good name. The forbearance in his life translates into the resilience with which he faced the possibility of death. It is hard to face death each day – to mortify our passions, our bad habits. But that death we have to face, with resilience, if we are to grow in virtue. May Saint Thomas's resilience in the face of his death be an example for our own daily deaths.

Finally, after forbearance and resilience, we learn another quality from this remarkable archbishop. Looking at the way his cult has developed, we learn about the necessity, sometimes, of enduring a bad reputation. Thomas has been a controversial figure ever since his death. Now, while we should not court controversy or a bad reputation, we should be indifferent to what others think of us. If Thomas in his life displayed that quality of indifference to opinion, the reputation of the man after his death has not enjoyed such a serene passage: it has undergone intense scrutiny over the centuries. Catholics and non-Catholics alike have used Becket both as their champion and as their scapegoat or whipping boy, to promote this cause or that. And I like to think that Thomas looks benignly on from his place in heaven, wondering what all the fuss is about. This great man is our great patron: his forbearance in life, his resilience in death and his indifference to reputation all offer us tools as we try to be saints in a rather confusing world.



FR JOHN FLYNN is a priest of the Diocese of Salford and is Vice Rector of the Venerable English College.

A Reflection for Martyrs' Day

MGR MARK LANGHAM

“But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. And so you will bear testimony to me. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. Everyone will hate you because of me. But not a hair of your head will perish. Stand firm, and you will win life.”
(Lk 21:12-19)

A few years ago, I attended a student production at the Corpus Playhouse here in Cambridge, entitled ‘Blame not our Author’. Set in a fantasy world of Euclidean geometry, it told the tale of a melancholic young square, Quadro, who dreams of becoming a circle. His quest takes place against a background of plotting by the dastardly Rectangulus, who seeks to subvert the realm of shapes, turning Quadro, Line and Circulus against their sovereign, Compass. As a result, geometric figures rebel against their allotted shapes, and endeavour to mutilate and disfigure themselves, in order to assume different patterns. What was compelling about this play was, clearly, not the plot, but its provenance. For it was the first performance in 400 years of a holiday entertainment written by seminarians at the English College in Rome around 1613, and as such, was a forerunner of our familiar pantomimes and College entertainments. The plot was overworked, but the language, the common tongue of English contemporaries of Shakespeare, was exquisite. Most interestingly, it provided a candid insight into the minds of early seventeenth century students at the English College.

Firstly, most obviously, their familiarity with the world of Euclid and geometry which featured large in the Jesuit-inspired curriculum of the College. But more telling were the references to religious issues which peppered the script. Quadro, seeking to be squeezed into a different shape, is bound to an instrument called the ‘Squarenighter’s daughter’ – an obvious reference to the instrument known as the ‘Scavenger’s daughter’ used to torture Catholics in England; and, in general, there is talk of stretching shapes, cutting off angles and compressing figures that can only reflect a gallows humour among students who were preparing to travel back to face torture and death in England.

At a psychological level this is one of the ways that those students dealt with their probable destinies. Yes, resolved and firm in faith, but still needing to find a

way to process it, to get their minds around what awaited them at the end of their seminary training. “They will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name.” It’s enough to make the bravest man hesitate. I’ve never been convinced by the notion that our forebears went breezily to their terrible fate. With all due respect to our protomartyr, “*potius hodie quam cras*” has all the bravado of pub talk late at night in the College bar. “You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death.” Some of you will remember Cardinal Hume, preaching at Martyrs’ Day in Rome, affirming that if a similar sacrifice were asked of us, none of us would be found wanting. There was a lot of not meeting of eyes for the remainder of Mass. I find more compelling Saint Ralph Sherwin’s letter to his uncle, written on the day he learned of his sentence, which was the day before it was carried out. It has a pensive, preoccupied quality. Firm in belief of eternal life in Christ, yes, but also aware of his own frailty and fears which he brings to the scaffold. “My sins are great, I confess, but I flee to God’s mercy... I have no boldness but in his blood,” he wrote. I find it hard to imagine that even the staunchest of those who signed the *Liber Ruber* would have been unflustered by their likely deaths and the preliminaries would not have wrung out their hearts contemplating how they should approach what was asked of them.

Today, we are also reminded of the promise of the Lord: not a hair of your head will perish. Stand firm, and you will win life. Our fears, our hesitations are to be owned with honesty, but set within the assurance of the Lord of salvation, of ultimate victory. That assurance is not the banner of the fanatic – a Covid-denier who holds to some alternate reality of invincibility – but perhaps more a ‘hanging on by the fingernails’ of faith. “Oh,” wrote Saint Ralph “that God would vouchsafe to write himself in our hearts, the dignity whereof, when I think of it, my flesh quaketh, not sustaining, by reason of mortal infirmity, the presence of my Creator’s majesty.” Our forebears assimilated Christ’s assurances of victory by acknowledging their assessments of their own fragility. They brought to their passion a genuine, guileless humanity. They were not, I would suggest, unflinching in the face of inevitable pursuit and torture, dispassionately embracing their fate. Rather, they had to work out, work through, within themselves how those fears should not cripple them, render their ministry ineffective and timorous. And they did it with honesty, neither deceiving God nor themselves. They stood before the Lord as they were.

That, I would propose, is real courage. Not to repudiate fear as weakness itself, or lack of moral fibre, or a failing in devotion to the cause – that is the badge of the fanatic. The courageous martyr owns his hesitancy and, as a result, clings – as to a life raft – to the promises of Christ. In just such a way, our Lord processed his own terrifying Passion. Just as the student dramatists made light of their destiny in order to cut their fears down to size, so the College martyrs were honest about their states of mind, struggled with their thoughts about their destiny, and as a result clung all the more tightly to the promises of Christ, their belief in their mission, and the will of God for them. That, to me, makes them truly heroic, truly Christlike, true martyrs

– a testimony that encompasses all their lives, a pattern for our smaller concerns, and a witness to our calling and our faith.

*Holy Martyrs of the Venerable English College,
in all our hesitations and anxieties,
pray for us!*

MGR MARK LANGHAM was a priest of the Archdiocese of Westminster. He was a student at the Venerable English College from 1986 to 1990. His obituary appears on page 123 of this issue of *The Venerable*.

A Tudor Quincentenary

Henry VIII's *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*, 1521, and the Venerable English College

MAURICE WHITEHEAD

What is the link between every British coin of the realm, the Venerable English College in Rome and the Royal Library at Windsor Castle?

The answer may not be immediately obvious, but lies in the title, *Fidei Defensor*, or *Defender of the Faith*, inherited by every English monarch since it was first awarded to Henry VIII by Pope Leo X on 2 October 1521. The 500th anniversary of that event is perhaps a moment to reflect on the links mentioned above.

In the aftermath of the publication in 1517 by Martin Luther of his famous 'Ninety-five Theses', an event often regarded as the beginning of the Reformation, Henry VIII of England began preparing his *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum adversus Martinum Lutherum*. Possibly written with the help of Saint Thomas More, a matter on which historians are still divided, the king's theological text re-asserted the importance of the seven sacraments and provided a rebuttal of Luther's arguments.¹

Henry VIII entrusted to John Clerk (1481/2-1541), who occupied a prominent place in English politics throughout the chancellorship of Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, a special mission to Rome: its purpose was to present a fine copy of the *Assertio* to Pope Leo X, with additional verses personally inscribed by the king.

Before setting out on his mission, John Clerk already knew Rome and Italy well. Following graduation at Cambridge in 1498, he had studied at Bologna, securing a doctorate in canon law there in 1510. He had then entered the service of Cardinal Christopher Bainbridge in Rome, residing in the English Hospice and becoming its chamberlain in 1512, and again in 1514, but returning to England after the cardinal's death in the latter year.

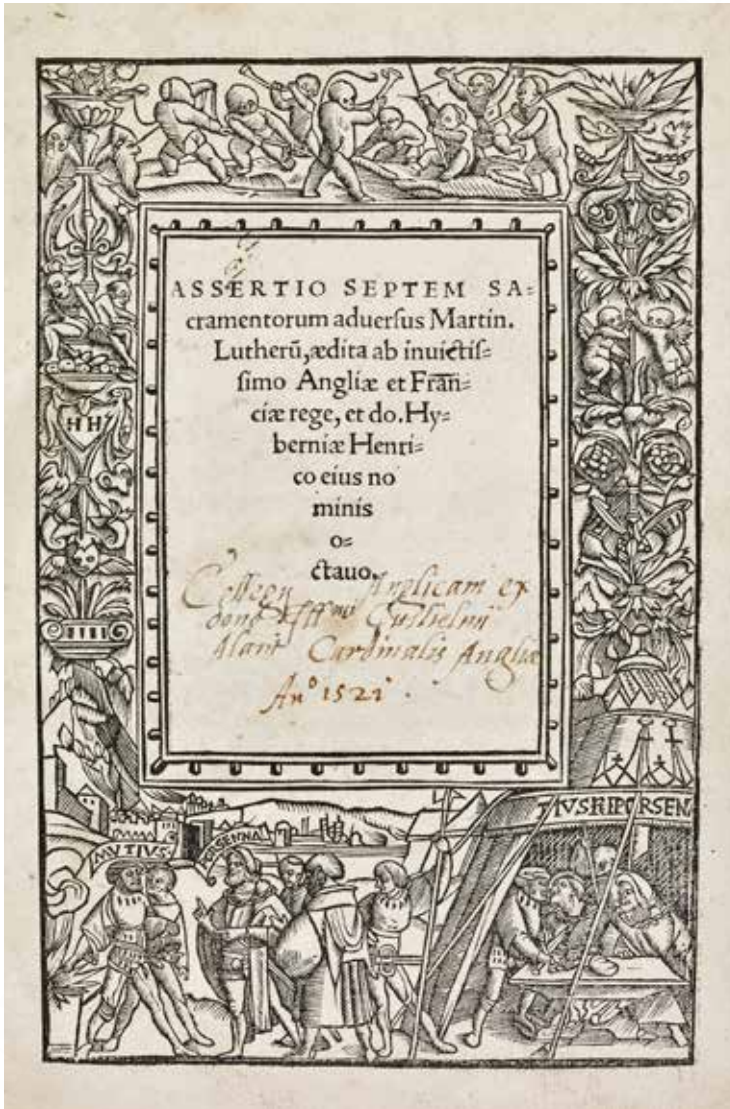
Having entered the service of Thomas Wolsey, appointed as the new English cardinal in 1515, John Clerk had thereafter received rapid promotion as dean of the Chapel Royal in 1516 and a judge in Star Chamber at Westminster in 1519. His attendance as one of the retinue of senior English clergy at the spectacular meeting between Henry VIII and the King of France, Francis I, at the Field of the Cloth of Gold near Calais in 1520, was a precursor to his Roman mission of 1521.

The *Assertio* presentation ceremony itself, held in Rome on 2 October 1521, took place at a private consistory, rather than in the glare of publicity for which John Clerk had hoped. Nevertheless, he made the best of the occasion, addressing Leo X with a lengthy oration which was subsequently printed and bound with the *Assertio* when it was generally released early the following year. For the presentation ceremony itself,

the pope was presented with a specially illuminated copy of the first edition of the book, personally signed at the end by Henry VIII.²

For his part, Leo X was so impressed by the king's argument that he rewarded Henry VIII with the title *Fidei Defensor*, and John Clerk transported from Rome to London the documentation conferring the award of that title. Though Pope Paul III subsequently rescinded the title when Henry broke with Rome, it was restored to the king by Parliament in 1544 and has been used by his successors down to the present day: the title has appeared on every English coin for the past five centuries, with the exception of the Commonwealth and Protectorate period (1649-1660).

Prior to Clerk's 1521 mission to Rome, a limited number of copies of the first



The titlepage of the copy of the Assertio presented to the Venerable English College by Cardinal William Allen, circa 1590.

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edition of the king's *Assertio* had been printed in London, with Henry VIII personally autographing some of these copies which were intended as presents for cardinals throughout Europe. Many subsequent editions were to follow.³ By the 1580s, one of the autographed copies of the first edition had come into the possession of Cardinal William Allen, who had founded the Venerable English College in 1579. In or about 1590, just a few years before his death in the College in 1594, Allen presented his copy of the work to the College Library where it survived down to the sequestration of the premises following the invasion of Rome by the French in 1798.

The titlepage of that copy is inscribed as belonging to the English College and, at the end of the volume the name of the printer and the date of publication are given as



The signature of Henry VIII within the copy of the Assertio presented to the Venerable English College by Cardinal William Allen, circa 1590. Reproduced by kind permission of the Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2021

Richard Pynson, London, 12 July 1521. Pynson (c. 1449–c. 1529), who had been born in Normandy, was the King's Printer, with premises at the Sign of the George in Fleet Street, London.

During the tumultuous events of 1798 in Rome, the volume was either looted from the College Library, or sold, and it then disappeared for nearly fifty years. In 1846, it was purchased on the book market by the wealthy Turkish-born and Lyons-based silk merchant and bibliophile, Nicolas Yemeniz (1783-1871), becoming a prized item in his renowned collection of rare books.

Soon after the fall of the short-lived Roman Republic of 1849, the British Museum dispatched to Rome, as its agent, a British dealer in rare books. His mission was to purchase a copy of the very rare first edition of the *Assertio* which was known to be on the market there, as many of the copies of the first edition which had remained in England had been destroyed at the king's orders following his break with Rome.



The front cover of the leather binding of the copy of the Assertio presented to the Venerable English College by Cardinal William Allen, circa 1590, showing the royal arms and the Tudor rose.

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Stopping off *en route* at Lyons, the dealer paid a courtesy visit to Nicolas Yemeniz, mentioning in conversation the main purpose of his mission.

To the agent's amazement, Yemeniz conjured up from his collection the Venerable English College's former copy of the *Assertio* which he had then recently purchased. Though the agent offered a large sum for the purchase of the volume for the British Museum, Yemeniz, who never sold items from his collection, politely turned down the offer.⁴

Four years prior to his death, Yemeniz disposed of his entire collection in a great auction held in Paris in 1867. His copy of the *Assertio* eventually passed into the hands of the London rare book dealer John Pearson and Company, of 5 Pall Mall Place, from whom, in 1900, the trustees of Queen Victoria purchased the volume for £600. At that juncture the historic tome, with such close links to the Crown, was added to the Royal Library at Windsor Castle where it remains to this day.⁵

The volume has been rebound over the centuries, but the central panel of the front cover is original, and the binding includes the arms of Henry VIII, the Tudor rose and the pomegranate of Catherine of Aragon.

Given its provenance, the copy of the *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum* in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle is priceless. Whoever removed the volume from the College Library, in or about 1798, clearly had a good eye for precious tomes!



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ENDNOTES

- ¹ For a modern critical edition of the text, see Pierre Fraenkel, ed., *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum adversus Martinum Lutherum* (Corpus Catholicorum 43), (Münster: Aschendorff [1992]).
- ² For digitised images of the illuminated pages of the volume, including the signature of Henry VIII, presented to Leo X and today preserved in the Vatican Apostolic Library (VcBA, 10313813), see https://digi.vatlib.it/view/STP_Membr.III.4 (this, and the URL in footnote 5 below, were accessed on 19 July 2021).
- ³ Subsequent editions included those published in Paris (1521 and 1562), London (1522, 1687, and 1688), Lyons (1561), Dublin (1766), and New York (1908).
- ⁴ *Catalogue de la bibliothèque de M. N. Yemeniz* (Paris: Bachelin-Deflorenne, 1867), 94, available digitally at: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k98213383>.
- ⁵ The volume, bearing the Royal Collection Inventory Number (RCIN) 1006836, may be viewed online at <https://www.rct.uk/search/site/1006836>. I am grateful to Stephen Patterson, CVO, formerly Head of Collections Information Management, Royal Collection, Royal Household, for help and advice in the preparation of this article, and to Karen Lawson and Daniel Partridge, respectively Picture Library Manager and Digital Imager for the Royal Collection Trust, based at St James's Palace, London, for their help in providing the photographs above.

Hidden Liturgical Books of the English College

FR ANTHONY FYK

Books are more than paper, card or vellum. They are part of a living patrimony. Books recount the events of history on a number of different levels, whether it is studying the material, font, ink and images used, or how books were printed and produced. Liturgical books give us insight into the rites, prayers and gestures used throughout the centuries. In addition, if there is an indication of any ownership and/or dedication of the books, it provides a concrete historical context of the period and history of the people who owned or used these books. The Library and the Archives of the English College are full of hidden treasures: manuscripts, books and objects. What follows is a small selection of liturgical books they currently hold.

Sarum Missal

One of the unique holdings of the Archives is a Sarum Missal dating from 1555. Properly speaking, it is called the Sarum Use of the Roman Liturgy. The Sarum Use was used in pre-Reformation England, but it also had traces of use in parts of Scotland and Ireland. It was derived from the Cathedral in Sarum, now Salisbury. Saint Osmund, the second bishop of Sarum of Norman descent, arrived in England during the Norman Conquest under William the Conqueror. He was made bishop in 1078. He is credited with the compilation of the liturgical books corresponding to the missal, breviary and ritual, which revised and fixed the Anglo-Saxon readings of the Roman Rite. This developed to become the Sarum Use, which is the Roman Rite with Norman and Celtic influences in an Anglo-Saxon context. Other major centres



The title page of the Sarum Missal from the College Archives, showing the date 1555.

in England and Wales, such as York, Lincoln, Bangor, Hereford and Durham had adapted the Roman Rite in use in Normandy to their specific context. This is a prime example of liturgical inculturation and therefore diversity in the early medieval period.¹

The edition of the Sarum Missal in the College Archives was printed in Paris in 1555. The inscription indicates it belonged to the English Clergy – *liber cleri Anglicani*. The frontal also contains an image of Saint George slaying the dragon. In addition, there are the Royal Arms of England and France and the Tudor double rose royally crowned, and the motto – *Haec rosa virtutis de caelo missa sereno. Aeternum florens regia sceptrum ferret*. In the section where the Roman Canon is located, an etching of the crucifixion and God the Father, with the symbols of the Four Evangelists, has been inserted into the Missal. This appears to be etched on vellum. This Missal was printed during the reign of Queen Mary I, when Catholicism was restored in England after the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI.

The College Archives contain evidence of the presence in the Hospice and early College of Sarum liturgical books. For example, the Hospice possessed two copies of the ‘*Sarum Legenda*’ which had been printed by William Caxton.² This English diplomat, merchant and writer introduced the printing press into England. In a cursory examination of the inventories of the Hospice and early College, there is evidence of numerous different Sarum Use liturgical books, specifically Missals, in the possession



An insert to the Roman Canon, showing etchings of the Crucifixion and God the Father.

were various liturgical books in circulation for rites reserved for bishops. Before the 10th century, numerous Sacramentaries and Roman Ordinals contained some rites. Afterwards the '*Roman-Germanic Pontifical*' and the '*Pontifical of William Durand*' became important liturgical books used by some bishops. However, it was not until Pope Clement's edition that the Latin Rite received a standard and universal book of rites reserved for a bishop. Pope Clement's Pontifical continued to be in use, with adapted variations throughout the centuries, until the Second Vatican Council, where a general renewal and reform of all the liturgical books of the Roman Rites was accomplished. Individual rites and sacraments, which are typically reserved for a bishop, were published in separate fascicles.

The book in the Archives belonged to *Ludovici Audoenis Anglis Ep. Cassanensi* (Bishop Owen Lewis of the Diocese of Cassano). On the main frontal page, it mentions that it was part of the sacristy of the English College. Lewis was an important individual in the early foundation and life of the College. Born on 27 December in 1533 in Codeon, Llangadwaladr, Anglesey, he studied at Winchester College and New College, Oxford. With the change of religion in England, he moved to Louvain and eventually become Rector of the University of Douai. He was able to get the papal licence to print the Douai Bible.⁵ Eventually making his way to Rome, he was in favour of opening a seminary in Rome, modelled after the recent seminary foundation in Douai. Working with Cardinal Allen, the English Hospice turned into a seminary to train future priests to work in England. It was Lewis who composed the College Oath taken by students going back to England.⁶ With his eagerness to implement the reforms of the Council of Trent, Cardinal Charles Borromeo took him on to be his vicar general in Milan to help implement the Council. Lewis appears along with Cardinal Borromeo and Saint Ralph Sherwin in one the lunettes at the back of the College church. After the death of Borromeo, Lewis was nominated bishop of Cassano in the Kingdom of Naples, now in Calabria. He was consecrated to the episcopacy in the chapel of the English College on 14 February 1588 by Cardinal Nicolas de Pellevé, the Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. During his episcopacy he was also appointed nuncio to Switzerland. He died on 14 October 1595 and was buried in the College chapel.⁷ The inscription on his tomb is now on the wall of the College church above the effigy of Cardinal Bainbridge.

In connection with this specific book, between September 1593 and January 1595 most of the ordinations in the College chapel were performed by Lewis.⁸ Given that this period was after the publishing of this book and before the promulgation of the Roman Pontifical of Clement VIII, it is very likely that this book may have been used in the College chapel during that period. It is amazing to speculate that this book may have been used to ordain priests who returned to England and Wales to serve Catholics during the penal period. Shortly thereafter, the Roman Pontifical replaced different variations of rites reserved for a bishop, allowing this book to remain on the shelves of the College for posterity.

Rituale Romanum

The *Roman Ritual* contains all rites outside of the Eucharistic Liturgy and the Liturgy of the Hours, such as the other sacraments, blessings and sacramentals. In a sense, it is the priest's ritual book necessary for day-to-day pastoral work. These differed from the rites used by a bishop, which are to be found in a Pontifical. Historically, when prayers and rituals were needed in administering the sacraments and sacramentals, various *libelli* were produced for specific rites, making it easy to carry out pastoral duties. Over time these *libelli* were bound together to form one book. Eventually, it was under the care of local bishops to regulate rituals or *manuale*. With the desire for liturgical

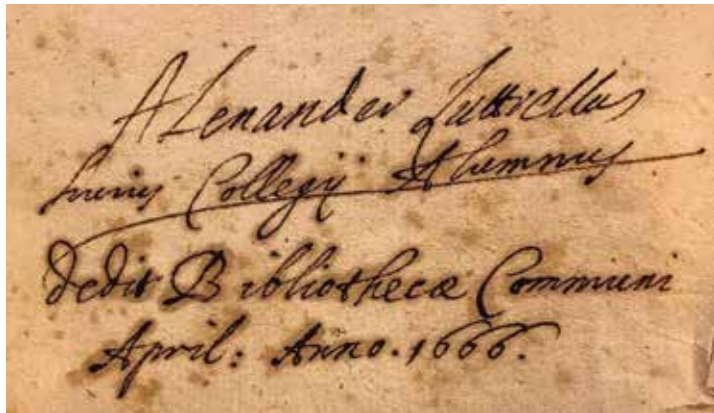


The title page of the *Rituale Romanum* of 1663 from the College Archives.

uniformity after the Council of Trent, Pope Paul V promulgated a version of the Ritual known as the *Rituale Romanum* in 1614. Interestingly, this liturgical book was never made an obligation and therefore numerous local rituals continued to be in use. With the liturgical changes after the Second Vatican Council, the Church has made use of having separate publications of fascicles.

The *Roman Ritual* in the Archives is the *Rituale Romanum* promulgated by Pope Paul V. It was printed in Venice in 1663 and it belonged to Alexander Lutterell. Information written on the end sheet mentions that Alexander was an alumnus of the College, and that it was given to the library in April 1666. The cover appears to be vellum and is slightly worn. Alexander Lutterell's real surname was Keynes, it being common in this period for the College students to use an alias.

The dedication in the end sheet showing Alexander Lutterell's name and the date of donation, 1666.

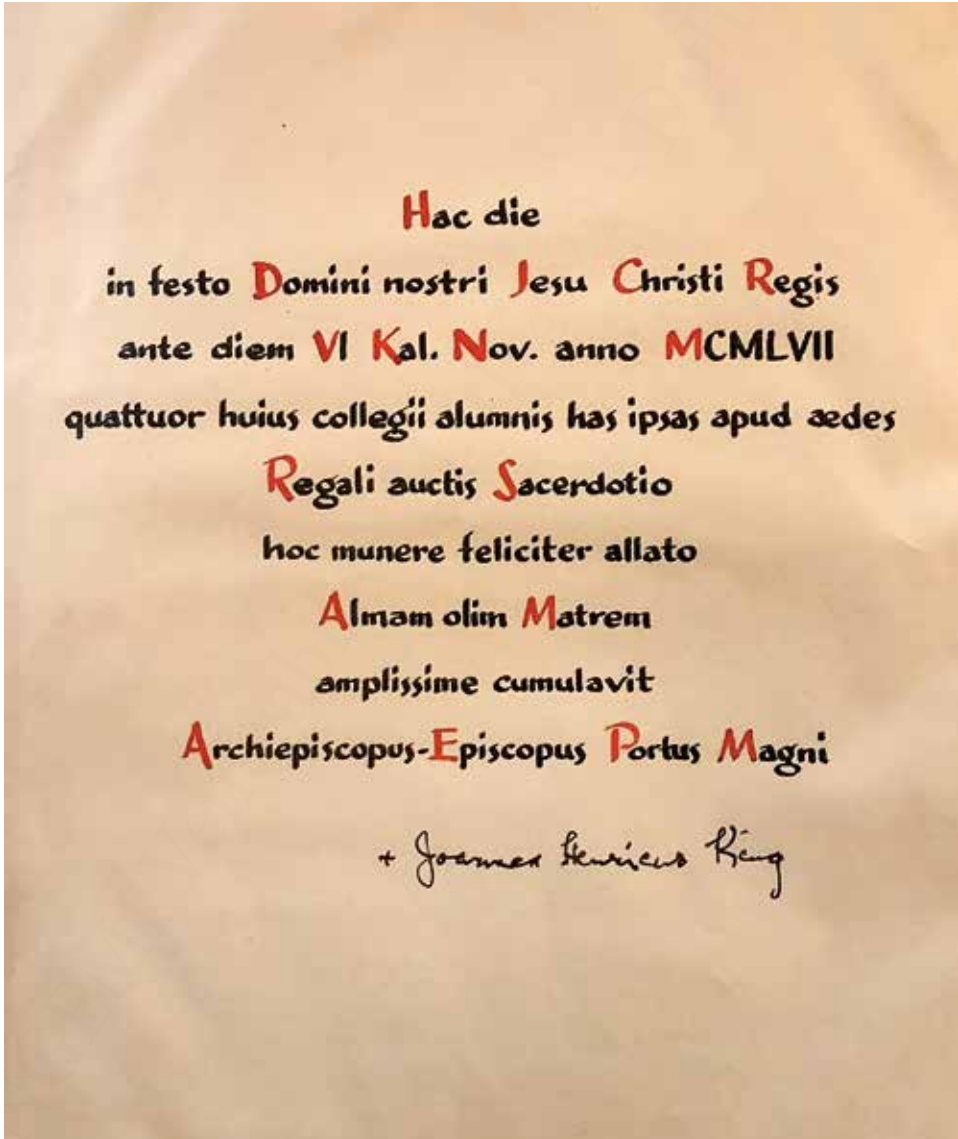


According to the *Liber Ruber*, Alexander Keynes entered the College on 17 October 1659, was ordained a priest on 4 April 1665 and left Rome on 26 April 1666.⁹ The *Responsa Scholarum* provides further details in that he was born on 11 February 1642 to noble Catholic parents in Somerset and studied humanities at Saint Omers, the Jesuit run College in Artois, France.¹⁰ His grandfather was Edward Keynes of Compton Pauncefoot.¹¹ After his time in Rome, he was the chaplain to Benedictine Nuns in Brussels. Three years later, he joined the Society of Jesus at Watten on 1 November 1669 and finally was professed on 2 February 1680.¹² He was active on the English Mission in the Eastern and Western Districts.

It is interesting to note that the liturgical rituals at the College at this period would have been exclusively in the Roman Rite. The Sarum Use most likely would not have been in use in the College after the Council of Trent and under the care of the Jesuits. It may be supposed, given the date when this book was gifted to the library, that it was gifted right before Lutterell's departure from Rome. The habit of decluttering one's possessions before one departs from Rome has continued down the centuries in order to travel lightly.

Canon Missæ ad usum Episcoporum ac Prælatorum

The *Canon Missæ* was a liturgical book used by bishops and prelates. It contains the Preparatory prayers before Mass, Prayers for vesting, the Order of the Mass, the Prefaces, the Canon of the Mass (today Eucharistic Prayer I) and Prayers after Mass. It also includes various rites found in the Roman Pontifical, including: the Consecration of a Bishop; Blessing of an Abbot; Confirmation; and Consecration of a Chalice and Paten. It was used by the bishop at his throne, at his faldstool and at the altar. The



The dedication in the front of the Canon Missæ, signed by Archbishop King.

font is usually larger than that of the Missal, making it easier to read. In addition, a candle bearer would hold a *bugia* when it was used. With the liturgical renewal following the Second Vatican Council, and subsequently, the simplification of the ceremonies for a bishop and prelate, the Roman Missal replaced the use and purpose of the *Canon Missae*.

This specific edition of the *Canon Missae* was published by the *Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis* in 1955. It received its approbation from the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, Archbishop Alfonso Carinci. There is an indication of the use of the books into the 1960s, as it includes, in handwriting, the name of Saint Joseph in the Canon (*sed et beati Ioseph eiusdem virginis sponsi*), which was included in the Roman Canon by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

This liturgical book seems to have been used as a memorial and in honour of the ordination of four students of the College to the priesthood by Archbishop King of Portsmouth on the Feast of Christ the King, 27 October 1957. They were Cyril Murtagh of the Diocese of Portsmouth, Augustine Davis and Michael Downey of the Diocese of Plymouth and Paul Moakler of the Diocese of Brentwood. During the same liturgy, some seminarians of the Pontifical Beda College were ordained to the diaconate and subdiaconate and one was tonsured. Archbishop King visited Rome from 23 to 31 October 1957 and during this time the ordinations took place in the College church. The College Diarist at the time recalls:

This ordination was a truly memorable one, for it was performed in the College church by Archbishop King. Our warmest thanks are due to the Archbishop for making this occasion possible and, we sincerely hope, for creating a precedent for future years to follow. Lunch *in famiglia* was in honour of the Archbishop, who was enthusiastically toasted during coffee and liqueurs. Replying to the toast in a most entertaining speech, he assured us that this was his last visit to Rome; but as he has said similar things on two previous occasions, we sincerely hope to see him again soon.¹³

The dedication of the book is signed by the archbishop. John Henry King was born on 16 September in 1880 in Wardour near Salisbury and was baptised the next day. His father was a tenant farmer on the Wardour estate in Wiltshire and his family had strong ties with Catholicism during the penal times. Accepted as a seminarian for the Diocese of Portsmouth, he entered the English College on 21 October 1899. He remained in Rome for five years. He always maintained that he was recalled to the diocese, as Bishop John Cahill feared him becoming a “Modernist”. He said, with a twinkle in the eyes, “I think he was probably right.”¹⁴ Ordained to the priesthood on 20 November 1904 in Jersey by Bishop Jules Prosper Paris, SJ, the Vicar Apostolic of Nanking, China, he fulfilled many roles in the Diocese of Portsmouth including Bishop’s Secretary and Vicar General. On 15 July 1938, he was consecrated Bishop of Opus and appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Portsmouth. With the death of Bishop William Cotter, Bishop King was translated to the Diocese of Portsmouth as Bishop on 14 June 1941. He led the Diocese for almost twenty-four years and died on 2 March 1965.¹⁵

This has just been a very small selection of books found in the College's Library and Archives. There are many hidden treasures waiting to be discovered. The German novelist Heinrich Mann once remarked that "a house without books is like a room without windows". The same can be said regarding the Library and Archives of the English College. A college without books is an institution without windows. These books, studied from a number of different perspectives, provide a window into the history of the book itself, the history of the content of the book, and the history of the owner or user of the book. The next time you write your name or insert a *Ex Libro* in the end pages of the book, recall that it becomes part of the living history of the book itself and will be passed down from one generation to the next.



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ENDNOTES

- ¹ For further information on the Sarum Use, see: F.T. Bergh, "Sarum Rite" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 13 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912); and P. Baxter, *Sarum Use: The Ancient Customs of Salisbury* (Salisbury: Spire Books Ltd, 2008).
- ² Cf. *The English Hospice in Rome* (Rome: Venerable English College, 2012), 309-310.
- ³ Cf. *Archivum Venerabilis Collegii Anglorum de Urbe (AVCAU)*, Liber 33, f50r, f57r, f60r, f89v.
- ⁴ Cf. *AVCAU*, Liber 17, 112v.
- ⁵ Cf. M.E. Williams, "Owen Lewis," in H.C.G Matthews – B. Harrison (eds), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (60 vols), vol. 33 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 640.
- ⁶ Cf. G. Anstruther, "Owen Lewis," in *The Venerabile XXI* (May 1962): 277-288.
- ⁷ Cf. Williams, "Owen Lewis," 640.
- ⁸ Cf. Anstruther, "Owen Lewis," 285.
- ⁹ Cf. *AVCAU*, Liber 1579, *Liber Ruber*, f.121v, n.941.
- ¹⁰ Cf. A. Kenny (ed.), *The Responsa Scholarum of the English College, Rome*, Pt II:1622-168, Newport: Publications of the Catholic Record Society (Vol. LV), 1963: 576.
- ¹¹ Cf. G. Anstruther (ed.), *The Seminary Priests* (4 vols, 1968-1977), vol 3: 1660-1715 (Great Wakering: Mayhew-McCrimmon, 1976), 122.
- ¹² Cf. H. Foley (ed.), *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus*, (7 vols, 1875-1883), vol 7 pt 1 (London: Burns and Oates, 1882), 415.
- ¹³ *The Venerabile XVIII*, no. 4 (May 1958): 238-239.
- ¹⁴ The *Liber Ruber* simply mentions "1904 Nov. 6 – *Revocatus ab Episcopo reduit in Angliam*". See *AVCAU*, Liber 1581, *Liber Ruber*, III, 1818-1919, p.313, n.1924.
- ¹⁵ Cf. *The Venerabile XXIII*. No. 2 (Summer 1965): 141-142; *AVCAU*, Liber 1581, *Liber Ruber*, III, 1818-1919, p.313, n.1924.

The Catholic Church and Same-Sex Attractions: A Radical Invitation

FR PHILIP G. BOCHANSKI

Few topics are as discussed, or as misunderstood, in the modern world as the Catholic Church's teaching about homosexuality. While priests and other pastoral ministers surely understand how important it is to "speak the truth in love" about it (*cf.* Eph 4:15), not many feel equipped to do so. Yet this type of ministry is not some unique, arcane mystery, but simply an application of the Church's pastoral approach – encompassing welcome, accompaniment and formation – to a particular set of experiences and questions that arise in the hearts of some of her members. Thus, it should not be surprising to find models for this accompaniment in the ministry of the Lord Jesus himself. One such episode may not seem precisely "on point" at first glance but has a great deal to teach about both the minister and the one ministered to: the story of the Rich Young Man, which is relayed in all three Synoptic gospels (Mt 19:16-22; Mk 10:17-31; Lk 18:18-25).

The outline of the story will be very familiar: a young man comes to Jesus and asks, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mk 10:17). He receives a simple response – "keep the commandments" – yet he presses the issue further. "I have kept all these from my youth," he says; surely, there must be something more, something specific, something daring, which is his particular path to holiness? And Jesus identifies a path for him, one tailored to his specific situation and his particular need: "you lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (v. 21). However, "at that saying his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions" (v. 22).

Nevertheless, the Gospels do not insist that the man who went away *stayed* away. While the radical invitation to voluntary poverty was too much for him to accept that day, one is free to speculate that perhaps he returned – after a few days, or weeks, or months; after conversations with family and friends – and even that he became a disciple. It is not impossible to imagine – in fact, there exist good reasons to suppose – that he became not only a disciple but an evangelist: namely, Saint Mark himself.

This is because Mark includes an important detail in his telling of this episode that Matthew and Luke leave out, and it seems that this detail must come from an eyewitness, from the rich young man himself. Before inviting the young man to radical poverty, Mark explains, "Jesus, looking upon him, loved him" (v. 21). He really saw the young man and made him feel seen. He truly knew the deep desires of the young man's heart and made him feel known. He loved that young man intimately and infinitely and made him feel loved. The invitation he extended would require heroic sacrifice, even suffering, from the young man, and was a daunting thing to consider. But in the

context of knowledge and love, one can hope that the young man was able to receive the invitation as it was intended and embrace it as a real calling, a true vocation.

The ministry of welcoming and accompanying Christians who experience same-sex attractions belongs to the whole Church and is becoming more vitally necessary with each passing day. Too often, the Church's ministers are apprehensive about this undertaking, for they realise what a radical invitation the call to chastity represents and how difficult it can be for modern people, especially young men and women, to hear and embrace this call. Thus, the encounter of Jesus and the rich young man provides an important model for people in ministry to these brothers and sisters of ours. Essentially, it teaches that a pastoral minister should not try to encompass every facet of Church teaching in one conversation, nor worry overmuch if the initial encounter ends in hesitation, scepticism or even outright rejection. Rather, he should trust in divine providence while responding to the person's good will and self-revelation with three simple truths: "I love you. I believe God has a plan for your life. I want to hear your story."

"I love you."

If one's approach to a person who is experiencing same-sex attractions begins with a recitation of commandments and expectations, the conversation is likely to be over before it begins. Likewise, if one begins by presuming that the other is "struggling with" or "suffering from" these attractions, the response is likely to be defensiveness or rejection. It is not possible to address such personal, intimate realities in a person's life without trust, and one cannot trust a person one does not know. Real accompaniment begins with welcome and encounter, and a willingness to listen carefully to a person's story. "In life, God accompanies persons, and we must accompany them, starting from their situation," Pope Francis said in 2013. "It is necessary to accompany them with mercy."

In this context of really seeing, knowing and loving the other, of listening to a person's story and taking it seriously, a pastoral minister will be able to share the rest of the story. That is, he can invite the person experiencing same-sex attractions to discipleship and holiness as a *vocation*, a real calling from the Lord. Far from discarding or repressing human emotions and desires, a real vocation fulfils them:

The Church knows that her message is in harmony with the most secret desires of the human heart when she champions the dignity of the human vocation, restoring hope to those who have already despaired to anything higher than their present lot. (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 21)

Pastoral charity calls on the minister to acknowledge that "the human person, made in the image and likeness of God, can hardly be adequately described by a reductionist reference to his or her sexual orientation.... Every person has the same fundamental identity: to be a creature and, by grace, a child of God, an heir to eternal life" (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, 1986, no. 16). When this realisation is at the heart of one's genuine welcome and

accompaniment, it conveys not only love but truth, and allows a person to understand and live his or her identity more fully.

“I believe God has a plan for your life.”

The Church’s “message” begins with her understanding of the human person, what can be called *Christian anthropology*. As the same section of *Gaudium et Spes* explains, “the truth is that only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. Jesus Christ fully reveals us to ourselves and makes our supreme calling clear” (no. 22). The elements of this anthropology are written not only in the first pages of Sacred Scripture, but in the very nature of the human body, soul, mind and heart.

“In the beginning,” God created human beings with a purpose and a plan, an ordering to their lives that is founded on a call to relationship: man “alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God’s own life. It was for this end that he was created, and this is the fundamental reason for his dignity” (*Catechism*, no. 356). Every human being is created according to this same plan and purpose.

This call to relationship is inherent in human *personhood*, since Man is created in God’s *image* and according to God’s *likeness*. “The Lord Jesus... implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons and the unity of God’s sons in truth and charity. This likeness reveals that Man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 24). Human beings are made to give themselves away in loving relationships with God and others.

The same sentence that reveals this truth likewise situates it in the context of human sexuality: “in the image of God He created them; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27). The purpose or ordering of human sexuality and all that it implies – the sexed nature of the body, complementarity of the sexes, marriage and sexual intimacy – finds its meaning in the ability and responsibility of human beings to give themselves to each other in relationship.

Sexual identity is a deliberate and purposeful gift given to each person by the Creator, not an arbitrary or socially conditioned reality. “*Being man or being woman* is a reality which is good and willed by God,” the *Catechism* explains, and so “everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his or her sexual identity” (nn. 369, 2333).

The “physical, moral and spiritual differences” that exist between men and women are *complementary*. The gifts of one correspond to the needs of the other, and this reality not only attracts a man to a woman as a source of needed good but invites him to make an offering of himself to her.

The complementarity between men and women allows the sexual union of marriage to be an image of God’s love in the world. Because they each have gifts to give and receive, their complementarity is a sign of the self-giving of the divine Persons. Because it is a total gift it must be permanent and faithful, and thus “their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves Man” (*Catechism*, no. 1604). And because their love “is intended to be fruitful” through procreation, it is a sign of the generous, life-giving love of the Creator of all (*ibid.*).

Christian moral teaching reflects this ordering of the sexual relationship of marriage: it must be permanent, faithful, complementary and open to procreation. Whenever one or more of these essential elements of properly *ordered* sexuality is missing, then the Church must judge a sexual act, desire or relationship to be *dis-ordered*. Adultery, fornication, pornography, masturbation and contraception are all considered disordered actions, and grave sins, for the same reason: they depart from the proper order of sexuality by omitting one or more of these essential elements.

The Church's definition of homosexual acts as "intrinsically disordered" and of homosexual desires as "objectively disordered," far from being discriminatory, is simply an application of the same moral principles. Homosexual acts exclude complementarity and procreativity (and are thus "disordered") by the nature of the acts themselves (hence, "intrinsically"). Desires are judged by the object of desire; since homosexual acts are always wrong, same-sex desires are objectively disordered. The Church does not use this word with the same meaning as medicine or psychology, nor does she mean that the entire person is disordered by these attractions. The Catholic Church makes an important distinction between actions and feelings and condemns no one for the experience of same-sex attractions, which are not in themselves sinful.

In light of this ordering of human sexuality, it becomes clear that homosexual acts and intimate same-sex relationships are not part of God's plan for the human person. Many in secular society, and even some in the Church, would reject the teaching at this point, claiming that it condemns people who experience same-sex attractions to a life of loneliness, isolation and misery. It is simple enough to say that God and the Church love each son or daughter, and do not wish such a life for any of them. But what, then, does the Church have to say to people of homosexual orientation? What kind of life can they hope to live as Catholics and disciples of Christ?

The beginning of an answer can be found in a somewhat unlikely place: the experience of procreation and parenthood. Every person has a deep desire to be generative, to give life. Pope Saint John Paul II insightfully noted that not only this desire, but a specific way of living it out, is engraved in the heart of every man and woman. In *Mulieris dignitatem* (1988), his encyclical letter "on the dignity and vocation of woman," Saint John Paul wrote that "motherhood is linked to the personal structure of the woman, and the personal dimension of the gift" that she makes of herself, first to her husband, and then to the child that is conceived in her womb (*cf.* no. 18). A mother, he explains, must be able to recognise the new person within her and give herself completely to the needs of that person. Thus, John Paul intuitively understands that every woman, by virtue of being a woman, must have an innate ability to love *like a mother*, and that gives her an outlook towards "not only her own child, but every human being, which profoundly marks her personality" (no. 18). Following this line of thought, there must also be a corresponding *fatherly* way of loving that characterises the heart and personality of every man.

The Church's radical invitation to a chaste life begins with a call to men to recognise their spiritual fatherhood, and a call to women to recognise their spiritual motherhood. Moreover, the Church insists that this call to spiritual paternity or maternity is not a consolation prize, but a meaningful, fruitful kind of love. It is the one gift of self that every human being is called to make, whether married or single,

consecrated or ordained: every person can be a spiritual mother or a spiritual father to someone in need, and thus fulfil the human vocation to find oneself through a sincere gift of self. This self-gift brings to fulfilment the God-given human desires to be generative, to love passionately and committedly, to be seen and accepted, to be needed, to give and to receive.

“I want to hear your story.”

When pastoral charity impels one to accompany another “starting from their situation... with mercy,” it can spark a transformation in the life of the other and in his or her self-understanding. For the pastoral minister desires, above all, to take the other person’s story seriously, to understand what the other feels, desires and thinks. The reality for many people is that being received and taken seriously in this way prompts them to take their own feelings, desires and thoughts seriously, perhaps for the first time, and to see them in a new light.

Too often, it seems, people stumble into ways of coping – of meeting needs, soothing wounds, answering questions – that give comfort and pleasure and a kind of answer, but are not healthy or moral for them. Assumptions and routines that are never questioned may never be evaluated, and never changed or exchanged for better methods of meeting God-given needs. But “strong feelings are not decisive for the morality or holiness of persons,” the *Catechism* explains (no. 1768). A life of virtue requires acknowledging and understanding the desires and feelings one experiences and choosing to act only on those desires that lead on to do good things.

In particular, the virtue of chastity “means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being” (no. 2337). Chastity does not mean repression or denial of one’s feelings. Rather, this virtue calls and guides one to understand what he is feeling in light of Christian anthropology and his true identity and vocation, and thus make good choices among desires in order to pursue and achieve integration. Real chastity leads, not to loneliness and misery, but to freedom, joy and authentic relationships.

Often, the person who experiences same-sex attractions finds the Church’s teachings unsatisfying, not because he wants too much, but because modern society has trained him to want too little. The world insists that the only “real” relationships are sexual relationships and that every strong feeling must be a sexual feeling, thus concluding that a chaste life is a life without love. But this is a serious underestimation of what love really is. The Christian knows that there are many types of love, for many types of relationships. The affection which binds one to family and childhood acquaintances; the divine love of charity that allows us to receive God’s love and love Him and others in return; the often-forgotten love of friendship – these are not pale substitutes of erotic or romantic love, but real loves in their own right. While the virtue of chastity calls a person to forego erotic sentiments and intimate actions towards someone who is not and cannot be one’s spouse, this is meant not to deprive but to liberate. The integration which keeps *eros* in its proper context frees one to make a gift of self in affection, friendship and charity with authenticity and freedom.

Helping someone to embrace chastity, of course, will often involve calling him away from unchaste relationships or behaviours. Here authentic accompaniment involves a recognition that, as the Bishops of the United States have written, “the Christian life is a progressive journey towards a deepening of one’s discipleship of Christ. People do not all move forwards at the same pace, nor do they always proceed in a direct line toward their goal” (*Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care*, 2006). It requires that one speaks honestly about the differences between friendship and *eros*, and the limits of affection and its physical expression. It means that the pastoral minister must not hesitate to affirm all that is good in a person and help him to see in himself that his identity goes much deeper than physical attractiveness or sexual availability. It obliges us to create opportunities in our parishes, schools and other institutions for people of all walks of life to understand the Church’s teaching, and each other’s experiences, more profoundly.

Above all, it means that those who serve the Church must never hide or gloss over her authentic teaching for the sake of avoiding giving offence. Truly, the invitation to chastity is a radical invitation, and not every person will be in a position to accept and embrace it, or even respond patiently to it, right away. But, as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith points out,

Departure from the Church’s teaching, or silence about it, in an effort to provide pastoral care is neither caring nor pastoral. Only what is true can ultimately be pastoral. The neglect of the Church’s position prevents homosexual men and women from receiving the care they need and deserve. An authentic pastoral program will assist homosexual persons at all levels of the spiritual life: through the sacraments, and in particular through the frequent and sincere use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, through prayer, witness, counsel and individual care. From this multi-faceted approach there are numerous advantages to be gained, not the least of which is the realisation that a homosexual person, as every human being, deeply needs to be nourished at many different levels simultaneously. (*Letter*, 1986, no. 15)

“Our hearts were burning within us as he spoke to us ...”

Another account from the Gospel illustrates the art of accompaniment in action: the story of the Road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35). On Easter Sunday afternoon, the Risen Lord encounters two disciples walking home from Jerusalem, distraught by the events of Good Friday. Rather than reveal himself in a flash of divine light, he walks alongside them, until the moment when he can invite them to share their story with him. They do so defensively at first, bewildered that he could possibly be unaware of the source of their suffering. He invites them again, with patience, to tell their story, and the whole drama emerges: expectation, disappointment, abandonment, grief, confusion, uncertainty. Having listened to their story, having taken it seriously and approached them with compassion, the Lord then offers to recount the rest of the story: the predictions and promises they had heard from Jesus but had discounted because of their limited

perspective on recent events. He takes them through the Scriptures, pointing out the plan and promises of God, and their fulfilment in the Passion, and gives them hope that their present suffering is not in vain, and that they will find joy when God keeps his promises to them. Their hearts, they admit, “did burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures” (v. 32). As a result, they invite him into their home, are refreshed by the sacraments, recognise the Risen Lord in their midst, and testify to their friends about “what had happened on the road, and how he was made known to them” (v. 35).

When one strives to welcome and accompany fellow disciples who experience same-sex attractions, the first encounter often happens at a place marked by some of the same emotions that were in the hearts of the disciples from Emmaus. Thus, one’s approach should be the same as that of the Lord Jesus: to walk alongside them, to ask them to share their stories, to listen patiently, to offer gentle reminders of God’s providence, and to lead them, step by step, to find their home in the Church, in the sacraments and in a relationship with the Risen Christ. Even with the best intentions, this radical invitation may not always be easy to accept. But when one’s commitment is to see, to know and to love the object of one’s pastoral care, “the Holy Spirit inspires one to say the right thing,” as Pope Francis said, and gives the grace that one needs to hear and embrace God’s call.



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Founded in New York City in 1980, Courage International provides pastoral care to men and women who experience same-sex attractions (through local Courage chapters) as well as parents and other family members whose loved ones identify as LGBTQ (through EnCourage chapters). More information about the apostolate, which now comprises several hundred chapters in eighteen countries, can be found online at www.couragerc.org.

A Pastoral Reflection on the Coronavirus Pandemic

ARCHBISHOP GEORGE STACK

On 23 March 2021 I was privileged to celebrate a Solemn Requiem Mass in Saint David's Cathedral in Cardiff for the 121,000 people who had died from Coronavirus over the past year. That number continues to rise, although not with the sharpness of the graph experienced in those early months. This was one of a series of Masses offered throughout England and Wales marking the first anniversary of the lockdown which has had such a profound impact on the lives of everybody throughout the country and on every institution also. The NHS has been rightly praised for the heroic efforts made to treat patients in those early days of the pandemic. Staff did so with limited equipment and even limited knowledge of how best to deal with the seemingly uncontrollable spread of the virus. Other institutions were affected, too, not least our schools. The uncertainty cast over the future of countless numbers of pupils and teachers as they tried to continue the important business of teaching and learning remains. Churches, together with all public places, were impacted also. How painful to see our places of worship closed at a time when, increasingly, people needed time and space, and at least an oasis, in which to be still in the turmoil which surrounded them. This eventually was expressed in so many 'mental health issues' in the euphemistic language of our day.

The advice of the government was stark. "Stay at home. Save lives." This seemed a clear instruction in those early days, and something which could be sustained in the short term. As the implications of the limitation of movement, and the inability to see relatives young and old became more and more obvious, the tensions within society and individuals began to grow. Painful stories emerged of families not being allowed to see their loved ones dying in hospital. Equally painful were the restrictions surrounding funerals which initially were not allowed to take place in churches. Graveside or crematorium services with limited attendance of mourners caused even more pain. The work of hospital chaplains and local priests in sustaining those who were suffering anxiety over their sick loved ones, comforting the bereaved and sustaining those who were living alone has, quite simply, been heroic.

An extraordinary revelation of the pandemic has been the levels of food poverty in the midst of our affluent society. The economic crisis caused by the pandemic has meant an increase in unemployment and the closure of many small businesses – despite the extraordinary efforts of government in furloughing staff and making grants available for certain public services. The hugely increased demand on foodbanks was merely the tip of the iceberg. The number of children depending on free school meals for their main daily nourishment was suddenly exposed whilst schools were shut. Gradually, local communities and parishes were galvanised with the distribution of free meals and food parcels by innumerable volunteers. This voluntary service gave access to many elderly, isolated people also. 'Good Neighbour' schemes became the norm.

Many dioceses and parishes realised that the concept of supermarket food vouchers

would also be a dignified and efficient way of assisting families in need. Thanks to the generosity of Local Government, Grant Making Trusts, Lenten Alms and individual donations, many thousands of pounds were allocated to this program whereby headteachers, parish priests and the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul were able to respond to the known needs of families and individuals in order to give comfort and a measure of relief with vouchers of £100, £50 or £20 to be spent at the supermarket of choice.

During those early days of the pandemic, churches remained locked. This was a cause of great pain and distress to many people – not least the priests who continued to celebrate Mass in empty churches. Gradually, the technological revolution impinged on many of the clergy who discovered the world of live-streaming. The live-streaming of Mass and other devotions has literally been a lifeline to countless numbers of people who felt cut off from the life of the Church. The testimonies received as a result of the expansion of live-streaming are a reminder that, apart from anything else, this means of communication is an extraordinary instrument of evangelisation.

The essence of our worship is nonetheless *'communio'*. The People of God are physically present to God and to each other in the re-membering of the perfect worship offered by Jesus in the sacrifice on the cross. The gradual re-opening of churches, with all the limitations imposed by social distancing, health and safety requirements and the need for volunteers to register the limited congregation demanded new organisational and financial realities as churches sought to conform to the variations of legislation as they were revealed in the latest road map out of the crisis.

The joy of Easter was compounded by the fact that, at last, we were able to gather together to celebrate a slimmed down version of the Sacred Triduum, unlike last Easter when no one was present at the rather hollow celebrations which were conducted by priests in empty churches. The Holy See and the Bishops of Conference of England and Wales distributed careful and sensitive directions as to the simplified nature of each celebration. Although limited in one sense of the word, the view of many congregations and clergy was that the simplified liturgy and, indeed, the regular offering of Mass with a small congregation, allowed the words and actions of both to speak in ways which are not always appreciated in larger gatherings.

Hopefully, we are now emerging from the restrictions imposed on us during the past year. We are blessed with the vaccination programme which has made it possible to gather together, albeit learning the lessons of behaving responsibly in large gatherings. We are well aware that the virus is still active worldwide and are concerned with the suffering still being experienced by those in other parts of the world who do not have access to the necessary vaccines which we have received. The 'new norm' will affect the international, national and local communities in the global village in which we live for many years to come.



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The Year of Saint Joseph

FR KONRAD GRECH, SJ

Topics much discussed during these last decades are masculine identity, masculine sexuality and spirituality. In these discussions, the father figure and fatherhood loom large and are central to the debate.¹

Humanity is connected to fatherhood on different levels: conception; the relationship children have with their father during their stages in life; for boys, the father's role in helping his son discover his own manhood. What about the role played by religion in presenting the father archetype? Christianity, in the person of Jesus Christ, is vocal in this regard: "anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?'" (Jn 14:9) and "because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father!'" (Gal 4:6).

Jesus humanised his Father for us. When we call a priest 'Father', it is not a meaningless title but a loaded one – it recognises the spiritual fatherhood of the ministerial priesthood as well as the attitudes, which the head of a family, a father, can adopt for his calling in raising his family.

Priests and future priests need role models of spiritual fatherhood. The more our role models are integrated in their humanity and paternal aspects of their personality, the better we ourselves grow as "father" in the ministerial priesthood. By analogy, just as a young father or husband is different from an older father in his way and manner of expression, because of age and experience, so too a seminarian, a young priest or an older one all live fatherhood differently although all share the same goal: to nurture and lead the People of God entrusted to them.

The Year of Saint Joseph

It is with this in mind that we may appreciate the year dedicated to Saint Joseph, which was inaugurated by Pope Francis on 8 December 2020 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the proclamation by Blessed Pius IX, in 1870, of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Catholic Church. After Mary, Saint Joseph is mentioned most frequently in the Magisterium, even though there is limited information about him in the Gospels. His biography, as seen in the four Gospels, is not extensive, but it is deep! It is essential because it presents Joseph's character and virtues in his role in the mystery of salvation. In the Apostolic letter *Patris Corde*,² Pope Francis writes, "the aim of this Apostolic Letter is to increase our love for this great saint, to encourage us to implore his intercession and to imitate his virtues and his zeal."³ It is an invitation to see what sort of father Saint Joseph was within the context of the mission entrusted to him by God's providence. Saint Joseph "concretely expressed his fatherhood" by making an offering of himself in love, "a love placed at the service of the Messiah who was growing to maturity in his home." In him, "Jesus saw the tender love of God," writes Pope Francis, quoting his predecessor

Pope Saint Paul VI. It is within the ordinary, hidden, daily routine that Saint Joseph lived his life and so is an inspiration for living the ordinariness of life. Saint Joseph is an intercessor in times of trouble, a reminder that those who live a hidden and unassuming life, or go about their business in the shadows, can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation. The Pope remarks that “our lives are woven together and sustained by ordinary people, people often overlooked. People who do not appear in newspaper and magazine headlines, or on the latest television show [or, it may be added, Facebook, Instagram or Twitter] yet they are shaping the decisive events of our history.”

Saint Joseph’s attributes which serve as a role model

The Apostolic letter contains seven attributes of Saint Joseph’s character which may serve as a model for seminary formation or ongoing formation in relation to the “spiritual fatherhood” which priests are called to exercise.

The first attribute is that of a beloved father. As the “legal father” of Jesus and spouse of Mary, Saint Joseph, in the words of Saint John Chrysostom, “placed himself at the service of the entire plan of salvation.” Pope Saint Paul VI pointed out that Saint Joseph concretely expressed his fatherhood,

By making his life a sacrificial service to the mystery of the Incarnation and its redemptive purpose. He employed his legal authority over the Holy Family to devote himself completely to them in his life and work. He turned his human vocation to domestic love into a superhuman oblation of himself, his heart and all his abilities, a love placed at the service of the Messiah who was growing to maturity in his home.

Saint Joseph was also a tender and loving father as he watched Jesus grow daily, as the Gospel according to Luke testifies (*cf.* Lk 2:52). Saint Joseph dealt with Jesus as God dealt with Israel: he taught him to walk, taking him by the hand; he was for him like a father who raises an infant to his cheeks, bending down to him and feeding him (*cf.* Hos 11:3-4). In showing tender love and goodness, Saint Joseph reflected this of the God of Israel (*cf.* Ps 145:9). He carried this even through his fears and life’s setbacks and tempests, because he trusted that God saw the bigger picture.

As he had done with Mary, God revealed his saving plan to Joseph. He did so by using dreams, which in the Bible and among all ancient peoples were considered a way God manifested His will. Obediently, in every situation, Joseph declared his own ‘*fiat*’, like those of Mary at the Annunciation and Jesus who, learning from the school of Joseph how to do the Father’s will, did the same in the Garden of Gethsemane. All this makes it clear that “Saint Joseph was called by God to serve the person and mission of Jesus directly through the exercise of his fatherhood” and that in this way “he cooperated in the fulness of time in the great mystery of salvation and is truly a minister of salvation.”

In accepting Mary unconditionally and placing his trust in the angel’s words regarding the origin of her condition, Joseph showed a nobility of heart such that “what he learned from the law he made dependent on charity.” Joseph appears as the figure of a

respectful and sensitive man. Even though he did not understand the bigger picture, he made a decision to protect Mary's good name, her dignity and her life. In his hesitation about how best to act, God helped him by enlightening his judgment.

The spiritual path that Joseph traces for us, therefore, is not one that *explains* but *accepts*. Only because of this acceptance, this reconciliation, can we begin to glimpse a broader history, a deeper meaning. Joseph is certainly not passively resigned, but courageously and firmly proactive. In our own lives, acceptance and welcome can be an expression of the Holy Spirit's gift of fortitude. Only the Lord can give us the strength needed to accept life as it is, with all its contradictions, frustrations and disappointments. Christian realism rejects nothing that exists. Reality, in its mysterious and irreducible complexity, is the bearer of existential meaning, with all its lights and shadows: "we know that all things work together for good, for those who love God" (Rom 8:28). Nor should we ever think that believing means finding facile and comforting solutions. The faith Christ taught us is what we see in Saint Joseph. He did not look for shortcuts but confronted reality with open eyes and accepted personal responsibility for it.

If the first stage of interior healing is to accept our personal history and embrace even the things in life that we did not choose, we must now add another important element: *creative courage*. This emerges especially in the way we deal with difficulties. In the face of difficulty, we can either give up and walk away, or somehow engage with it. At times, difficulties bring out resources we did not even think we had. Saint Joseph could be our model in this. As we read the infancy narratives, we may often wonder why God did not act in a more direct and clear way with him. Yet, we know that God acts through events and people. God acted by trusting in Joseph's creative courage. At the end of every account in which Joseph plays a role, the Gospel tells us that he gets up, takes the child and his mother, and does what God commanded him (*cf.* Mt 1:24; 2:14.21). God always finds a way to carry out his saving plan. So too our lives may at times seem to be at the mercy of the powerful, but the Gospel shows us what counts. God always finds a way to save us, provided we show the same creative courage as the "carpenter of Nazareth," who was able to turn the problems he had to face into creative possibilities, by trusting always in divine providence.

At times, God seems reluctant to answer our prayers or even to help us. This does not mean that we have been abandoned. It is through an invitation that we learn how to plan, to be creative and to find solutions ourselves whilst always trusting Him, as He trusts us to use our creative courage as Joseph used his in protecting the Holy Family.

An aspect of Saint Joseph that has been emphasised from the time of the first social encyclical, Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, is his relation to work. There is a renewed need to appreciate the importance of dignified work, of which Saint Joseph is an exemplary patron. Working persons, whatever their job may be, are cooperating with God himself, and in some way become creators of the world around us. The crisis of our time, which is economic, social, cultural and spiritual, can serve as a summons for all of us to rediscover the value, the importance and necessity of work for bringing about a new "normal" from which no one is excluded. Through dignified work carried out in the shadows, Joseph, in his relationship to Jesus, was the earthly shadow of the heavenly Father, which he faithfully reflected. He took responsibility and cared for his child, for

Jesus' life. He actively "became a father" to his adopted son: he introduced Jesus to life and its reality; he did not hold Jesus back, and he was not possessive. Joseph was chaste in all senses!

Chastity is freedom from possessiveness in every sphere of one's life. Only when love is chaste is it truly love. A possessive love ultimately becomes dangerous: it imprisons, constricts and makes for misery. God himself loved humanity with a chaste love; he left us free even to go astray and set ourselves against him. The logic of love is always the logic of freedom, and Joseph knew how to love with extraordinary freedom. He never made himself the centre of things. He did not think of himself but focused instead on the lives of Mary and Jesus.

Finally, Saint Joseph found happiness not in mere self-sacrifice but in self-gift; not in being possessive, but rather in acting as a "sign" pointing to a greater fatherhood. Our world today needs fathers like him. Every true vocation is born of the gift of oneself, which is the fruit of mature sacrifice. The priesthood and consecrated life likewise require this kind of maturity. Whatever our vocation, whether to marriage, celibacy or virginity, our gift of self will not come to fulfilment if it stops at sacrifice; were that the case, instead of becoming a sign of the beauty and joy of love, the gift of self would risk being an expression of unhappiness, sadness and frustration.

This year dedicated to Saint Joseph is an opportunity in many ways to rediscover or intensify our devotion to Jesus' foster father. In him we have a role model of what fatherhood means – its essential qualities and inspirations. In a world where authentic role models are practically non-existent, Saint Joseph encapsulates what young men seeking their identity can count on. Moreover, both those aspiring to the priesthood and well-seasoned priests can find in Saint Joseph those attitudes of mind and heart so necessary to the priesthood and good shepherding. We can all learn from him. We can also ask him, in Pope Francis' concluding reflection before the prayer to Saint Joseph, "to intercede for us to obtain the 'grace of graces': our conversion."



FR KONRAD GRECH, SJ has been Spiritual Director of the Venerable English College since September 2020.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Literature abounds, including: Guy Corneau, *Absent Fathers, Lost Sons*; James B. Nelson, *The Intimate Connection*; Daniel J. Levinson, *The Seasons of a Man's Life*.
- ² Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter, *Patris Corde*, 8 December 2020.
- ³ This article is a summary of the Apostolic Exhortation *Patris Corde* and a spiritual conference delivered at the VEC. All quotes are taken from the Apostolic Exhortation.

The English College in the 1960s

ANTHONY LAIRD

I read with interest Chris Larkman's article in last year's *The Venerabile*.¹ Chris was in the year above me in Rome, part of a very talented group which included, among others, a future Cardinal, a Rector of the Beda and a Lord Mayor of Leeds. His reminiscence reminded me that there is an even greater interval between our student days and the present than there was between the mid-60s and the beginning of the Hinsley Rectorship, often considered as a golden age in the history of the College. One afternoon Dick Ashton and I, the College archivists, asked Bishop Edward Ellis, who was staying in the College during the Council, if he would allow us to interview him about that period. He kindly did so, warts and all, and we were delighted to preserve his reminiscences in the Archives.

So, I wonder whether, though a layman, I might similarly, in old age, offer a few thoughts on College life over 50 years ago, especially since this covered a period of major change in seminary education. In his history of the College, Michael Williams succinctly lists the major features of this process, and I can add only my own juvenile impressions and a few later observations.

The most striking thing, to an 18-year-old coming from the cliquish life of a junior seminary, was how welcoming the College was, and how strong a sense of "house spirit" permeated the community, which then numbered about 80 students. Three aspects of the daily routine reinforced this. When we went to the Gregorian in the morning, the practice was to walk there with whomever was immediately in front of or behind you at the bottom of the stairs; similarly, you came home with whomever was around as you left the Greg. Most afternoons there was a compulsory walk, and the bell brought everyone down to the main corridor, where anyone could shout out a destination, and any other three might join him and set off. There was a certain degree of grouping, of course, such as the addicted smokers or the cultural 'brickers', but in principle anyone walked with anyone.

Most important of all, though, in the creation of the College community was the evening practice of 'circles', when for half an hour before night prayers everyone was obliged to go to the Common Room and join one of the half-dozen large tables surrounded by recycled cinema seats. There were no set places and the practice was to join any group, and then in turn to make space for later arrivals. I still remember how impressed I was, still a 'new man' after just 24 hours in Rome, to be welcomed to sit between two of Top Year and to join in their conversation.

Another feature of seminary life then was how young most students were. My intake of ten consisted of seven junior seminarians, two straight from school and another who had worked briefly in a bank. This was slightly unusual, since most years had one or two graduates and there was a sprinkling of men who had done National Service or had worked for a while; however, the majority of entrants in those days joined the College at the age of 18.

Yet another interesting aspect of the College was that a third or so of the community were invariably known by their nicknames. Some were amendments to their surnames,

some had been brought from junior seminary, some were descriptive, and many were of indeterminate provenance. A specimen selection from 1964 included Ichabod, Coggers, Sam, Pongo, Geist, Chiz, Ebb, Vicar, Bun, Dodo, Wubbles, Babs, Wurzel, Pump, Yogi, Wart, Strad, Larkie, Buj and Xmas. The rest of us were known by our Christian names, (even to the Staff; this was a recent innovation, as “Mr ……………” had traditionally been used). Nicknames were a dying habit, though, and I can remember very few (Crutch and Basher come to mind) used among later intakes.

A few students had private means, and one or two in each year received £100 from the Roman Scholarship, but most of us were dependent on the meagre *piccole spese* paid annually by dioceses and supplemented by occasional gifts from relatives and friends. These amounts varied considerably, but this did not matter unduly because there was not much to spend money on. We were permitted to shop for basic necessities on Thursday mornings, and there were day gitas every month or so. Some could afford to ‘slug’ expensively with a lavish lunch at a nearby town, but most either went to Palazzola or had a “hearty” hill walk with a lunch packed by the nuns; and everyone received 200 lira from the College towards bus or train fares. Most students smoked, some very heavily, but even this cost them less than might be expected because many visitors gave away their duty-free purchases. As one of the few non-smokers, I remember how pleased we were on the rare occasions when this bonanza came around as chocolates instead.

In 1964 there was no bar at the Greg, and it was officially forbidden to enter any other one. Although some did so, rule-breaking in general was at that time typically seen as “against the spirit of the house,” and so the pre-lunch prayers for the conversion of England were known as ‘starvation prayers’, taking place more than four hours after what was only a light breakfast and, for most students, without an intervening snack. There were usually four lectures in Latin of 45 minutes each on five mornings per week, and we were expected to attend all of them. Later, there evolved considerable variation in diligence about this, especially as regards minor courses and those given by the less intelligible of the professors, so that from time to time the Rector or Vice Rector would feel the need to remind us of our obligations. My recollection is that the Greg was usually a source of discontent, and I must admit both that I enjoyed very few of my courses and that in later years my own attendance fell away. I often escaped to the Archives room, and it was a delight to work far more creatively there on historical research.

The Rector (traditionally known as ‘the Boss’ and addressed as ‘Sir’; in those more robust days, ‘Father Rector’ would have been regarded as unutterably precious) was Leo Alston, for whom I had, and retain, great respect. He had assumed the post a few months before my class arrived and had the difficult task of leading the College during and immediately after the Second Vatican Council, against a background of the wider societal changes of the 1960s. A seminary structure which had varied little for decades (and, in some respects, for centuries) was challenged by new ideas as regards liturgy, spirituality, study, discipline, time-tabling, expectations and lifestyle. The overall thrust was towards a relaxation of the rules (so, for example, compulsory walks were abolished) and greater scope for personal responsibility (*camerate* were reduced to two, and eventually discontinued altogether). Thus, by 1969 students could go out alone, and in lay clothes – a situation which would have been quite unthinkable five years earlier.

There was a range of views on these matters, but overall most students supported the changes, and there was certainly a general optimism about the Council and the permanent renewal in Catholic life it was expected to bring about. I remember interminable discussion, both in the formal setting of public meetings and in daily conversations, about how priestly training should be structured, linked with a growing mockery (sometimes gentle, sometimes not) of traditional practices in general and of *Romanità* in particular. As part of this, the long summer spent at Palazzola was much debated, along with various options for more frequent return to England. My memory is that this was a more divisive issue than most others. The Rector increasingly allowed compassionate visits home, or time to spend with family in Italy, as well as assorted other reasons for absence (I remember passing much of summer 1966 near Lecco with the Consolata Fathers, who had asked the College for three competent Italian-speakers to teach English to their future missionaries). This was welcome for those concerned but meant an ever-smaller College community at the Villa, especially once a second complete summer at home was introduced after Second Theology, and numbers dropped still further.

Another change with unintended consequences was the abolition of ‘circles’ in the evening. Many had pressed for this, in order to give more time for private study or for activities such as prayer groups, greatly encouraged by the new Spiritual Director, Tom Curtis-Hayward. Both of these were undoubtedly advantages but proved to be yet another factor in the decline of the previous house spirit. Now that the former rules forbidding entry to other students’ rooms (in any case, by then frequently disregarded) had been abolished, this College-wide sense of community was increasingly replaced by coffee and/or prayer groups of just half a dozen or so members.

The dinner and supper arrangements in 1964 were as they had been from time immemorial, with seating by year seniority and with readings in Latin from a martyrology followed by a worthy book in English throughout most meals, which were perforce eaten in silence. Even when the new refectory was installed in the following year, this system did not immediately change, but soon the martyrologies were abolished, and ever more meals were “off reading” until this ceased altogether. I do not recall any opposition to this, but more controversial was the removal of a fixed seating plan. Supporters of the move made the fair point that this should ensure that the House continued to mix even after the end of compulsory walks and the decline of ‘circles’, and this was indeed the case for as long as everyone took care to sit with anyone, according to random entry into the refectory.

Over time, though, particularly as new entrants came who had not known the old spirit, this mixing slowly gave way to self-selected seating by some, though by no means all. It was nevertheless divisive, as was the decline of random pairs walking to the Greg. Many still did this, but others teamed up in their rooms and went as the same couple every time, a practice which the student body itself would never have permitted a few years before.

Study at the Gregorian did not qualify for a mandatory financial grant from a Local Education Authority (LEA), such as was automatically given to students at a British university. However, LEAs could, if they so decided, offer a discretionary award. In 1966 the Vice Rector, Jack Brewer, realised the potential benefit of this situation, and required all of us to apply. Over half were successful and were obliged to donate part of the proceeds to their diocese. Jack’s initiative was at first a wise move, but again there were unintended

consequences. Firstly, it widened the difference in wealth between students. Secondly, this grant proved beneficial for recipients who went on to ordination but contained a hidden trap for those who left formation. Greg degrees were not recognised as the basis for any career back in England, so those leaving the seminary had to start all over again as undergraduates. There were several instances of students who had received a grant in Rome being refused a second award, when it was essential for them later, and sometimes this had traumatic consequences. I well remember my own disappointment when Liverpool LEA refused me a discretionary award in Rome, followed a few years later by intense relief once I needed and obtained this financial support for a place at Oxford.

Another liberalising change in the late 1960s with damaging consequences was the blanket permission for students to eat out and return late on Thursday evenings. Again, this was generally welcomed at its introduction, but it soon became clear how divisive it was. Firstly, these groups were arranged privately, unlike the practice of posting day-trip destinations on the noticeboard and allowing anyone to sign up. Secondly, this innovation differentiated between the better-off students and the rest. It was, of course, expensive to pay for a meal out over many weeks (as well as ridiculous to do so when a perfectly good meal was available for free in the refectory) and only the wealthier members of the College could afford such a lifestyle. I remember that by 1969 it was not uncommon for only three or four tables to be eating in on Thursday evenings, and those of us doing so sometimes expressed a certain resentment towards the Lucullans.

It is interesting to see what became of the student body of that time. On page 243 in the second edition of Michael Williams' history of the College, there is a photograph of the House with the English hierarchy, taken about 1965. Altogether 77 students appear; 18 of these departed at various stages before ordination to rebuild their lives as laymen, and 59 became priests. Of those, I know of 18 who later left the active ministry, and there may well have been others. In my own year, supplemented by two who joined for theology, exactly half were ordained. Two of them have since died, two later married, and two are still in good standing, though retired. Of course, I have no way of knowing how this outcome for the mid-1960s student body compares with those at the College before or since, and it is certainly not for me to draw any conclusions. These are merely a few observations, with nearly six decades of hindsight, on the impact, not always intended, of some of the changes which took place at that time. Twenty years ago, I sent the College photocopies of my diaries, and in the unlikely event that anyone would like to read a fuller account of that period, warts and all (mostly my warts) then *rivolgersi all'archivio*.



ANTHONY LAIRD was a seminarian at the Venerable English College from 1964 to 1969.

ENDNOTES

¹ Cf. Christopher Larkman, "The College Lexicon", in *The Venerabile* XXXVII, no. 1 (2020): 36-38.

Experiences of the Anglican Exchange Programme

SION HUGHES CAREW

Climbing aboard the 'plane back in September 2020, I had no idea that I would shortly be losing my heart. The night before my flight had been a late one – a liquid lunch with clergy friends in London had flowed into a friend's leaving party, as well as my own farewell drinks – and so it was only as we soared over the Alps, gleaming in the mid-morning sun some hours later, that the reality of what I was doing really hit me. A term (not a full semester, sadly) on an exchange (of the one-way variety) at the Venerable English College in Rome beckoned, and – I mused as I sipped my second glass of champagne – I had no idea what lay ahead.

I am not usually one to step spontaneously out of my comfort zone. Reserved by nature, I am given to holding back, standing by, and not throwing myself headlong into unknown situations: I prefer the road more often travelled. Sitting in the tower of the American Cathedral in Paris just before Christmas in 2019, with my own ordination to the Diaconate in the Church of England pressing on and caught up in a swell of European excitement, I felt the time was right to put out into the deep. I sent the application for the Roman exchange to the Ministry Division of the Church of England, who would support, arrange and fund the venture, should I prove successful.

I had no premonitions. I had come to be on nodding terms with Rome through school Classics trips and work ecclesiastical law symposia. I knew next to no Italian, however, and even less about formation for ministry in the Catholic Church; about the Catholic Church at all, come to that. Comprehending at 36,000 feet that Rome generally, and the VEC in particular, was going to be my home for the next three months was something of an awakening. And I realised immediately that I hadn't packed nearly enough pairs of trousers.

It was my immense privilege, upon arriving at the College, to join a group of nine New Men – new to the VEC, if not to Rome or seminary life entirely – from various dioceses in England, Ireland, Norway and Canada. Being thrown together so intensely so early on was, for me, a great blessing. It was a levelling experience and an excellent way of getting to know each other quickly. I was moved and honoured to hear the stories of each of the New Men, whether they had come to the VEC straight from college, after time at university, or having worked or ministered in a different context. Many ordinands (for thus we who are in training and formation for ministry in the Church of England are dubbed) seem to have spent time in a 'ministry experience scheme' before beginning their college formation. Such programmes are hugely valuable, but it was a delight to hear instead about 'propaedeutic years' and 'minor seminaries'. The exchange of the oft-heard refrain "when I was a pastoral assistant..." for "when we were at Valladolid..." was most welcome.

Those early days of camaraderie and gelato helped lay foundations for the remainder of my time in Rome. It was wonderful to make connections and friendships in those first weeks

which continued throughout my time at the VEC. The arrival of the returning seminarians (not ‘Old Men’, I was pleased to discover), brought a modulation to the dynamic of the nascent community and more new friendships, as well as the opportunity to hear more about the College and life in Rome from those who had been there some time. The sense of camping out in the palazzo was dispelled at their return as the entire community reformed, once more back to full strength. Unlike my college in the UK – Westcott House in Cambridge – where a large number of ordinands live out with spouses and families, it was a particular treat to experience the whole community living and working together under one roof. This, coupled with the comparatively young age of the seminarians at the VEC, meant my experience was that of a lively, gregarious and vivacious community, where jokes, gibes, barbs and capers were rife, the corridors ringing frequently with raucous laughter. And I miss that enormously.

One of the abiding memories of my experience – perhaps the most, in fact – was how welcome I was made to feel, both by seminarians and staff. The warmth with which I was greeted, and the apparent ease with which I was integrated into the community was truly humbling and, I must confess, somewhat unexpected. I was, and remain, hugely grateful to the Rector, Mgr Whitmore, for his instruction that I behave and be treated no differently from the other students during my time in the College, in order to have as fully authentic an experience of Catholic formation as possible. As such I was counted, to all intents and purposes, as a supernumerary seminarian, rather than an ecumenical guest and this, I think, made all the difference to my experience.

It meant that I felt very much a part of the College, rather than merely an observer. Like the other New Men, I took part in the New Men’s Show, the annual ‘talent’ performance put on by the freshers to amuse, entertain and occasionally scandalise the remainder of the student body and staff. (For my act, I donned Church of England clerical choir dress and recited (no singing allowed, mercifully) a version of Cole Porter’s *Anything Goes*, which I had reworked in reference to the Church of England in all her breadth.)

I was also given a house job, which entailed spending two hours a week cutting out articles relevant to the College, or English Catholicism more generally, from *The Tablet*, the *Catholic Herald* and *L’Osservatore Romano*, and pasting these into massive scrapbooks, dating back over a century. It was through this entirely enjoyable occupation that I came into regular contact with Prof Maurice Whitehead, the College Archivist, whose conversation I enjoyed enormously, and who was kind enough to show me a number of the treasures lurking in the Archives.

Like the rest of the community, I also had academic work to do. I attended lectures at the Angelicum (in person for the most part, until the creeping restrictions required a move to online teaching), and thoroughly enjoyed (the majority of) the classes. It was fascinating, as well as very humbling, to meet and study with seminarians, clergy, religious and a substantial number of lay people from all over the world. There was perhaps rather less interaction and more purely didactic instruction than I was used to in the English academic system, which came as a surprise to begin with; but the experience was no less rich for that, some of the more animated lecturers more than making up for the lack of student participation.

While the time I spent at the University was regrettably short, and I was unable to sit the exams at the end of the semester as I had hoped (due to having to be back in the UK for the start of my penultimate academic term), I learned a huge amount there. I particularly

appreciated the Spiritual Theology and Mariology modules – topics which, sadly, we in the Church of England tend to neglect, very much to our detriment. Being taught Canon Law from a Catholic perspective was also a joy. I had studied it in the UK and had considered its relation to Anglican ecclesiastical law through the Colloquium of Anglican and Roman Catholic Canon Lawyers. But being taught it from scratch, in a way that took the Canons as a text to be venerated and the subject of exegesis, rather than cold legalistic interpretation and criticism, was truly eye-opening.

As a result of this incredible warmth, hospitality, and what felt almost like an assimilation, given our manifold similarities, it was those elements which divide my Communion from that of the Catholic Church – or perhaps prevent our communion with it, is a better way of phrasing it – which were particularly and personally painful. The sin and scandal of our separation was really and physically brought home to me every day during the Mass. Not being able to receive Holy Communion in this community of which I felt so much a part, in so many ways, was a very great sadness. Kneeling each day as the entire community filed past to receive the Sacrament was certainly a formational experience and helped very profoundly to focus my prayers.

It delights, surprises and invigorates me that both the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion are still committed to full, visible unity. Quite what any future unity looks like for our two Churches (or that of the Catholic Church with the ‘ecclesial community’ to which I belong, as one persifleur reminded me), given the profundity of what currently separates us, I do not know and cannot say. But I feel very strongly that ecumenism, like charity, begins at home; and hope most ardently that those relationships I was blessed to forge in Rome may be of some benefit across our division in the future. While it occasionally felt that my presence at the VEC was, perhaps for some members, something between an amusement and an affront, I made friendships there as strong as some which I have enjoyed for many years. Just as heart speaks unto heart, I have come to appreciate that learning is a sort of friendship – and friendship a sort of learning.

I am immensely grateful to all the staff and students of the VEC for their company, forbearance and generosity over the three months I spent with them. In losing my heart to the City of Rome, the Venerable English College and the community that dwells there, I left far richer – if somewhat heavier – than I arrived. The night before my flight had been a late one – the Feast of Saint Thomas of Canterbury, as well as my own farewell drinks – and so it was only as we soared over the Alps gleaming in the mid-morning sun some hours later, that the reality of what I was doing really hit me. Leaving behind friends and a place I had come to love almost like home, returning to an unfamiliar country, and – I mused as I sipped my second glass of champagne – I had no idea what lay ahead. Except a future burst open by possibilities.



SION HUGHES CAREW, who was then an Ordinand at Westcott House, Cambridge, spent the first term of the academic year 2020-2021 at the Venerable English College. He was ordained a deacon in the Church of England in July 2021 at Saint Bede’s, Newsham, in the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle.

News from the College Archives 2020-21

MAURICE WHITEHEAD

The Archives re-opened at the beginning of September 2020 after a five-month closure to visiting researchers, owing to the lockdown situation in Rome. From March to August 2020, the normal administrative work of the Archives had continued uninterrupted, conducted virtually from the present writer's home in Wales. During that period, work concentrated on preparing a major funding bid to a private foundation with a view to securing funding to continue the task of cataloguing the Archives.

Award of a three-year archival project development grant, 2021-23

Happily, shortly before the September 2020 re-opening, we received news that the funding bid had been successful, and that the College had secured a development grant totalling £150,000. This is to be used over a three-year period, which began in January 2021, to allow cataloguing to proceed, to initiate the digitisation of some of the more important documents in the collections, and to help foster academic links to raise the profile and standing of the Archives.

The College was able to appoint to the single archivist's post provided for by the grant, on a job-sharing basis, the wife-and-husband team of Elisabeth and Johan Ickx. Originally from Antwerp, but settled in Rome for more than thirty years, Elisabeth and Johan are both professional archivists with specialist experience of Roman ecclesiastical archives, including the archives of the Secretariat of State (Relations with States) in the Vatican, where Johan is the head archivist.

Work on the new project began on 4 January 2021 and efforts are now concentrating on the cataloguing of the *Libri*, or collection of more than 1,600 bound manuscript volumes in the Archives, which include an extensive collection of financial records.

In the first six months of the project up to July 2021, many thousands of names from the indexes to the College's account books, dating from 1579 onwards, have been added to the archival database. This work has already revealed much interesting information.

To give but one example: the account book index for 1583 includes the name of one 'Carlo Bassetto' who, unusually for the time, was a *'convictor'*, or paying boarder, as a seminarian within the College. It is only when one adds to the entry in the database the fact that this young man was, in fact, Charles Basset (1558-1584), the great-grandson of Saint Thomas More, that a fuller picture comes to light.

Basset had been arrested in London in 1581 for having aided and abetted the

earliest English Jesuit missionaries to England, Edmund Campion (1540-1581) and Robert Persons (1546-1610), the latter a future Rector of the Venerable English College. Charles Basset was admitted to the English College in Rome in November 1581 with a letter of introduction from Persons to the Rector, Fr Alfonso Agazzari, describing him as “a youth of an illustrious and wealthy family,” and the great-grandson of Sir Thomas More, with “talents, manners, virtues worthy of himself and his ancestors.”¹

Coming from this prosperous background, Charles Basset as a seminarian had the financial means to pay his way as a ‘*convictor*’, and it is for this reason that his name appears in the account book. However, his health broke down in 1583 and he moved to France, dying at Rheims the following year and bequeathing all his possessions to the Venerable English College.

It is only through such meticulous and comprehensive cataloguing that the full potential of the Archives for revealing hitherto hidden histories can be realised, and there is every hope that the current project will greatly facilitate the work of future researchers.

An unexpected drama: the collapse of Archives’ Office floor, September 2020

When the Archives re-opened in September 2020, it quickly became evident that, during the lockdown period from March 2020, while the Archives’ Office had been closed, part of the floor of the first-floor room, located immediately above the Schwarzenbach Reading Room, had sunk by several centimetres.

Building inspectors were hastily summoned. It was soon discovered that the ends of several of the joists supporting the floor had rotted through within the brick sockets of an external wall, that they were hanging on by a thread, and that there was a real danger of part of the floor collapsing into the reading room below. The verdict was that the office needed to be vacated and completely emptied, immediately. An emergency rescue operation ensued, with the contents of the office being hastily packed into cardboard boxes and the ‘engine room’ of the Archives temporarily removed to Salone Room 2.

Ten months of waiting for the authorities to grant the necessary permits for reconstruction within a historic, listed building, followed – and then the problem was resolved. Within the space of little over a month from the beginning of June 2021, an excellent team of builders removed and replaced the offending timbers, doubled the strength of the floor by adding additional joists, and completed the work to the highest of standards by early July. Thanks are due to the builders for such careful and skilful work.

Just before the work was carried out an anonymous benefactor, a member of the recently created North American Friends of the Venerable English College, generously sponsored the creation of a new first-floor stopping-place outside the Archives’ Office to be added to the existing lift serving the general area around the Archives. Thanks to this welcome improvement, books and manuscripts can now be conveyed safely and more easily on a trolley via the lift between the Schwarzenbach Reading Room, the Archives’ Office and the Archives’ storage area without any problem.

Donations of books for the archival reference library

In 2019, a British Catholic family, who also wish to remain anonymous, approached the College with the offer of the donation to the Archives' reference library of a specialist collection of several thousand books on the history of the English and Welsh Catholic community. The collection was begun in the mid-1930s and then subsequently developed and maintained. It comprises a small number of important pre-1801 titles, accompanied by a wide range of books published between the early nineteenth century and the present day: very few of the books were already to be found at the College. Owing to transportation delays caused by various lockdowns, the second and final instalment of the collection arrived in Rome in June 2021.

The College owes an enormous debt of gratitude to the donor and his family for their generosity in enhancing so considerably the Archives' reference library and for covering the considerable costs of transportation. The library could never have been developed in this way within the existing archival budget.

I am grateful to David Bench, Daniel Ebert, Elliot Hanson and Trym Hellevig for their help in the painstaking task of adding to each volume a special label commemorating the donation. The benefits accruing from this collection will be enjoyed by researchers for very many years to come.

Thanks are also due to a host of other donors who, during the past year, have made donations of individual volumes, or small groups of volumes, all of which are continually enriching our holdings and helping to create a specialist research library unparalleled elsewhere in Rome.

Virtual outreach during lockdowns

Despite the many restrictions imposed by lockdowns, the external profile of the Archives, and of the College more generally, has been enhanced, rather than diminished, over the past year largely, but not exclusively, through virtual outreach.

With scholars across the world locked down and unable to visit archives, email requests from every corner of the globe requesting information from the College Archives increased enormously from March 2020 onwards. While at times, given the volume and complexity of many of the requests, it proved difficult to answer every enquiry in the timely fashion for which we normally aim, every effort was made to maintain a high quality of service. This was done while also attending to the requests of Italian scholars who were still able to visit the Archives in person, and to use the archival reference library.

Early in 2021, Sir Christian Sweeting, president of the UK Chapter of the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums, invited the present writer to give a virtual presentation entitled 'Unlocking a Hidden Heritage: Developing the Historical Collections of the Venerable English College, Rome'. Given on 3 March 2021, this formed part of a prestigious series of virtual presentations organised by the Patrons and hosted by Durham University: an earlier presentation had featured Dr Barbara Jatta, Director of the Vatican Museums, and Dr Gabriele Maria Finaldi, Director of the National Gallery in London.

The event itself attracted an international audience of over 300 viewers online, many of them members of American Chapters of the Patrons, with a further 150 people registered to view a recording subsequently made available. The talk generated a good deal of interest and ensuing email enquiries from all parts of the world on points raised during the talk kept the speaker busy for some days afterwards!

A presentation given on 20 May 2021 by Emma Wall, the Durham University PhD student featured in last year's issue of *The Venerabile*, who had spent a semester as an intern in the College Archives until just before the lockdown in Italy in March 2020, met with similar success. Emma's paper, entitled 'Disease Management in an International Context: The Venerable English College and the 1656-57 Plague Epidemic in Rome', formed part of a virtual international symposium. This was hosted by DePaul University, Chicago, and was entitled "*A fame, peste et bello, libera nos, Domine*": Religious Orders, Public Health, and Disease'.

In her presentation, Emma analysed the ways in which the English Jesuit administrators of the College managed, with great skill and efficiency, the major plague which struck Rome in 1656-57, causing periods of lockdown. She also revealed how they observed the protocols demanded by the *Congregazione della sanità*, the papal health board responsible for public health in Rome, while also creating their own strict protocols within the College itself.

Emma's paper drew on the wealth of evidence concerning the 1656-57 plague epidemic surviving in the College Archives, particularly in the account books and receipts' files, none of which had previously been mined by scholars and all of which Emma had uncovered through diligent research. We look forward to seeing the fruits of her research in print in due course and to learning more about the ways in which the College weathered a major and prolonged health challenge some 365 years ago.

Publications

During the year, two books closely associated with the Archives have been published.

The first, *Memory, Martyrs, and Mission: Essays to Commemorate the 850th Anniversary of the Martyrdom of St Thomas Becket (c. 1118-1170)* (Rome: Gangemi, 2020), edited by the present writer, was published in hard copy but is also available as the College's first downloadable e-book at: www.vecrome.org/college-life/publications.

The second publication, by John Francis Allen, *The Palazzola Story: 1920-2020* (Bengaluru: ATC Publishers, 2020), commemorating the purchase of the property at Palazzola in 1920, is the fruit of the extensive research conducted by Mgr John Allen, of the Diocese of Salford, in the College Archives during the autumn of 2019.

Thanks and acknowledgements

None of the work outlined above could have been achieved during such a challenging year without the help and support of many people.

I am indebted to Sion Hughes Carew, the College's Anglican Exchange student during the first semester of 2020-21, and to William Meehan and Torbjørn Holt for

maintaining the College scrapbooks in the Third Library; to Joachim Teigen and Torbjørn Holt, as Student Archivists, for ensuring that the *Liber Ruber* was kept up-to-date and data accurately recorded in registrars' ink; to Anthony Fyk for sterling work in helping to re-arrange the rarest books in the College collections, housed in the Rare Book Room; and to Emanuela Piacentini in the Finance Office and to Fr John Flynn, the Vice Rector, for managing the complex arrangements for the reconstruction of the Archives' Office floor.

Thanks are also due to a multitude of donors who have generously helped to enhance the work of the Archives through gifts of books or by means of financial support. Last, but not least, my thanks are due to the Rector, Mgr Philip Whitmore, for all his help and encouragement during a very challenging year.



MAURICE WHITEHEAD is Research Fellow and Director of Heritage Collections at the Venerable English College, Rome. He is also Research Fellow at the British School at Rome, Honorary Professorial Fellow in Catholic Studies in the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University, and Emeritus Professor of History at Swansea University.

ENDNOTES

¹ Letter of Fr Robert Persons, SJ, to Fr Alfonso Agazzari, Rector of the Venerable English College, 30 August 1581, reproduced in Leo Hicks (ed.), *Letters and Memorials of Father Robert Persons, SJ: Vol 1 (to 1588)*, (London: Catholic Record Society, 1942), 91.

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The Year in Pictures

JOSEPH O'BRIEN



Benvenuti! We welcomed 10 new members to our community this year. From left to right: John O'Laverty (Down and Connor), Jonathan Henry (Birmingham), Benjamin Sinclair (Hexham and Newcastle), Sion Hughes Carew (Anglican Exchange), Ryan Hawkes (Portsmouth), Torbjørn Holt (Oslo), Mark O'Farrell (Waterford and Lismore), Jack Ryan (Portsmouth), William Meehan (Hamilton) and David Ottersen (Oslo).



Fr Rector, masked and using a napkin to protect himself from the potentially Covid-ridden microphone, welcomes to Rome our New Men at the beginning of the New Men's Evening.



Members of the community were clearly thrilled to be back to the delights of Italian cuisine.



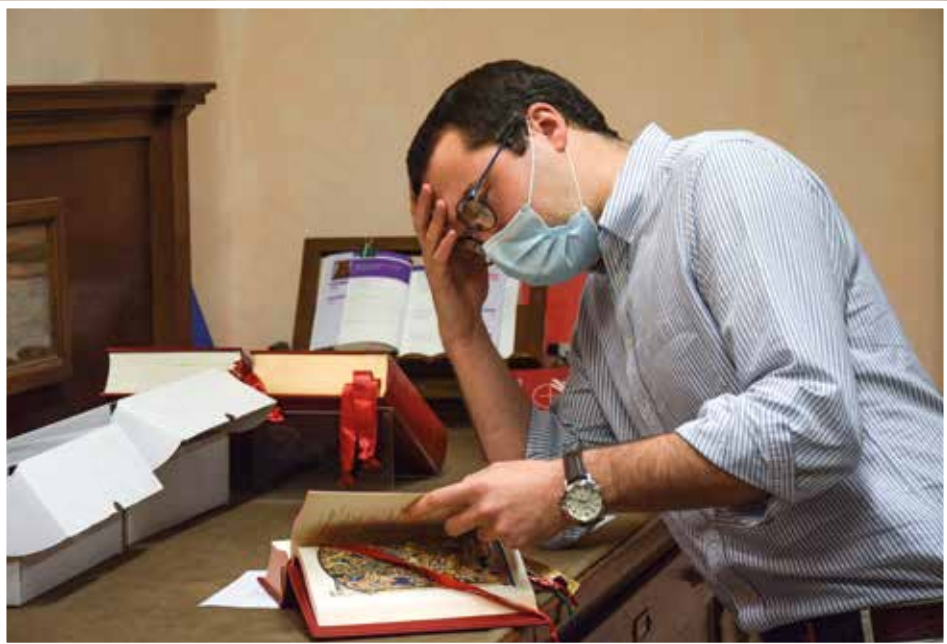
After dinner, the New Men took to the stage to entertain their brothers in the traditional rite of passage which marks their transition from 'New Men' to fully fledged members of the community.



Even with the requisite Covid measures, the New Men look proud of themselves... and so they should be. Well done!



Preparations begin for Martyrs' Day...



...which take their toll on some members of the community more than others.



Fr Rector presides at Mass for the Solemnity.



Even a pandemic cannot stop the College having a noble celebration of its martyrs, although Covid restrictions mean the cantors leading the music must be socially distanced and wear masks.



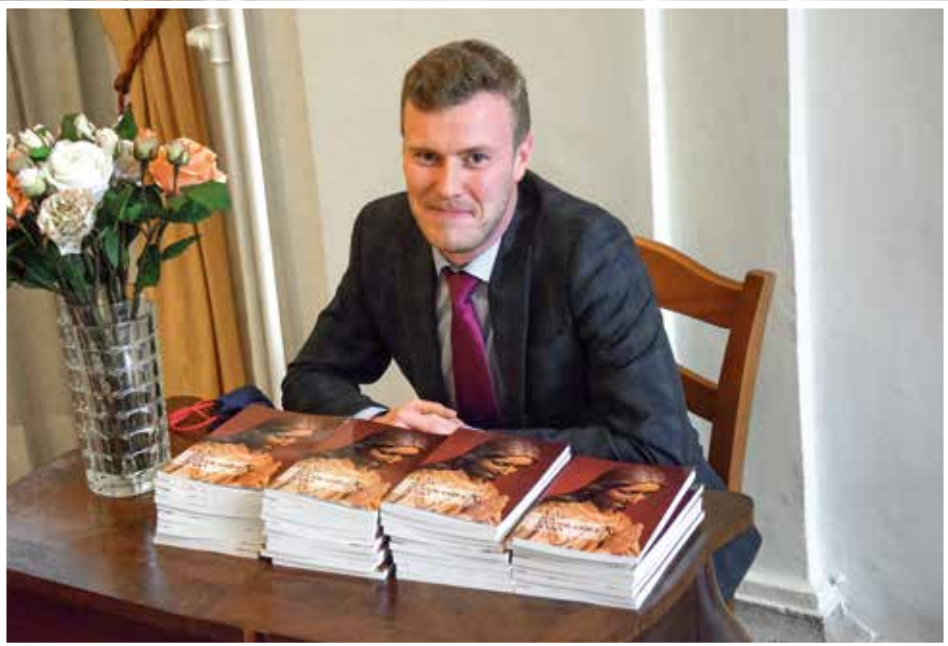
Nor are the priests immune from restrictions! Here, Fr Konrad shows off one of his liturgical mask collection.



Adapted because of the pandemic, this year's live-streamed Veneration of the Relic, led by Fr Rector, featured contactless veneration.



Members of the Common Room Team, Joseph O'Brien and Viktor Torres Airava, made their contribution to the day's Covid-security by wearing masks and gloves as they distribute drinks before lunch.



Editor Joachim Teigen looks proud as punch as he launches The Venerable 2020 after Martyrs' Day lunch.



Archbishop Arthur Roche presided at Mass with Admission to Candidacy. Congratulations Elliot Hanson and John O'Lavery!



On Gaudete Sunday, Archbishop Paul Gallagher conferred the Ministry of Lector on Viktor Torres Airava and Joseph O'Brien.



The customary post-ministry meal this year also marked the end of the College first term, to allow those students returning home to fulfil quarantine obligations in time for Christmas.



Fr Rector presides at Midnight Mass at Palazzola, beginning the Christmas celebrations for those of the community who remained in Italy...

...after which, a reception awaited, including Christmas cakes baked and decorated by Theo Sharrock.



Fr Alex Balzanella, Joachim Teigen and John O'Laverty celebrate the Nativity at the reception after Midnight Mass. The community was joined for Christmas at the Villa by many friends old and new who were likewise spending Christmas in Rome.

The community enjoys a traditional Norwegian meal on New Year's Eve, kindly prepared by Joachim Teigen and Trym Hellevig.





Covid regulations limiting travel between regions made trips away after February exams more difficult than usual. Some opted to visit local agriturismo instead...



...while others stayed closer to home, making the most of some of Rome's beautiful but lesser-known churches. Here, Fr Piotr Wygnanski celebrates Mass in the church of San Marco al Campidoglio.



Holy Thursday, and the community gathers in the Martyrs' Chapel after the Mass of the Lord's Supper to watch and to pray before the Altar of Repose.



Easter begins with the Easter Vigil, presided at by Fr Rector.



The College church bedecked with flowers for the celebration of Mass on Easter Day. Surrexit Dominus vere, alleluia!

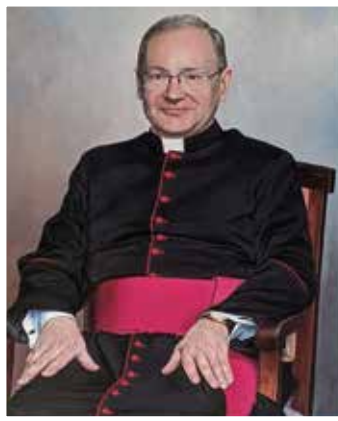
His Eminence, George Cardinal Pell presided at Mass for the College on the Solemnity of St George.



Cardinal Pell joined the community after Mass for supper and then for community night in the bar.

The first of several sends-off for Fr Rector, this one coinciding with the annual summer barbecue, hosted by the students.





The newly unveiled portrait of Mgr Whitmore in the library.



The College moves to Palazzola for Villeggiatura, which began with the conferral of the Ministry of Lector by Archbishop Arthur Roche on William Meehan, Mathias Ledum and Ryan Browne.

The Villeggiatura having been shortened to allow students time to quarantine upon return to their home countries, the following day saw Archbishop Paul Gallagher confer the Ministry of Acolyte on David Bench, Joseph O'Brien, William Meehan, Martin Fyles, James Finnegan and Mark O'Farrell.



Bishop Paul Tighe and our newly admitted Candidates: Marc Pitson, Trym Hellevig, Edward Hauschild, Theodore Sharrock and Joachim Teigen.



The Villeggiatura, and thus the College's year, draws to a close with the ordination of three new deacons: John O'Laverty, Elliot Hanson and Toby Duckworth.

Bishop Paul Tighe presided at the celebration, which was live-streamed for those guests unable to travel to Italy due to Covid-19.



The College and the Church rejoice with our three new deacons. Ad multos annos!



JOSEPH O'BRIEN is a fourth-year seminarian for the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, studying theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University.

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The College Diary 2020-21

FR ALEXANDER BALZANELLA

Monday 28 September 2020

The year begins following the end of the fourth college exile that began on 10 March 2020. Over the past six months many of the community have been in lockdown either in parishes, at home or, in the case of the seminarians of the Diocese of Oslo, in a smaller seminary community. There is thus an eagerness to get back to the familiarity of seminary life, with all its eccentricities and oddities. However, the year begins on an unusual note with a house meeting in which the Rector outlines the necessary restrictions that the Covid pandemic will mean for the house. New seating arrangements are made in the College church with places to sit marked by stickers; the lack of these on the back rows make a number of the brethren wonder if some kind of social-engineering to make seminarians sit more centrally in the nave of the church isn't going on. Celebrants will also wear masks for the distribution of Holy Communion and singing, for the time being, will not be possible. Elsewhere, the refectory tables now seat only four people each, with gloves to be worn when passing shared items, and the lift is to be used by a maximum of two people at a time, wearing masks. Students are also asked not to socialise in groups in each other's rooms, leading to some discovering the common room and snug for the very first time.

Alongside learning new things about the College, today is the first chance we have had to meet our New Men. The new first year philosophers are Jonathan Henry from the Archdiocese of Birmingham, David Ottersen from the Diocese of Oslo, Benjamin Sinclair from the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, and Ryan Hawkes and Jack Ryan, both from the Diocese of Portsmouth. Also joining the house is William Meehan from the Diocese of Hamilton in Canada and Torbjørn Holt for the Diocese of Oslo, both of whom will be studying theology. After the past year the College is pleased to welcome two exiles from the Irish College, John O'Lavery from the Diocese of Down and Connor and Mark O'Farrell from the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore, who are known by the community from the Pontifical universities. Finally, the community is also joined by Anglican exchange student, Sion Hughes Carew from Westcott House at Cambridge, who will be with us until January.

Tuesday 29 September

The community makes the supposedly arduous journey up the Janiculum hill to *Salvator Mundi* for Covid-19 antibody tests. Claims of illnesses and bouts of hypochondria being Covid are shattered, as only Anthony Fyk, who had no idea he'd had the virus, tests positive.



Members of the community return to College.

As ever, the doctors and nurses at the hospital seem pleased to see the back of us, perhaps due to Viktor Torres Airava confusing Phlebotomy with Lobotomy, or the Diarist asking about needles at the opticians before he is saved by Daniel Ebert and Mathias Ledum and led to the “Blood-drawing Room.”

Wednesday 30 September

House job meetings come early to the College this year, as the pandemic changes not only the global economy but work within the seminary. Like other leaders around the world, the Rector shows a willingness to take the tough decisions that the situation demands. Choirmaster Theodore Sharrock is informed that, rather than getting the extra members of his team he had long been lobbying for, the last remaining member is sacked. Meanwhile, Edward Hauschild’s team of guestmasters are informed that they are now entirely surplus to requirement. However, it isn’t cuts everywhere: the number of librarians is increased to five, a sign of the staff’s foolhardy optimism of how students will use their time this year. The evening concludes with the traditional *Ben Tornati* party. The evening provides the opportunity to meet our New Men as well as the two new members of staff: the College’s new Spiritual Director, Fr Konrad Grech, SJ, from Malta; and Fr Michael Doody from the Diocese of Leeds, who takes on the role of Pastoral Director.

Thursday 1 October

As the pandemic meant the need to cancel the planned pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the seminarians and staff go to Palazzola for the start of year retreat, given by Fr Konrad. Although this year’s retreat is shortened to only a few days, the amounts of luggage taken up by members of the Diocese of Portsmouth raises eyebrows. Claims about the weight of albs and cinctures are not taken very seriously.



Joachim Teigen finds an inventive use for his face mask while on retreat.

Photo: Joseph O'Brien

Saturday 3 October

With the retreat now over, the community returns to Rome and adapts to the new Covid system or, to be more precise, enjoys picking at the inevitable teething problems of the new system. Before even depositing their cases Toby Duckworth, Marc Pitson and David Bench have a long conversation in the corridor about whether providing seating and coffee outside of one’s bedroom would be permitted or whether it would undermine the spirit of the rule.

Sunday 4 October

The first Sunday liturgy with the whole community. In spite of being somewhat muted without the usual sung Mass setting, it is a joy to celebrate the Eucharist together and formally to mark the end of the fourth College exile.

Monday 5 October

The first Monday of October can only mean one thing: the start of the new academic year. Again, inevitable changes are announced. The Gregorian University states that it will be

operating a fortnightly timetable from next week until they can guarantee social distancing, meaning that the English College students under Jesuit tutelage work from home this week. For a number this provides no discernible difference from previous years. Angelicum students, meanwhile, make their way up the hill to discover new temperature checking devices installed at the *portineria*. This causes some amusement, as last year few of the classrooms had working thermostats. At both institutions those *in persona* will be required to wear masks, whilst those online will be required to show their faces on the virtual classroom, showing that professors had cottoned-on to how students were using lesson time in the Spring Term when working from home.

Wednesday 7 October

With all the change afoot, it is reassuring that some things remain the same in the community. The College bar reopens as usual on Wednesday evening and, even though no guests are permitted, the evening is festive. However, the mood becomes more sombre later on as the College learns of the death of Fr Joseph d'Amécourt OP, Vice-Dean of Philosophy at the Angelicum, whose sharpness of mind and eagerness to spar with students over Aristotle's philosophy was a rite of passage for English College students and will be much missed.

Friday 9 October

Today in Saint Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, on the Feast of Saint John Henry Newman, two Old Romans, David Evans and Stephen Wright, were consecrated bishop by Archbishop Bernard Longley. Both will serve as auxiliary bishops in the Archdiocese of Birmingham. *Ad multos annos!*

Whilst Covid-19 has sadly brought a temporary pause to much of the singing in the College, it should not be thought that community members are not finding new outlets for their creative talent. During the celebration of Mass in the Nuns' chapel a celebrant was amazed to hear flute music begin at the moment of consecration. However, any chances of spiritual ecstasy were swiftly dashed when the tune took up the theme of the Finnish national anthem, indicating that the source was not the powers and dominions of heaven but rather Viktor Torres Airava, who has taken to practising his flute in different locations around the College.

Sunday 11 October

Dedication of the Year at *Santa Maria in Campitelli*. The route takes us back through the *Campo de' Fiori* which has a festive atmosphere with much singing and dancing. Fr James McAuley, perhaps eager to live up to his Ulsterman persona, or else warning smokers of how loud they are on the terrace, declares to James Finnegan that he "hates people singing and having fun."

Monday 12 October

Theo Sharrock's birthday provides an opportunity for the College to support the Italian hospitality sector by a meal out. The evening, however, brings the sad news that from next week bars and restaurants will be forced to close by 10pm to tackle the growing number of Covid cases in Lazio. The next morning also sees the beginning of pastoral classes led by Fr

Doody on the subject of hostile spirits and exorcisms. Always wanting a chance to show off their broad literary knowledge, the students quickly label the course ‘Defence against the Dark Arts’, in reference to children’s book series *Harry Potter*.

Friday 16 October

Friday morning Latin Mass with Fr McAuley takes on something of a Tridentine air: not due to it being celebrated in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite but due to a power outage in the city, plunging the whole church into darkness. Never one to be flummoxed, sacristan Toby Duckworth quickly mobilises his team and the morning Mass is celebrated by candlelight. In a very non-Tridentine act, however, the language of the Mass is changed from Latin to English – much to the relief of Fr Dominic Jenkinson and the Diarist.

Thursday 22 October

The Feast of Saint John Paul II: Fr Piotr Wygnanski preaches on the saint of the day, with whom his family had a close connection when he was Archbishop of Kraków, recounting to us some of the character of the man as relayed by his father, as well as telling us about the bizarre circumstances that led to them sharing an omelette breakfast.

Sunday 25 October

The 50th anniversary of the Canonisation of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales is celebrated in the College. The evening also includes a ‘Public Meeting’ of the community, which should not be confused with a house meeting, although as it takes place in the Crypt with only the College community present no discernible difference is observed. The Rector announces that the College will remain open over the Christmas holidays, with the Nativity of Our Lord likely to be celebrated at Palazzola. Discussions also take place about modifications to the Covid restrictions. First on the list is the reintroduction of singing with some form of protective equipment, with choirmaster Theo Sharrock modelling a visor for the community. Approval is won for the reintroduction of singing at solemn occasions, even if some seem somewhat dubious about the visors.

The announcement of a new decree from the Italian Health Authority also reaches College, which means that from 26 October bars and restaurants must close at 6pm. In a final hurrah, for who knows how long, the seminarians make final visits to their favourite haunts.

Friday 30 October to Sunday 1 November

The first free weekend of the year sees many take the opportunity to travel before any further tightening of restrictions. The Birmingham remnant in the College alongside Theo Sharrock travel up to Assisi for the free weekend. However, their accommodation isn’t quite what was expected, with the sleeping arrangements offering very little privacy. However, some creative use of bedsheets fixes the problem somewhat, if leading to the apartment looking more like a *lavanderia*. A breakdown in communications about the booking means Theo is not booked into the accommodation at all, leading to him finding much more pleasant accommodation elsewhere in the town.

Many of the community make a trip up to the Villa, with the festivities of All Saints being beamed to the rest of the community regularly via WhatsApp. Palazzola also provides a rare

chance to mingle with outside guests, since the College is still closed to visitors. Fr Dominic and Fr Piotr, meanwhile, head off with Martin Fyles to the east coast and visit Cathedral of Thomas the Apostle in Ortona. Showing a high degree of organisation, they arrange ahead of time to celebrate Mass on Saint Thomas' altar. However, their plans are dashed when they discover that their altar has been given away to Tony Simon, a Syro-Malabar seminarian from England studying at the Capranica, and a group of pilgrims.

Friday 6 November

Covid-19 strikes the College; a positive case leads to the Italian health authorities implementing an eleven-day lockdown on the seminary. No members of the community will be able to leave the building, and face masks must be worn at all times in public spaces. In a totally unrelated and unconnected event, the Diarist, who had not been feeling well, takes to his room on the advice of his doctor for eleven days. Not to be thrown by a minor outbreak of plague in the College, the community decides that "the show must go on," and thus the planned New Men's Show continues as planned that evening, but with some stricter social distancing measures introduced.



Fr Konrad Grech takes to the stage for the New Men's Show.

In spite of these challenges, the performance is a great success, continuing the College's tradition of displaying the New Men's creativity and sheer surrealism. This year's performance has something of a nautical theme with Sion Hughes Carew performing his own adaption of "Anything Goes" about the Anglican Communion whilst Fr Konrad does an ecclesial adaption of "My Heart Will Go On" from *Titanic*. Finally, due to the precedent of Canadian seminarians jumping ship to English dioceses, William Meehan faces pitches from some potential locations including Portsmouth, Shrewsbury and, most bizarrely, the Church of England.

Saturday 7 November

The student community gathers for what Fr Dominic Jenkinson christens Fr Marco Egawhary's "Hoping to leave at some point" party - a theme that I'm sure all staff and student members can get on board with. Due to the heightened Covid vigilance the party takes places almost *al fresco*, with the Garden room being opened entirely to the elements and with social distance maintained. Theo Sharrock produces his famous crumble which appeals to Fr Marco Egawhary so much he is photographed tucking into it whilst wearing a face mask.

Tuesday 10 November

Midway through the lockdown. The last few days have witnessed a number of students follow the Diarist's lead and take to their rooms as a precautionary measure in the pandemic, although the usual winter colds in the building make it hard to know what could be serious and what might be hypochondria. Fellow inmates include Fr Marco Egawhary, Fr Piotr

Wyganski, Marc Pitson and Toby Duckworth. Will Meehan as Infirmarian and the Vice Rector do sterling work in providing meals for those in isolation, showing a willingness to cater to even the most exacting dietary requirements and with supplies of ice even being delivered. However, rubbish collection, which Fr Piotr Wyganski wisely considers as the first step from barbarism towards civility, proves something of a challenge for the team, leading to the odd student feeding leftovers to the seagulls. The priests in quarantine use the time to minister to their brethren in isolation, whether it be by the ‘Zooming’ of Masses or else by arranging online pastoral evenings.

Monday 16 November

Whilst these days of isolation have meant very little activity for some members of the community others have been working overtime. Thanks to the hard work of the administrative staff the College undertakes a medical operation worthy of the Nightingale hospitals in England, transforming the Garden Room into a Covid testing centre. Seminarians are amazed at the appearance of Paola Caiati and the Rector in full PPE, making them a somewhat unconvincing doctor and nurse combination. Sadly, or perhaps luckily, neither of them actually implements the test, leaving this instead to the qualified hands of a nurse. Seminarians are allowed out for an hour after their test before all the results are back to give the ‘all-clear’. Supermarkets around the city are hit for supplies whilst James Finnegan and Joachim Teigen confirm that Bar Peru has continued to remain open, perhaps having taken advantage of Italian government financial support to survive the drop in custom while the College has been closed.



Fr Rector sporting his Covid-secure garb.

Tuesday 17 November

The closure of bars and restaurants in the evening has led to an inevitable increase of attendance at meals in the College, giving everyone the chance to learn far more about each other. Marc Pitson informs the College of his family’s roots amidst the Transylvanian Counts, whilst the Rector’s personal links to Japanese royalty become well-known.

Thursday 19 November

Having completed his Licentiate in Sacred Scripture, and having tested negative prior to his flight, Fr Marco leaves the College to take up his appointment at Holy Trinity, Newcastle-under-Lyme. *Arrivederci!*

Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 November

The seminary gathers together for a human development weekend delivered by the head of Courage International Fr Philip Bochanski. As international travel is extremely difficult at

the moment, Fr Bochanski is transmitted to us via Zoom along with the community at the Pontifical Scots College who are joining us for these talks. Unfortunately, due to technical teething problems, Fr Bochanski does not have the seminary community streamed back to him, giving him the disconcerting feeling of talking to empty space. One feels at this moment a certain sympathy for Gregorian professors who have long complained of classrooms full of students that may as well be empty.

Monday 23 November

The autumn ritual of the room ballot takes place. However, changes introduced by Rev. David Irwin and Rev. Anthony Fyk prove controversial in their prioritisation of clerics in the room allocation rather than length of residency, raising criticism from certain Misterys of the house. Other reforms include that toilet brushes should move with their owners. One hopes this won't go so far as to ship them back to the UK at the end of formation.

Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 November

The College's advent recollection is given this year by Fr James Hanvey, SJ. His thoughtful conferences alongside the *Quarant'Ore* give us the opportunity to reflect on the mystery of the Lord's Nativity and the immense love the Incarnation reveals.

Monday 30 November

In spite of rumours of several novenas having been said, the inevitable red note appears announcing the return of choir practice at 6.45pm so as to rehearse the music for Martyrs' Day. Choirmaster Theo Sharrock's hope that the habit of turning up to practice closer to 7pm has been forgotten is dashed, as the odd staff member is seen slipping in a moment or two late.

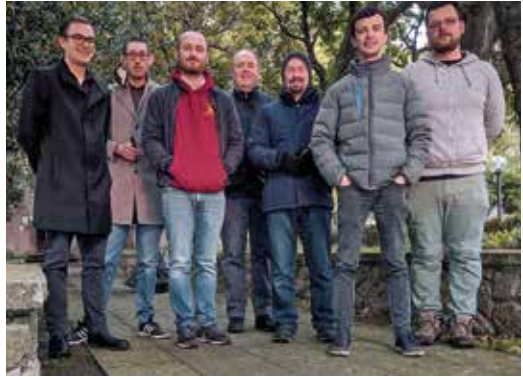
Tuesday 1 December

This year's Martyrs' Day differs somewhat from the norm we have come to expect in recent years – Mass is celebrated by Fr Rector, who preaches on the desire for life that made the martyrs' act of self-sacrifice and witness so meaningful. Lunch is its usual feast, with further chocolates, cheese and port provided by the Friends of the *Venerabile*. The day also marks the release of this year's issue of *The Venerabile*. With the exile earlier in the year many are impressed at the excellent issue put together by Joachim Teigen and his team. Although highly professional and in full technicolour, it has a slightly less formal feel, with photos normally reserved for the photo review at the end of the year making an appearance. The Diarist does not wish to distract readers, but photographs of Fr Rector, Fr James and Fr Anthony Doe all show something of their lighter side. Meanwhile Mathias' enthusiastic response to the Zoom spiritual conferences is captured for all to see. The evening sees the first streaming of the veneration of the relics, allowing absent friends a chance to experience something of the day.

Friday 4 December to Tuesday 8 December

A free weekend and the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception mean the traditional 'Hollycam' takes place. An opportunity to go to the Villa to pick holly to decorate the College

and get into the festive spirit. An unforeseen benefit of lectures *a distanza* is discovered by the Villa-goers, who receive permission to stay at the Villa between the weekend and the Solemnity, since they can keep their didactic commitments over the internet. Ever a stickler for tradition, the Editor, as youngest member of the party at the Villa, leads carols after lunch for a third year running, refusing to yield his position to an older but newer member of the community.



Members of the community gather to pick holly at the Villa. Photo: Piotr Wyznanski

Wednesday 9 December

The exile has meant that the situation regarding the conferral of ministries has become somewhat muddled, with some receiving them from their bishops in the respective dioceses and others waiting to return to Rome. As a result, Archbishop Arthur Roche is invited to give Candidacy to those who had yet to have been made receive it. Congratulations to John O'Laverly and Elliot Hanson!



The new candidates greet Archbishop Arthur Roche.

Sunday 13 December

Archbishop Paul Gallagher is invited to give Lectorate to those who had not received it last year: namely the Editor and Viktor. Our Finnish brother's bidding prayers cause some amusement, as they petition for good diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and Finland, as well as petitioning for the speedy appointment of a new Bishop of Helsinki and invoking prayers for the Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle. Archbishop Gallagher, perhaps somewhat thrown by the last of these petitions, is heard questioning the Editor at lunch about whether Bishop Robert Byrne has suddenly taken ill. The Lectorate Mass also marks the end of the College term, allowing students to return to the UK and fulfil their mandatory quarantines in time for Christmas.

Saturday 19 December

Those of the community who remained at the College for holidays head up to Palazzola. Some of those new to the Pontifical University system have the audacity to bring up revision material, to which Fr James McAuley declares that, alongside academic work, learning how to manipulate the examiner is the key technique needed to survive oral exams. News also comes through that for much of the time at Palazzola Italy will be *Zona Rossa*, meaning very little will be open in the city and giving our time at the Villa the feeling of being something of an escape.

Monday 21 December

News reaches the seminarians of the collapse of the Tank changing room's roof. Theo Sharrock worries about the safety of his vibrant purple and pink swimming trunks. The Vice Rector is more concerned that such lack of taste may have been the cause.

Tuesday 22 December

The mild and dry weather encouraged a number of the community last night to sign up for today's Tusculum walk. However, claims of sickness or "tiredness" mean only Theo Sharrock, Ben Sinclair and the Diarist are up to making the journey on foot. The rest of the pilgrims make their way up at a much more reasonable hour by car. Whilst the summer Tusculum Mass requires planning against insects and lizards, the winter brings its own forces of nature too, with a number of cows taking an interest during the Eucharistic Prayer. Whether these were drawn by Eucharistic devotion, the dulcet tones of Joachim Teigen's singing or the vibrancy of the trousers of certain members of the party remains the subject of much debate.



Fr Alex Balzanella celebrates Mass at Tusculum during the Christmas break. Photo: Joseph O'Brien

Thursday 24 December

As the Nativity of the Lord draws nearer, Palazzola is humming with activity on all sides. Music rehearsals, liturgy practices and manic present wrapping take place in every corner of the Villa. The Editor is seen waving a hot iron around the church, supposedly to prepare the linens, whilst Ryan Hawkes' diligence and practice on both the organ and the piano draw Fr Konrad's attention. Fr Rector presides at Midnight Mass, making it the first time a community Mass has been celebrated over Christmas since the early 1990s when the Rector himself was a seminarian. Afterwards, the community gather with guests from the Lay Centre for a drink and for Secret Santa before retiring.

Friday 25 December

Christmas Day and after Mass it appears that much of the timetable has been arranged around the time of Theo Sharrock's family stocking-opening on Zoom. Lunch is a blend of Italian and English traditions and is eagerly consumed by all. As the evening draws on, the Editor muses about the mention of the Prophecy of Daniel in the Kalenda Proclamation sung at Midnight Mass, prompting Fr Rector to pull, as if from



Members of the community at Christmas lunch.

thin air, *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives*, with the signature and message from Pope Benedict inside. Ben Sinclair and Ryan Hawkes' deep interest means that the Rector is careful not to let the book out of his sight.

Monday 28 December

A rare “*arancini*” day and an opportunity for the College to return to Rome. Guidance to wear masks in the car and to have both passengers in the back lead to some making jokes of being bishops with their secretaries and drivers being taken far too seriously.

Tuesday 29 December

The Solemnity of Saint Thomas of Canterbury. As BIBOS are away, the meal is prepared by the students, priests and administrative staff of the College. Yet some of the community's contribution is a little lacklustre, as Ben Sinclair arrives with the entirety of the *Campo de' Fiori's* rotten tomatoes. For the Diarist's health and wellbeing, special mention must go to the *melanzane* prepared by Paola Caiati, sweet enough to trigger a diabetic episode, and her carrots which were not so much glazed as drowned in Cointreau. The holidays give us the chance to hear something of family life from those who work at the College, with Emanuela Piacentini sharing stories of her son Tommaso and Paola telling us about the surprising lessons being given at her daughter Isabella's school by a certain Don Salvatore, leading to the Rector to quote from the day's reading from the First Book of Maccabees. The day also gives those who remained for Christmas the opportunity to say goodbye to Sion Hughes Carew, who returns to Westcott House to complete his studies. Torbjørn also gives a speech celebrating the kindness Sion has shown in his time in the community and warns him how Catholicism can work on you slowly, like radiation.



A selection of the delights on offer at lunch on Saint Thomas' Day.

Thursday 31 December

New Year's Eve takes on a Norwegian feel in the College as Joachim Teigen prepares a traditional New Year's Eve festive supper of pork belly and rice porridge, to which his tender care shows a paternal heart and a willingness to forgo a cigarette, which none of us have seen before. Trym Hellevig, meanwhile, scours the Eternal City looking for a source of Brussels sprouts. As 2020 draws to a close, the community ascends to the roof. Mrs Raggi, the Mayoress of Rome, has banned all fireworks from the city except for a few public displays. However, the *Romani* are not so easily cowed and those on the roof are able to witness the College's neighbours letting fireworks off from their window boxes.

Tuesday 5 January 2021

Tragic news reaches the community. Viktor's promised supply of *poronkärästys* (or sauteed reindeer for those whose Finnish is rusty), will not be arriving. Viktor declares that the problem is due to Covid restrictions, although Marc Pitson and Will Meehan remain somewhat sceptical of this account.

Wednesday 6 January

Epiphany not only announces the arrival of the Wise Men but also those of our brethren who are returning from overseas. Those from the UK begin a two-week lockdown in the College. Daniel Ebert, meanwhile, is unable to travel at all.

Friday 8 January

The Bede Chapel opens for Mass. Cleared out in December by the Vice Rector, a quick passing offer of help from Daniel Ebert, Mathias Ledum and Anthony Fyk ties them into a 3-hour enterprise, proving the maxim that no good deed goes unpunished. It is also the day of more Covid tests, which seem each time to bring fresh claims of medical abnormalities and difficulties. Edward Hauschild shows particular ingenuity, by declaring at breakfast that his unusually narrow inner nasal passages make the tests especially uncomfortable.

Friday 15 January

College hears of the sad news of the death of Mgr Mark Langham. Mgr Mark was resident in one of the College apartments for several years and known to many in the community, through his various ministries.

Saturday 16 January and Sunday 17 January

This weekend's formation weekend is given by the College Archivist, Professor Maurice Whitehead on 'Understanding, protecting and promoting the cultural heritage of the Church: An Introduction'. An exhibition is put on in the Schwarzenbach Reading Room which, due to its confined space, can only receive a few at a time. The day is also a chance for others to reminisce, as the talk of North West England's recusant Catholic families reminds James Finnegan of his hunting days.

Thursday 21 January

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This time our speakers are more familiar to us in the persons of Torbjørn Holt and Sion Hughes Carew (via Zoom from Cambridge). Torbjørn Holt reflects upon the need to engage ecumenically not only on a theological level but also personally, advising the community the skills of cooking and hospitality are also important tools. James Finnegan and Fr Peter Ellul speak about putting this into action at the earliest opportunity.

Friday 5 February to Sunday 7 February

Another free weekend upon us! The lightening of Covid restrictions allows travel within the region of Lazio. James Finnegan, Jonathan Henry and the Diarist leave the Vicar General of the diocese of Viterbo literally dumbstruck by their presence in the city, as well as being pretty overwhelmed themselves as the town suddenly filled up with NACers.

Saturday 13 February and Sunday 14 February

The College's safeguarding weekend given by Liam Ring on Zoom takes place. This time the presentation is a technical success with all members of the community and the presenter able to be seen and heard. This new medium is also proving popular with members

of the community: head sacristan Toby Duckworth is particularly chipper at not needing to organise the usual caravans of vestments needed for a weekend at Palazzola.

The Rector reminds the priests of the house by email to “ignore what is written in the Missal” when coming to the end of the Collect, a line that the Diarist for one never thought he would see sent by Mgr Philip Whitmore.

Tuesday 16 February

Elections, elections, elections. Last year saw the record shortest term as Senior Student by Andrew Coy, who only lasted one meeting before having to book his one-way flight in March 2020 to London Luton at the beginning of lockdown. Since September, Anthony Fyk has ably been filling the post. This time the election is a two-horse race between Toby Duckworth and John O’Lavery. Toby is duly elected Senior Student with John graciously taking the role of Deputy Senior Student.

Wednesday 17 February

The arrival of Ash Wednesday and Lent brings some changes this year, with no celebration of the Station Masses organised by the North American College and ash to be sprinkled on the head at Mass rather than applied in the usual manner. The day also brings the arrival of Hugh Donleavy, a Liverpool seminarian transferring from Oscott. However, the community is not given much opportunity to see Hugh before he is confined by the Italian Health Authority to his room. The Rector requests that the community help Hugh establish a rhythm of life in spite of the quarantine, and within a short space of time Martin Fyles, William Meehan, Mark O’Farrell and Marc Pitson have a takeaway with him over Zoom. The community quickly hears of Hugh’s sharp wit at the expense of Martin, which will undoubtedly serve him well once he is out of isolation.

Thursday 18 February

As surely as night follows day, so do the house job meetings follow the election of the new senior student. Marc Pitson is raised to the role of head sacristan. A position that, due to having never experienced a triduum at the VEC, gives him a degree of concern. The new Common Room Team *capo* Edward Hauschild leaves the Rector’s office for a rare gin or two at Bar Peru. Joachim Teigen, perhaps due to his performance of the Kalenda Proclamation, is made Choirmaster. With the current health situation, the once-coveted job of infirmarian is now much feared. The Sword of Damocles falls squarely into Mark O’Farrell’s lap who, having been a pharmacist prior to seminary, is perhaps the most qualified infirmarian the College has ever had.

Sunday 21 February

Sunday evening and the annual House Meeting with house job handover. The spirit of students past seems to hang over the proceedings. Senior Student Toby Duckworth expresses the hope that he will remain longer in post than Andrew Coy. Edward Hauschild, meanwhile, channels his predecessor Albert Lawes in bringing down parts of appliances from the kitchen and laundry room for us to examine in turn so as to determine what is clean and what is not. New Deputy Senior Student John O’Lavery

seems truly lost for words under the weight of his new post, a feeling with which all past DSSs can empathise.

Thursday 25 February to Sunday 28 February

Although restrictions on leaving the *Comune* are back, those preparing for ministries and candidacy are still offered a change of scene with a retreat at the Passionist house on the Coelian Hill.

Thursday 4 March

The College begins plans to have not only the Holy Week retreat but the entire Easter Triduum at Palazzola. News also filters through of a new College car to replace the old Rector's Fiat Stilo. The Vice Rector, Trym Hellevig and Marc Pitson's care of the new hybrid Toyota Corolla is so great that an enhanced College driving test is announced for it. Toby Duckworth's initial reaction to the car's name is perhaps evidence of the demands this year's seminar at the Gregorian has placed upon him.



'Joseph' the new College car. Photo: John Flynn

Monday 8 March

Fr Aayrton Muscat arrives safely back in Malta, having completed his Licentiate at the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family Life. However, Aayrton's cassock is not so lucky, being victim to a wax spillage at his leavers' party, giving the event something of a pre-conciliar air.

Sunday 14 March

The vaccination programme of the English College begins with Fr Konrad. Since the community now has members who were born in the twenty-first century, the wait for Jack Ryan and Ryan Hawkes seems infinite. The worsening Covid situation puts the region of Lazio back into *Zona Rossa*, meaning that plans to go to Palazzola for Holy Week and the Triduum have to be abandoned. Instead, the College will remain at Via di Monserrato for both Holy Week and the Triduum.

Wednesday 17 March

It's the beginning of the bishops' visitation but not as you've known it before! Virtual meetings replace the personal familiar presence of Archbishop Bernard Longley and Bishop Mark O'Toole, as well as being our first opportunity to welcome our new trustee, Archbishop John Wilson.

No one seems to have alerted the BIBOS staff that the trustees' visit is virtual rather than physical, with students taking delight in the delicacies suddenly produced from the kitchen.

Friday 19 March

The end of the visitation and an evening Mass and supper to celebrate the Solemnity of Saint Joseph. The Rector begins a speech to the College community thanking us for our contribution to the visitation and announcing that the College will within a couple of weeks be returning to an historic tradition of having an Italian rector. A cold shiver runs through the community of what this could entail, with thoughts of daily Italian Mass, compulsory study hours and the infamous Mass settings, before the Rector reassures us that this is because he is becoming an Italian citizen. However, the rollercoaster of events is not over as he then announces that in September the College will once again have an English Rector in the person of Fr Stephen Wang, Senior University Chaplain in the Diocese of Westminster, known to many of the community by his pastoral classes at the *Villeggiatura*. There follows a sustained period of applause for all the Rector has achieved in his eight years in the College and the customary round of '*Ad multos annos*'.

Thursday 25 March

The ordination to the priesthood of Andrew Coy at Northampton Cathedral. Theodore Sharrock hosts a screening in his room for a number of the community. This new method of participating in liturgies does present its own problems, as being in the College does leave one tied to the timetable. Fortunately, the rite of ordination concludes prior to the beginning of community lunch.

Saturday 27 March to Tuesday 30 March

The College Holy Week retreat begins in the College church and is given by Fr Edmund Power OSB, former prior at *Sant'Anselmo* and Abbot of *San Paolo fuori le Mura*, on the account of the Passion in the Gospel of Saint Mark. Fr Power manages to bring in an eclectic array of signs from our world, whether it be Zen Buddhism, trans-linguistic prayer or Roman Graffiti, but is still able to point clearly and fruitfully to the Paschal mystery we are about to experience.

Thursday 1 April

Maundy Thursday Mass celebrated by Fr Michael Doody, without the customary foot washing but with a sung Roman Canon. After the Mass the College gathers at the Altar of Repose masterfully put together by Fr Peter Ellul, James Finnegan and Ryan Hawkes. Whilst Covid meant no visitors to the College for the duration of the Triduum, members of the community still went out to see the friendly competition that takes place with neighbouring churches.

Friday 2 April

The Liturgy of Good Friday is celebrated movingly by Fr Konrad Grech and his thoughtful words provide us the opportunity to dwell on the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. Byrd's *Passion of Saint John* is sung beautifully by David Irwin, Fr Piotr Wagnanski and the Vice Rector alongside the schola, who, in spite of being masked, make present those final hours of Our Lord's earthly life.

Saturday 3 April

The Easter Vigil and, as usual, the community gathers in the dark of the garden around the Easter fire, awaiting the cry of *Lumen Christi* to announce the light of the world. However, due to a sleight of the hand by the Editor, the corridors of the College are blazed in light a few moments before the liturgy is due to start. In spite of there being no guests, the liturgy is kept to its usual standard with the Rector as celebrant. The night sees the long months of silence that have fallen over the eternal city since the end of tourism and international travel broken with excerpts from Byrd's *Passion of Saint John* and *Thine be the Glory* being sung from the College roof. As with many things, the quality of music did decline by the early morning with only a few bars of *Shine Jesus Shine* being croaked out by dawn. Fr Dominic Jenkinson's attempt to bring the night to a close by turning off the physical light and threatening to use the hose failed to extinguish the enthusiasm of the singers who carried on regardless.



The Paschal Candle, 'the work of bees' and, in this case, Edward Hauschild.

Sunday 4 April

Surrexit Dominus vere! Alleluia! With no Papal Mass at Saint Peter's, the College gathers in the Church to celebrate Easter Sunday together, celebrated by Fr James McAuley. The day takes on a highly festive air with more singing on the roof in the afternoon whilst other brethren take the opportunity to experience solemn vespers in "another place." The heightened restrictions mean travel to other countries is not possible, but the freedom to explore the *Comune di Roma* – or the desire to leave the building – proves a tempting proposition to many. Mark O'Farrell and John O'Laverty take an apartment in the city to have something of the holiday experience, white taxi waiting at the door included. That their residence was near the Pantheon and closer on foot seems to have escaped their notice.

Friday 9 April

The sad news of the death of the Duke of Edinburgh reaches the College. Fr Rector makes hasty contact with the embassy to confirm flag protocol for the Prince's death. As the last consort of a reigning sovereign died in 1861, one can forgive the Rector for not having the exact measures to hand.

Sunday 11 April

David Irwin leaves the seminary to undertake a placement in his Diocese of Shrewsbury before taking up an appointment at the Marian Shrine at Knock in the Archdiocese of Tuam. His departing message of "*Sic transit gloria generationis Hudson*" causes those of us who aren't taking Fr James McAuley's intensive language classes to reach for our copy of Collins' *Primer of Ecclesiastical Latin*. As is standard practice, members of the community descend on his room like vultures on a cadaver before David has left the building. The Diarist is impressed by the speed at which some of the first years have learnt the system, with Jack Ryan spotted dragging a three-seater sofa through the College mere moments after having wished David goodbye.

Saturday 17 April

The Funeral of the Duke of Edinburgh is marked in the College, with, as has become the standard practice, a live-stream in the Common Room. James Finnegan once again proves himself a man of many talents and rustles up a set of black armbands for those who desire them.

Sunday 25 April

Good Shepherd Sunday. Today is also the episcopal consecration of Mgr Mark Miles in Gibraltar as Titular Archbishop of Città Ducale before he begins his new ministry as Apostolic Nuncio in Benin and Togo. Archbishop Mark was external confessor to the College for many years. *Ad multos annos!* The end of April also brings a sustained drop in Covid cases, making lunch outside the College possible on a Saturday.

Thursday 6 May

The Solemnity of Saint George. This year's festivities are particularly special as they are celebrated by his namesake Cardinal George Pell, who also joins the College for the festal meal and drinks in the bar afterwards. Edward Hauschild gives an address on the nature of Englishness that, perhaps due to the presence of the Cardinal, has something of an Empire flavour to it. After supper students take the opportunity to speak to His Eminence and ask him to sign copies of his books. The variety of accents in the community and the increasingly complex dedications he is asked to write allow him to experience the many peoples and accents of those who call Saint George their patron.

Sunday 9 May

The College makes a visit to *Santa Maria della Consolazione al Foro Romano* for the May devotions. Fr Konrad's selection of church is seen as quite appropriate with examtide just around the corner. The evening also sees the Oaths of Fidelity prior to the diaconate made by Toby Duckworth, Daniel Ebert, Elliot Hanson and John O'Laverty, as well as Anthony Fyk who will be ordained priest in July.

Tuesday 11 May to Friday 14 May

Tish Nicoll, the College's ever patient voice-coach is back in a digital form. A lectern is set up in the second-floor computer room to give her, supposedly, a more realistic experience of the seminarian's public speaking. However, suggestions that this could be more to do with her experience of the unkempt state of some students' rooms or the wide variety of Joachim Teigen's drink collection during her autumn Zoom classes continue to abound.

Wednesday 12 May

Nordic Night in honour of Saint Ansgar, celebrated by Fr Pål Bratbak, priest of the Diocese of Oslo and licentiate student at the Angelicum. The evening proceeds to supper, with the refectory taking on the feel of a Viking longhouse, complete with horned helmets adorning the busts of bishops from the Garden Room. The food takes on a Scandinavian flavour too, with gravadlax making an appearance, but alas there is no reindeer to be seen. Full use is once again made of the pulpit, as Viktor proceeds to examine the eccentricities of his

Scandinavian brethren, including David Ottersen whose nationality has apparently been something of an enigma to some.

Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 May

Another free weekend, and the first since October in which almost all of Italy is accessible and for which the Villa has been open, having been closed since Christmas. A large group head up to Palazzola and are joined there by Fr Rector. Others, however, take advantage of the greater freedom to explore, with Torbjørn Holt and Ben Sinclair experiencing Venice without the crowds. James Finnegan, Jonathan Henry and the Diarist head to Florence where they spend the majority of their time enjoying the highlights and refreshment of the *Galleria Uffizi*'s top floor.

Monday 17 May

The curse of the free weekend strikes again as both Fathers James McAuley and Michael Doody test positive for Covid and begin their isolation in their rooms whilst the College more generally goes into lockdown.

Saturday 22 May

The time in the house provides some members the opportunity to contemplate the Four Last Things and how they relate to them in a new way. Viktor informs the community that it is the Feast of Blessed Hemming of Åbo and makes a desperate plea for any miracles we might spot to aid the cause of his canonisation. The thought of the United Kingdom might receive a single point in tonight's Eurovision would seem to be of appropriate weight and significance.

Tuesday 25 May

In spite of being in lockdown and wearing masks in communal spaces, Choirmaster Joachim Teigen refuses to dampen his enthusiasm for the weekly choir practice. Whilst no congregational singing is possible, the community gathers to listen to the tones for Vespers. We may be able to sing at Mass on 30 May should the College test negative.

Friday 28 May

The College community gets the Covid all-clear, apart from Fr James and Fr Michael, who remain in isolation until a more precise PCR test can be arranged. The student body once again sees Paola Caiati dressing up in scrubs, although wearing her hairnet in the unorthodox manner of a beret.

Saturday 29 May

The Rector's leaving party. The event begins with the College Barbeque, at which ample supplies of Viktor's homemade mead make an appearance. Fr Rector, never willing to let a pun pass him by, contemplates how "just a spoonful of honey helps the mead go down". After the refreshments the evening proper begins. Ryan Browne presents 'This Is Your Life' to Father Rector, with a selection of photographs that were gathered by his sleuth David Bench. The evening then takes a more macabre turn as there begins a murder mystery game of 'Who Killed Philip Whitmore?'. An array of suspects is gathered for questioning includ-

ing Fr James McAuley, who participates by Zoom, Toby Duckworth, Viktor Torres Airava, Joachim Teigen and the Diarist. Yet the true murderer was none other than our quiet Canadian William Meehan. Knowing the Rector's love of fine music and the rich musical traditions of Italy and Britain, James Finnegan and Ryan Hawkes lovingly craft an adapted version of ABBA's *'Thank you for the Music'*. The Diarist and Editor, not being able to carry a tune in a bucket themselves, include the lyrics of the chorus for your own personal judgement:

Thank you, Father Rector. We'd hoped you were stayin'!
 But, alas, *Auf Wiedersehen!*
 How the words escape us, to wish you on your way,
Adios? Good day?
 Wait, in your country, what is it they say?
Arriverderci, Don Rettore! Pensiamo sempre a Lei!



Fr Michael Doody, consigned to quarantine in his room, joins the Rector's leaving party via Zoom.

Photo: William Meehan

Sunday 30 May

Another goodbye today, but this time to Sally Axworthy the British Ambassador to the Holy See since 2016. A slightly surreal message is sent by the Vice Rector encouraging the students to head down to the bar before lunch, which, due to the celebrations the night before and forthcoming exams, sees students more reticent to join than normal.

Tuesday 1 June

Fr James McAuley is released from his isolation and wastes no time in threatening with menace students who have not returned their library books, whilst the assistant librarians Daniel Ebert, Trym Hellevig and David Bench are set to work in the *Salotto* to prepare a recent gift of books to be included in the library catalogue. The increasing temperatures mean that the students feel less like members of a team and more like they've been pressed into a chain gang. Fr Michael Doody, however, continues to test positive and thus remains in quarantine. Appearances of baked goods and even small kitchen appliances outside his door makes one wonder for how long it could go on. The Vice Rector also announces the pool is now opened. After having attended a course in pool maintenance alongside some of the administrative staff, he gives his expert opinion that the water is safe but remains "a little murky." Many students wait for Theodore Sharrock to take the first swim before braving it themselves.

Thursday 3 June

Vaccinations in Italy begin to open up to more members of the house, giving many of the community their first experience of the Italian Health Service. Like in the United Kingdom, vaccines are booked online, but the Italian experience is like trying to book seats at a popular concert, for which times and locations vanish as quickly as they appear. As a result, bookings

are made for vaccines that range from the pharmacy 200 meters down the road to Edward Hauschild's choice of a rural doctor's office in southern Lazio over 70km away.

Sunday 6 June

A more formal opportunity to say goodbye to Fr Rector from the College community with the presence of the *personale* and Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Rector's flatmate when he arrived in Rome in 1999. The day sees the unveiling of the Rector's portrait in the library which is an incredible likeness. There follows a formal lunch in which the Rector faces some more gentle teasing, including from the Vice Rector on his inability to boil an egg, a claim that the Rector firmly disputes. The leaving gifts from the staff include a new set of sherry glasses, since it appears that his colleagues have at one time or another managed to break most of his previous set. The students meanwhile present an icon of Saint Ralph Sherwin that had been written for the occasion. A further gift is also promised at the *Villeggiatura*.



The community gathers in the library, awaiting the revealing of the Rector's portrait.

Friday 11 and Monday 14 June

The seminary community gets to see a side of Italian life we are usually protected from: the bureaucracy. The student community, under the careful stewardship of Paola Caiati, is taken to the *Polizia di Stato* to receive their *carta di soggiorno*. The security checks reveal quite how seriously several students have taken the lengthiness of the process with David Bench's banana and several students rosaries almost being confiscated. However, it is John O'Laverty's glass bottle of water that has the officers reaching for their guns before a conversation about MMA fighter Conor McGregor lessens tensions somewhat.

Sunday 13 June

Having completed their exams, the first years are rewarded by the College with an all-expenses paid trip to the beautiful Tuscan town of San Giovanni Valdarno for a two week language course with the imperturbable duo of Rossanna and Stefania. The endless chorus of "it won't be that bad" fails to lift their spirits. Those who remain at the College wonder how the fortnight will go, as it is only by David Ottersen's experience of orientation in the forests of Norway that they actually manage to make it to the right platform at *Roma Termini*.

Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 June

The final free weekend of the year. With the fear of a potential lockdown and final exams on people's minds many choose to stay nearer to home. The Rector, however, appears not to have got the memo as he emails the community from Vilnius, over 1,400 miles away. Proof, perhaps, that it's not only students who need a break. The weekend also includes the happy news that Ambassador Sally Axworthy has been received into the full communion of the Church.

Wednesday 23 June

The procrastination from revision this year takes on a new character in the form of ornithology. Fr Peter Ellul and James Finnegan are seen taking to the roof a seagull, which had fallen out of its nest, whilst Joachim Teigen and Daniel Ebert attempted earlier in the week to nurse a sick adult seagull back to health. One can't help wonder if this isn't due to the Vice Rector revealing to the community at a recent spiritual conference that he suffers from ornithophobia.

Saturday 26 June

This year's *Villeggiatura* begins, although it has been shortened to eight days so as to allow seminarians to self-isolate upon their return to their home countries without losing too much of their holidays. The usual military precision and organisation that students exemplify in their packing once again shines forth, with deacons-to-be Elliot Hanson and John O'Laverty requesting their forgotten breviaries be brought up at the next opportunity.

Sunday 27 June

The Lectorate Mass marks the beginning of the ministries at the Villa and is celebrated by Archbishop Arthur Roche. Congratulations to Ryan Browne, Mathias Ledum and William Meehan. The day also provides the opportunity for the community to congratulate Archbishop Roche on his new role as Prefect for the Congregation for Divine Worship.

Monday 28 June

Today sees the celebration of Acolytate by Archbishop Paul Gallagher. Congratulations to David Bench, James Finnegan, Martin Fyles, William Meehan, Joseph O'Brien and Mark O'Farrell.

Tuesday 29 June

The Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, and the opportunity to say goodbye to two other monumental figures of seminary life who retired during lockdown last year: Barbara Donovan, former administrator at the College, and Joyce Hunter, former director of Palazzola. Both were figures of real kindness and warmth to students over many years and have been sorely missed, so the opportunity to say goodbye properly seemed right and proper. The day is not without its mishaps. John O'Laverty needs a pep talk in how exactly to present a box of wine to a lady, whilst Dave Bench proves himself deeply attached to the orchids he's meant to be carrying to the car.

Wednesday 30 June

The shortened *Villeggiatura* means that a number of the traditional outings have not been possible, but due to popular demand the lake *gita* still takes place with Fr Piotr Wagnanski, Hugh Donleavy, Jonathan Henry, Jack Ryan, Theodore Sharrock and Ben Sinclair taking to the surprisingly choppy waters. Jack Ryan in particular seems to thrill in the outdoor activities and opportunities for photographs. The evening sees the College's Leavers' Mass celebrated by Fr Dominic Jenkinson on the memoria of the First Martyrs of Rome. Fr Rector, as a leaver himself, is somewhat gentle with the teasing he gives out, although news

that Dominic would be appointed to Derbyshire probably caused him some distress at its announcement. The evening concludes with the ritual humiliation of the new men and leavers in the photo review before the final gift from the community to Fr Rector, a Roman Chasuble made by the hands of the Villa Man, James Finnegan.

Thursday 1 July

In a radical change from previous years, and perhaps an indication of an increasingly southern dominance in the College, the North-South football match is replaced by an East-West croquet match. Who won is not considered by observers to be a very serious question.

Friday 2 July

Today marks the conferral of Candidacy and, as ever, in the blazing July heat seminarians are wearing new suits of the deepest, darkest black. Joachim Teigen's suit gets special attention in particular for the characterful buttons on the sleeves of his blazer. The Mass is celebrated by Bishop Paul Tighe, Secretary at the Pontifical Council for Culture. Festive lunch is held and the cutting up of Theodore Sharrock's ties gains much applause from the community. Congratulations to Edward Hauschild, Trym Hellevig, Marc Pitson, Theodore Sharrock and Joachim Teigen.

Sunday 4 July

A happy day in the life of the College with the ordination of three new deacons: Toby Duckworth, Elliot Hanson and John O'Laverty. The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Paul Tighe and the usual festive lunch then followed. Unfortunately, most invited guests were unable to be in attendance, but the live-stream of the Mass transmitted something of the day's joy to viewers from all four corners of the world. However, members of John O'Laverty's family from the Republic of Ireland were able to make it, along with John's mother and sister, who had come from Northern Ireland, and so had to endure quarantine in Rome before the ordination. Afterwards the student body returned to Rome, PCR test results in hand, to begin their journeys to their respective lands and the different array of quarantine and testing regimes awaiting them.



The deacons-to-be stand before Bishop Paul Tighe.



FR ALEXANDER BALZANELLA is a priest of the Archdiocese of Westminster, having been ordained to the sacred priesthood in September 2020. He completed his Licentiate in Dogmatic Theology at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in 2021 and is now ministering within his diocese.

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Leavers' Profiles

Fr Alexander Balzanella

“Oh, so this is what the Greg looks like.” In boat shoes, crimson trousers and a starched TM Lewin shirt, and with Aperol Spritz in hand, Alex Balzanella took to the stage to rapturous applause and raucous laughter. Portraying the stereotypical English College student (or, as many of his confreres would argue, portraying himself), Alex’s appearance in the 2018 Advent Show as a contestant in ‘Pontifical University Challenge’ garnered international attention, with honourable mention of his performance given in *The Tablet* the following day.



Outgoing, intelligent, sporty, artistic... upon first meeting Fr Alex, one could be forgiven for thinking that he is one of life’s truly gifted all-rounders. But after seven years in Rome, Alex is known by his brothers for two different characteristics. Linguistics has never been Alex’s forte. Even English seems to be a struggle for Alex when, excited about whatever topic he is holding court on, his otherwise crisp southern accent becomes a rapid jumble of words pouring out at a rate of knots. It’s no surprise, then, that Italian has always been a challenge for Alex. His appearance on stage may have brought much entertainment, but one can only wonder what the Italians must think when this tall, eccentrically dressed man steps forwards into a bar or restaurant (or, very occasionally, a Pontifical University) and attempts to engage in conversation in pidgin Italian with a thick English accent.

Perhaps Fr Alex’s best-known feature, however, must be his propensity for injury. So well-known are Alex’s accidents that, during the author of this note’s first week in Rome, a tour of the city led by a staff member included a chain-link fence over which Alex had tripped – not once, but twice – whilst out jogging. In fact, in my first encounter with Alex, only a few weeks later, he was being bundled into a car and taken to hospital, having managed to hurt his hand so badly on his own razor blade that he required immediate medical attention (and later, surgery). As he prepares to move back to England, rumours of the College’s local hospital opening a branch in Watford are, as of yet, unconfirmed.

“Know thyself” is a command alien to Alex, and so, blissfully unaware of the risk he poses to himself, he has continued his sporting feats throughout his time in College. At times he has put to shame his brothers in their laziness, but more often he has elicited from them a unanimous “why?!” Whether running the 30km uphill to Villa Palazzola instead of taking the bus; or drinking copious amounts of protein milkshakes made with powder from a suspicious, unmarked tub; or deciding to go for a traditional Boxing Day swim in the frigid waters of Lake Albano, Alex has usually left the community questioning his sanity rather than awing at his sporting prowess.

Yet in all this, Alex has remained a serene and prayerful presence in the community, never fazed by anything but remaining a strong and stable member of the house. Arriving

in College in 2014, Alex has thrown himself into *la vita romana*. His love for the city, the College and the Church has made Alex a great contributor to the community's life: leading regular groups to St Peter's for Saturday morning Mass, or taking his house group for pilgrimages to Roman churches, or leading the traditional pilgrimage from the Villa to say Mass at Tusculum. Alex has proven himself a stalwart member of the community, and all of us have benefitted from his presence (as well as from his excellent knowledge of Roman eateries and watering holes).

There is no question that Fr Alex will be missed by the VEC. A regular patron of the College bar, a true animator of the College's musical and liturgical life (questionably), but above all, a true friend to all and an example that, even without talent for Italian, one can still survive the Pontifical system with a little charm and a lot of lunches with lecturers.

The VEC's loss is the Diocese of Westminster's gain. As we mourn the loss of one of the great characters of the College, we can be confident that those gifts and talents for which he has been so loved at the VEC will be put to good use in the service of God's people and in the care of his flock.

Joseph O'Brien

Fr Peter Ellul

The cryptanalytical might of Bletchley, the technical prowess of GCHQ, the great minds of the field agents of the Intelligence Services. All of these put together would struggle to decode the great enigma that is Peter Ellul. I was, I must admit, tempted to follow Peter's advice in writing this and, "just find some saint's entry in the office of readings – preferably Mother Teresa – and substitute my name for theirs." Alas, a match of such singular peculiarity has yet to emerge amongst the white-robed army.



On first observation, Peter has the look – and expression – of the tyrannical leader of a totalitarian state. They say that we come, with time, to resemble that which we eat; it right that Peter is so notably fond of Ferrero Rocher. Beneath his hard, crusty exterior is a complexity, a smoothness, and a nuttiness beyond compare.

Peter is a hilarious eccentric, and this becomes apparent quite quickly. Peter's eccentricities are magnified through his unique grasp of the English language. His use of words that have been out of date since the late 19th century such as 'ironmonger' (to refer to a hardware store) and 'pail' (in reference to a bucket) being but two of such antiquated favourites of his. It seems, too, that wherever Peter goes he has the ability subliminally to transform all of those around him into characters in the *carry on* that is his life. A notable occasion of this was when, in a hotel in Vienna, Peter left the majority of his lay clothes (about a week's worth) in a 'laundry pail' which had been kindly put to his service in the room where he was staying. The chambermaid, having obtained quiriness by osmosis, and whilst Peter was out shouting at pigeons in Stephansplatz, decided not to take his clothes away for pressing, but to throw them all out on account of the 'laundry pail' actually being a bin. Peter, struggling to understand that others do not always have the exact *modus pensandi* as he, was not impressed.

It is true, and I speak from experience, that spending time with Peter will have one adopting his mannerisms quite quickly: the use of ‘*imma*’ at the start of sentences, the strange Maltese inflections that govern a whole sentence, walking at a slower pace as he does not have ‘long feet’. Would that one, however, were able to follow as easily his example of virtue: his care for the poor prompting quiet acts of charity which went (so he thought) unnoticed; his great love for and dedication to biblical science, and his ability to share the fruits of this in a humble, edifying and un-conceited way; his faithfulness to prayer and the joy of the Gospel; his generosity and ability to make all those who gathered around him feel valued, wanted and loved as a brother.

Peter, as you continue your journey in Malta, continuing the work of biblical formation in that great land of ‘uninterrupted Catholicism’ know that, while we will miss you terribly, we share the joy of the Church in Malta, which regains a great man, a supreme intellect, a fine example and, above all, a faithful, joyful and holy priest. God bless you.

James Finnegan

Rev. Anthony Fyk

Upon first meeting Anthony on the streets of Rome, as he introduced himself as belonging to the Diocese of Portsmouth, I confess that this did raise eyebrows. While the diocese is of considerable size – ranging from Oxford to the Channel Islands – his accent had me wondering if it had expanded into North America. Nevertheless, Anthony has made himself completely and utterly at home in Portsmouth, and we are all the better for it.

Originally from Edmonton, Canada, Anthony has joined the Diocese of Portsmouth with a wealth of previous academic experience: a BA in History and Art History from his studies in Canada, a Master’s in Theology from his time in the United States, the all-important STB from the Angelicum, and finally a Licentiate in Liturgical Theology from the University of the Holy Cross (‘Santa Croce’).

Anthony, having completed a pastoral year in the Cathedral (2018-19), brings to his diocese a great knowledge of its history, at times putting to shame native residents. An index-like knowledge of the parishes, parish priests and recent clergy moves shows how much he really has made Portsmouth his home. This enthusiasm extends to the archives both in Rome and at home, spending his ‘free time’ in the VEC Archives and doing various research projects.

Anthony’s attention to detail has been on display for all to see: stints in the common room, library and as the College MC were followed by his election as Deputy Senior Student. Then, following the news that the then Senior Student would not be returning to the College in autumn 2020, Anthony took on his mantle, assisting the New Men in settling into the College and leading the seminary student community through the new Covid measures, various protocols and the inevitable changes with almost clinical efficiency – arguably one of the most difficult phases in the College’s modern history.



Although his stint as 'SS' was shorter than most, it was certainly a unique time. He always made clear his availability to discuss student concerns or to receive their comments. Anthony was instrumental in the compilation of the annual student report, including a summary of the work of the various committees and a transparent exposition of their financial situation.

Anthony is quiet and gentle natured, and I think it is safe to conclude that he is more of a listener than a speaker. Although more at home with a book than at the bar, he is by no means a recluse, and can often be found in a variety of '*librerie*' or visiting Rome's many churches, museums and historical sites.

We wish Anthony all the best as he returns to England and prepares for ordination to the priesthood in July 2021. Our prayers go with him.

Jack Ryan

Rev. Elliot Hanson

Many people would start a note such as this by defining the man in question by his nationality. This simple foreigner shall not. Rather, the key to understanding Elliot Hanson is the mere experience of him walking down the corridor in the early morning, only to be met with the greeting, "sweet Jesus, come quick and make it stop."

Those of a more cynical mind would use this as an excuse for a Freudian self-projection, but alas, there is more than meets the eye. Granted, every seminarian finds the 6.45am morning starts a bit difficult, and one often craves a slightly later beginning to the day. Yet, one will always find Elliot there at the prescribed time, and often way before that. "Out of obligation" I hear cynical minds saying. I hate to disappoint the readers, but this frank Welshman also has an unshakable faith in God, which cannot fail to touch his fellow brethren.

Elliot merely put words to the simple sentiments of any seminarian, namely that life in seminary is a demanding one. And he would know – after all, he has been through two seminaries. Having said that, and ignoring the failed attempts of introducing Allen Hall breviary tunes to the VEC, Elliot's integration to the English College has been rather smooth.

This begs the question of the elephant in the room, namely, this man's provenance from the Principality of Wales. "About time" many would say. Again, there is more than meets the eye. Rumours have it that in his first year in this College, with people awaiting a Welshman, a member of the community turned to the gentleman from Newcastle (the current Editor) and asked him, "so, where in Wales are you from?"

The question is revealing indeed. The proud son of Wales does everything in his power to hide his provenance, after all. Apart from on the Feast of Saint David, where suddenly this posh, well-spoken Brit would invoke his newfound Welshness. But let us not dwell on nationalistic sympathies, or the lack thereof, since the man for whom I am writing this note prefers to keep his eyes on the Kingdom of God. After what might seem like a long introduction, this is actually the key to understanding Elliot Hanson.



A mere human, aspiring to follow Christ in everyday life, whilst being ready to give everything for the people of God. Rarely will one meet such a combination of normality and sanctity in a person training for priesthood. A combination which provides a bridge between all sorts of people, pulling them back to reality and the simple truths of the Gospel. After all, what else could possibly cause such a longwinded journey to the Catholic faith, other than the truths of the Gospel and everything these truths entail?

Those who have met Elliot will know that he meets people with the attitude befitting of a future priest, namely the attitude of meeting fellow brethren in Christ. He might one day be “Father” but from what I know of Elliot, he will always be a Christian brother. Merely a man of God who wants to serve the Church and the people of God with his life. What more could one want?

As someone far away from Elliot’s diocese, I can only envy the Archdiocese of Cardiff. They are not merely receiving a man who has been through seminary. They are receiving a man whose kindness never falters, whose smile never ceases, whose charity is ever-growing, and whose faith is in God alone. May the Good Lord bless him and the people whom he will serve.

Joachim Teigen

Torbjørn Holt

I was struggling to think of a suitable introduction for Torbjørn’s leaver’s note until one day at supper, he came up with the perfect phrase: “I am many things, but I am *certainly* not normal!” It is fair to say that this sentence perfectly sums up Torbjørn; it has become perfectly clear to us that this well-travelled, well-dressed and eloquently spoken man is very different from many naïve, unknowing seminarians like myself who arrive in Rome for their first year of seminary formation.

Torbjørn brought to the community a wealth of pastoral ministry and experience, having travelled to 73 countries around the world and having spent 27 years in ministry in the Church of Norway before having been received into the full communion of the Catholic Church in January 2020. He also brought his ‘unique’ dress sense with him, turning up daily in his collection of brightly coloured shirts, ties and suit jackets in various colours that would put Joseph’s coat to shame! Not only has this made him easily identifiable around the College, but he has also been seen around the various bars and restaurants around the *Campo de’ Fiori* where he appears to be a source of confusion regarding his profession. He has been identified by both waiters and clientele alike as someone obviously professional, most likely a university lecturer, given that he had a theology book close to hand. However, this opens up many conversations, and many of my walks to a bar or restaurant with Torbjørn have started off as innocent trip for a quick cup of coffee, only for us to return to the College many hours later after several drinks, *aperitivi* and a lack of work done.

Coming into Torbjørn’s room is like entering a completely different world, and if the bear dressed in a cope and mitre acquired from certain shops selling clerical attire did



not demonstrate this, the bust purchased from the Vatican Museum gift shop certainly did. In addition, the purchase of an iPhone, which ended up replacing the College's camera for a while, helped to contribute to his self-proclaimed title of liking the good things in life. It also helped to counteract the lack of travelling he was able to do due to the pandemic restrictions. One fascinating thing that Torbjørn told me at Christmas was that the four months he had spent in Rome to that date was the longest time he had spent in one place as an adult, without travelling to another city for either work or leisure.

Torbjørn does indeed enjoy travelling. However, moving around Rome for either work or leisure is also done in a different way from most. Upon hearing that some students were going to be participating in the seven churches pilgrimage, Torbjørn's initial reaction was of complete shock that it was possible to walk that distance. However, after having thought about it, he decided that it would be possible... by travelling between each church in a taxi! It's fair to say that it *probably* wouldn't have been worth the time waiting for the other pilgrims to arrive, and so Torbjørn made the wise decision not to take part.

After having written all this, however, I end by saying that Torbjørn's attitude to life is one which has increasingly struck me as the year has gone on. He is one of the most generous people whom I have ever met, and his wisdom and knowledge have been manifest through his deep but private faith, which is evident through his actions. Despite being a theologian, Torbjørn nourishes this part of his life with a pastoral approach, which is perfectly summed up by C.S. Lewis, the author on whom he wrote his *Licence tesina*: "True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less." This is the Christian life which Torbjørn lives out daily. *Lykke til* for the future and I'm sure our paths will cross soon!

Benjamin Sinclair

Rev. David Irwin

Having lived opposite David for a number of years on the *Montserrat* corridor during his first stint at the English College, I am happy to confirm that he was, for the most part, clean and generally polite. His hours were strange and his furniture seemed to move around a lot for reasons never entirely clear; the configuration he settled on appeared to necessitate his vaulting over a desk in order to get into bed. When he moved to the Common Room corridor, a new bed was bought. Viewing this 'high sleeper', with desk underneath and mattress accessible by ladder, one could only admire David's commitment to physical exercise while imagining the exertions involved in his scaling its heights.



When not mastering the art of interior design, David could be found playing the organ (mercifully infrequently) or hosting members of the North American College (extremely frequently). Thad, Chad, Brad... their names varied but the resulting impression was of a seminarian who felt very at home with our cousins across the Atlantic. This enthusiasm for all things American extended to the dining table: David was highly

adept at sniffing out the latest burger bar or making yet another trip to the Hard Rock Café, bypassing Roman cuisine's famously bland and unappetising offerings. There was even a touch of stateside self-confidence in David's many Advent show performances, though what P.T. Barnum would have made of his becassocked and meticulously choreographed performance of a Latin 'Twelve Days of Christmas' alongside Guido Amari we shall never know. The greatest show on earth it was not.

David fully embraced the Roman experience. Over his years in Rome, he developed an encyclopaedic knowledge of the various eateries and coffee bars in the local vicinity of the College. David would regularly instigate 'pizza gitas' and even during the time of the Covid pandemic one could hear his loud acclamations of "let's order food in!", always followed by "I'm going to the gym tomorrow." I never actually found out if David ever graced the gymnasium with his presence. Nor have I ever met a person who partakes of so much coffee. Usually at some point during the day I would have a knock at the door summoning to coffee, usually in the "hip and trendy" surroundings of David's favourite café, Barnum.

Aside from the fun memories, I think David's departure from the College will leave a huge gap. David has a tremendous love for Christ, the Catholic Church and the priesthood, which was evident to all who were close to him. This shone through particularly in his service to the community as Deputy Senior Student in his final year in the house. He was, of course, the last remaining student who had witnessed life at College during the rectorship of Nicholas Hudson. David very much took to heart Mgr Hudson's conviction that the "fifth pillar" of priestly formation, in addition to the four set out in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, should be hospitality. Because of his many years spent in Rome he knew many people. I can recall many occasions when I was walking around the city with David and he would see someone he knew. For David, Rome became very much a second home.

David's walk of faith now takes him overseas. He is returning to the very place that has nurtured his vocation throughout his whole life: the west of Ireland. I know that he will serve the people there with all his passion and zeal. We shall certainly miss him here and he will always be welcome back. In the meantime, David, *Go gcoinní Dia i mbos A láimhe thú!*

Fr Francis Murphy and Ryan Browne

Fr Dominic Jenkinson

It's easy to imagine that, when Dominic Jenkinson first walked through the doors of our hallowed institution as a first year seminarian fresh out of Valladolid, neither the Venerable English College nor the eldest son of the formidable Jenkinson clan of Rotherham knew quite what to make of each other. After all, Fr Dominic's own memories of his early days in the house often give the impression of corridors stuffed to bursting with students sporting trousers of the most eccentric hue and devoting their waking hours to a heady mixture of opera, Renaissance motets



and gin (not necessarily in that order). While the gin was never an issue for as broad-palated a man as Dominic, it's fair to say that neither Puccini nor polyphony ever really appealed as much as football or Johnny Cash, and he has – perhaps disappointingly – never once yielded to whatever faint yearning he must surely have felt to don a pair of claret corduroys and a cravat every once in a while. (Not in public, anyway...)

Upon finding themselves in such rarefied surroundings as those of the VEC, circa 2014, some fresh-faced young students might have wilted and drawn back. Being neither fresh-faced nor prone to wilting in any circumstances, Dominic did neither, but approached his new life in Rome with the same aplomb, good humour and generosity of spirit which continue to make an impression on those who meet him for the first time today. Few people are as naturally hospitable as he, as a succession of nervous first years and many passing visitors would testify. Such hospitality is, of course, to be admired. It must be said, however, that it does come with a health warning. As many will know, it is a fearful thing for one's waistline to be in close proximity to Fr Dominic Jenkinson wielding a serving dish and channelling his inner Mrs Doyle, as he strives relentlessly to ensure that every last morsel of the BIBOS banquet is consumed by his fellow diners, whether willing or (more often) not. Indeed, in the days before Covid, perhaps nobody ever invited as many people to meals at the VEC as Dominic, and it is surely beyond doubt that no-one in the history of the College has ever pronounced quite so many refectory creations to be “beaaauutiful!”, or (to use his favourite Italian word), “*meraviglioso!*”

Speaking of Italian, it would be all too easy to dismiss Fr Dominic's efforts at mastering the language of Dante. To do so would be to overlook the fact that, while his approach might best be described as unorthodox, in encounters with the good people of Rome and beyond, he often communicates far more effectively than many of those who insist on bothering themselves with mere trivialities like grammar, syntax and vocabulary. Who else, after all, would think of conveying his delight at the quality of the crispy duck on offer at a local Vietnamese restaurant by summoning the waitress and telling her, with due solemnity, “*il quack-quack – meraviglioso!!*”? In any case, even if his refreshingly pragmatic use of the language left his Italian examiners unimpressed – sticklers that they are! – this proved to be, in his own words, a happy fault, since it meant he could pursue theology at his beloved Angelicum instead.

Having completed his Spirituality Licence, Fr Dominic is now returning to the Diocese of Hallam, where his deep faith and warmth of character will make him a huge asset. He has certainly made the most of his time in Italy – whether spending time at the Villa (his favourite spot) or exploring further afield, endearing himself to the Community of Sant'Egidio and the homeless of Rome, demonstrating the redoubtable power of the traditional English centre forward while representing the no-nonsense North against the opera-obsessed South at Palazzola, or generating a peculiar mixture of fascination and alarm in those who witness his unique brand of “dancing” in the latter stages of a common room party. I, for one, look forward to visiting him on the wrong side of the Pennines sometime soon. I may even take him a box of the coveted Lancashire Tea, if only to hear those famous words once again – “Absolute Impediment!”

Martin Fyles

Fr Aayrton Muscat

Upon seeing Fr Aayrton Muscat for the first time, you may be forgiven for mistaking him for a burly security guard at a papal liturgy rather than perhaps a Maltese priest, with a warm heart and gentle nature. I remember the first time I spoke properly with Aayrton only a few days after I had arrived at the English College in September 2019. I was greeted by his incredibly tall presence, dressed in a strange montage of tracksuit bottoms and a T-shirt (ever the classic day off, *dress-down* look of Aayrton!), pieced together with the most striking trainers. However, as is indeed often the case, looks can be frightfully deceiving. Very quickly, I found a very dear friend in Aayrton and a close confidant, as I'm sure many people in the community found to be the case.



Aayrton arrived at the College as a deacon back in September 2018, after having been asked by Archbishop Charles Scicluna to embark on a Licentiate in Family Studies at the JPPI Institute. Now a priest and securely furnished with theological training, he bids the English College farewell after two and a half years. Despite his time in Rome having been disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, he clearly made a significant impact on the community – students and staff alike. I'm sure we shall all miss Aayrton's clear-cut and practical homilies, both those heard on Sundays, and those on a weekday, which were more akin to John Cage's *4'33"*, than the *Christus Vincit* intoned by a certain member of our community.

Every community has its particular characters and I think Aayrton established himself concretely as a listener, and indeed, a person who always goes out of his way to help others in numerous ways. I know many people at the College who admire Aayrton for his total availability to people, even if the times were perhaps inconvenient for him. I know also that Aayrton will miss the hallowed halls of the English College. It became his home as he set out on his journey of priesthood. He will miss the fun of living alongside us. I remember that, if someone were to propose an adventure, he would always be keen to go and explore a part of Italy he had never seen before. Although he will no longer live among the community, I'm sure that we will be keen to welcome Aayrton back, and certainly we look forward to seeing him back in Rome for inevitable visits.

Overall, and in all honesty, I think Aayrton can be summarised as a man of opposites: tall, yet quiet and reflective; outgoing, yet pensive and caring; intelligent, yet humble; prayerful, yet pragmatic; honest, yet benevolent and caring. A *liquorice allsorts*, one might say. The greatest witness of the priesthood is someone who can be a monstrosity to the world, whereby in their whole person, a particular part will resonate with someone and reveal the immense love of God. This is Aayrton in a nutshell. Wherever he goes, he is himself and lives out his priesthood as he is.

Aayrton, as you return to Malta to minister to the people of God, know that you have left seminarians with a stellar example of priesthood. We are all willing you on as you continue to live out your priesthood, and we bid you well with those most tender words that, we pray, you will hear on the last day: "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Mt 25:23)

Ryan Browne

“THE FREEDOM YOU DREAM OF,
THE JOURNEY YOU EXPECT”.



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The Minutes of the 151st Annual General Meeting of The Association of the Venerable College of St Thomas *de Urbe*

Tuesday 27 October 2020

Forty-one members of the Association attended the AGM: John Ainslie, John Allen, Thomas Arthill, Liam Bradley, Michael Burke, Vincent Brennan, Anthony Coles, Michael Cooley, Stephen Coonan, Tom Cooper, John Cunningham, Paul Daly, Bryan Dazeley, Anthony Dearman, John Deehan, Frank Fallon, John Fegan, Kevin Firth, Peter Fleetwood, Philip Gillespie, Michael Griffin, Raglan Hay-Will, Sean Healy, Edward Koroway, Chris Larkman, Tony Laird, Mike Lang (FOV), Damien McGrath, Leo Mooney, Fergus Mulligan, Gerard Murray, Guy Nicholls, Seamus O'Boyle, Peter Purdue, Michael Quinlan, Aaron Spinelli, Adrian Towers, Francis Wahle, Philip Whitmore, Anthony Wilcox, Mark Woods.

1. Prayer to the Holy Spirit

The Meeting began at 19:00 via Zoom with Fr Paul Daly in the Chair and Association Secretary Fr Aaron Spinelli taking minutes. Proceedings began with the Prayer to the Holy Spirit and welcomes to the Rector, to members and to Anthony Coles and Mike Lang representing the Friends of the *Venerabile*.

2. Apologies and best wishes

Received from Archbishop Pat Kelly, Bishop Crispian Hollis, Philip Andrews, Chris Beirne, Austin Bennett, Chris Bergin, Paul Bruxby, Mark Crisp, Tom Finnigan, David Forrester, Matthew Habron, Mark Harold, Andrew Headon, Tim Galligan, Miguel Garnett, Bruce Harbert, Tim Hopkins, Edward Jarosz, Paul Keane, Gerry O'Collins, Jim Overton, David McLoughlin, Patrick Mileham, Peter Morgan, Robert Murphy, Tony Myers, Terry Phipps, Robert Reardon, Paul Rowan, Gerard Skinner, David Standley, Mervyn Tower, Michael Tuck, William Young.

3. Minutes of 150th AGM

These were approved by the meeting.

4. Matters Arising

Mark Lewis and the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) – This is still ongoing, but much progress had been made with the Charities Commission and we are coming to the end of the process of the CIO's establishment.

5. The *De Profundis* for deceased members

Fr Terry Rodgers, Fr Frank Rice, Mr Christopher Murphy, Fr Charles Lloyd, Mgr Alessandro Manenti, Mgr Bryan Chestle, Archbishop Michael Bowen, Fr Jerome Bertram, Mgr Provost Peter Cookson, Fr Tom Creagh-Fuller, Mr Francis Poku, Canon Eddie Matthews, Fr Antony Conlon, Fr Michael Downey, Fr Charles Briggs.

6. Prayer for sick members

Prayers were said for Chris Lough, Andrew Hulse, Nick Coote, Christopher Lightbound, Antony Jones.

7. Chairman's Remarks

The Chair remarked on the unusual gathering in unusual times. There were many great ideas for this year's AGM. However, things are postponed and not cancelled, and it is hoped celebrations will take place next year.

8. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer gave his report – here follows a summary:

- a. 2019 Accounts were filed within the Charity Commission deadline. Given the current Covid situation, it was not possible to present these to the AGM before submission (full set were sent with the notification of this AGM). For 2020, it is proposed to complete the accounts in advance of the June 2021 AGM and to present them at the meeting prior to filing.
- b. Investment valuations:
Y.E. 2018 £942k
Y.E. 2019 £1,080k
Q1 2020 £880k
Q2 2020 £1,279k (including the

Chestle legacy of £227k @ June 2020 valuation)

Q3 2020 £1,324k (this valuation is approximately the same as at Y.E. 2019 allowing for the Chestle legacy)

- c. Income: The Projected yield from investments is forecast to be £17-20k/annum, allowing for reductions in dividend and other factors as a result of Covid. Subscriptions annually are approximately £5.5k and are in a slow decline. Therefore, total income is approximately £23-25k/annum.
Expenditure: Approximately £33-35k/annum, consisting of College Grant £20k, Top year grant £0.5-1.0k, Legal/professional £8-10k, *The Venerabile Magazine* £4k.
Accepting that it is anticipated that legal fees will reduce once the new trust is established there is still an excess of expenditure of approximately £10k/annum which will need to be drawn from investments. We currently aim to look for capital growth, but the level is around 1.3-1.5% which is not sufficient to support the additional costs. This will be reviewed by the Trustees.
- d. Gift Aid declarations have all been submitted. The total expected Gift Aid refund is £2,695 (including prior years' claim). To date we have received £2,100. The costs to collect this were approximately £0.5k.
- e. Banking activity is now all done on-line via AIB Internet banking.
- f. Due to the portfolio owning French shares, there is a need to submit a tax return to the French authorities. We used to be exempt, but the ruling changed this year. The shares have been sold to avoid this in future as this had required additional work by Ashtons Legal at a cost of £1,500.

Thanks were given to Damien McGrath for and for the great work he had done in bringing finance matters up to date.

9. Rector's Report

The meeting expressed its thanks to the Rector for his detailed report on the challenging circumstances of the year.¹ A particular note of thanks from the Rector on the two bursaries provided by the Association was acknowledged.

10. Election of new members

The following were elected to Ordinary membership from the summer: Jan Nowotnik, John Waters, Ryan Service, Dominic Jenkinson, Matthew King, Piotr Wygnanski, Andrew Coy, Sean Elliott, Albert Lawes. A note of congratulations would be sent to them.

It was proposed by the Chair that Pamela Coote be admitted as an Associate Member – the meeting was unanimous in agreement.

11. Elections and Appointments

- a. Election of Chairman and President of the Roman Association – John Allen was elected.
- b. Councillors of the Roman Association – for clarity, membership of the Council is defined as Trustees, Councillors, Rector, Past Presidents, up to 15 members but 3 elected each year for a fixed term and then must not be elected until a gap of a year has passed.
The meeting elected two new Councillors: Seamus O'Boyle and Liam Bradley (until 2023) to replace Kevin Firth, Gerard Murray and Matthew Habron. The new councillors join

Mark Woods, Patrick Mileham and Mervyn Tower (until 2022) and Philip Andrews, John Fegan and Mark Harold (until 2021). One other shall be asked to join the newly elected councillors.

- c. Election of a New Trustee of the Roman Association – Mark Harold.

12. 152nd AGM

It is hoped that this will be celebrated at Palazzola and incorporate many of the postponed events of the previous year. The dates of the meeting are to be 13th/14th June to 18th. It is anticipated that a visit to Monte Porzio will feature.

13. 2020 Martyrs' Day gatherings

Given the various lockdowns and travel restrictions these will not take place this year. A proposal that some Masses may be streamed for Old Romans and Friends of the *Venerabile*.

14. Any Other Business

Portrait of Mgr Bryan Chestle in the College – The members and the Rector approved of this to go ahead.

There was discussion as to marking Joyce Hunter's contribution to Palazzola as well as marking 100 years of the presence of the Piacentini family at Palazzola. The Council of the Association will meet to discuss and to come up with suggestions.

North American Friends of the *Venerabile* – this was successfully being formed, encouraged and promoted.

A Grant for the Archives was discussed. This was to be further explored by the Association. The meeting then concluded with the Chair encouraging members to continue online if they so wished.

ENDNOTES

¹ For the Rector's Report, see *The Venerabile* XXXVII, No. 1 (2020): 102-104.

Rector's Report to the Roman Association 2020-21

The Roman Association AGM could not take place in June 2021 as planned, owing to the health crisis. For the record, there follows a report which might in other circumstances have been made at that meeting.

We began the year with a sizeable intake, including five first-years, of whom four were from England and one from Norway. We also had a Canadian, transferring to Rome for first-cycle theology. As he had spent his propaedeutic year at Valladolid with some of our students, he was effectively rejoining them after studying philosophy elsewhere. We had an Anglican exchange student, joining us for the first six months of the year. And we had a convert clergyman, formerly chaplain to the Norwegian Lutheran community in London.

Then there were two Irishmen transferring from the Irish College in Rome. The Irish Bishops took the decision in June 2020 no longer to send their seminarians to the Irish College, although it would continue as a house for priests and for visiting American seminarians. There were two Irish seminarians whose bishops wanted them to remain in Rome, so we were approached. We are saddened by the close of an important chapter in the history of the Irish College, but glad to be able to help out in a difficult situation. Our two Irishmen have been a fine addition to our community.

This meant that we started the year with 26 seminarians.

The first-year seminarians are: Ryan Hawkes and Jack Ryan (Portsmouth), Jonathan Henry (Birmingham), Benjamin Sinclair (Hexham and Newcastle) and David Ottersen (Oslo). The two Portsmouth men are in receipt of a bursary from the Roman Association to support them for their first two years. Our Canadian is William Meehan (Hamilton), the convert clergyman is Torbjørn Holt (Oslo), the Irishmen are Mark O'Farrell (Waterford and Lismore) and John O'Laverty (Down and Connor), and our Anglican Exchange student is Sion Hughes Carew.

In February we gained a further seminarian – Hugh Donleavy from Liverpool, who transferred to us from Oscott after an extended pastoral placement during the first semester of this year.

We also gained two new members of the formation staff this year, as our former Spiritual Director, Fr Anthony Doe, and our former Pastoral Tutor, Fr John Metcalfe, had both completed their terms of office and returned to England. Thus we welcomed Fr Konrad Grech, SJ, from Malta, as our new Spiritual Director and Fr Michael Doody (Leeds) as Pastoral Tutor.

We had six student priests this year, three of them newly ordained, returning to complete their licences, Fr Alexander Balzanella (Westminster), Fr Dominic Jenkinson (Hallam) and Fr Piotr Wygnanski (East Anglia). These three joined the two Maltese priests – Fr

Peter Ellul and Fr Aayrton Muscat – and Fr Steven Billington (Leeds), who also completed their licences during the current academic year.

It was a great joy to be able to reconvene as a community in September, six months after the evacuation. Even so, it was an anxious time, as we had to balance the risks of the continuing health crisis against our community's need to operate in as "normal" a fashion as possible, for the sake of our sanity and the formation of the students.

New protocols for worship and for common living had to be agreed at an early stage. Sadly, we were unable to welcome guests at any point during the year, although we made one or two exceptions for bishops with business in Rome or business in the College. Distancing in the College church and in the refectory helped to keep us safe, as did daily temperature-taking and frequent sanitising of hands. Gatherings of any kind, especially in private rooms, were discouraged. The distribution of Holy Communion had to be thought through carefully and masks were worn when singing. Priests turned their own pages in the missal and care was taken that only one person would ever drink from any particular chalice before it was taken away for washing.

We set aside an infirmary area in the College – the last three rooms on the Common Room Corridor nearest to the Nuns' Chapel. As it happened, we have not had occasion to use it, but it helped us on numerous occasions to be able to indicate that such an area had been prepared.

When the community returned in September, we were all tested for Covid antibodies. Having obtained a clean bill of health for the whole community, we were able to relax. If infection were to enter our

community at this stage, it could only be as a result of contacts made in Rome.

These protocols allowed us to resume as 'normal' a life as was possible under the circumstances. We lived in constant fear of infection arriving. The dreaded day came when one of our student priests tested positive on Friday 6 November. This meant that we were locked down as a community, unable to go out of the building, for ten days. Happily, that Friday was the day of the New Men's Show, so we already had in-house entertainment lined up for our first evening of isolation. Ten days later, on 16 November, we all tested negative and were free once more.

The next major hurdle was the Christmas vacation. We recommended that our students remain in Italy, although we did not make this mandatory, realising that some would have compelling reasons to travel, even if this involved quarantine. About half remained in Italy, and we spent a most enjoyable Christmas at Palazzola, followed by New Year in College. This meant that we were able to celebrate Saint Thomas' Day in the College church on the 850th anniversary of his martyrdom, an unexpected benefit of the health crisis.

The emergence of a new variant in the UK during the Christmas vacation meant that most of our travellers had to do quarantine on their return. We also had to ensure that they were collected at the airport in private vehicles. Happily, all went smoothly and 'normal' life could be resumed at the end of the quarantine period.

Movement in Italy became particularly restricted during the spring, when Lazio was classified as an amber zone and occasionally even as red. As a community we were thrown very much on our own resources. It was a real hardship not to

have the opportunities for interaction with others that would be a part of the normal Roman experience, but we recognised that we were more fortunate than most, as we had the benefit of a large house and a sizeable community.

Infection struck again just as we thought we were emerging from the crisis. National and regional statistics were looking very promising, but as of 17 May, two of the positive cases in Lazio were in our own community, both members of the formation staff. A further period of isolation followed, but once again we were released after ten days when the community obtained a clean bill of health.

* * * * *

We began the year with ten seminarians in 1st Cycle Theology at the Gregorian University and one in 2nd Cycle Canon Law. At the Angelicum we had seven seminarians in 1st Cycle Philosophy, four in 1st Cycle Theology (that number rose to five with the arrival of Hugh Donleavy), and one in 2nd Cycle Theology. At Santa Croce we had one seminarian in 1st Cycle Philosophy and two in 2nd Cycle Theology.

We had planned to begin the year with a six-day pilgrimage to the Holy Land, but this had to be postponed on account of the health crisis. Instead, we made a short retreat at Palazzola, led by our new Spiritual Director, Fr Konrad Grech, SJ. In preparation for Advent, we had a day of recollection led by Fr James Hanvey, SJ. As in previous years, we arranged Forty Hours of exposition, beginning on the Saturday morning and continuing all day and all night. The Advent recollection began after supper on the Saturday and concluded with Solemn Vespers and Benediction on the Sunday evening – the end of the Forty

Hours. Those seminarians preparing for ministries or orders had an opportunity for a further retreat in late February or early March with their year-group. These retreats were made at the Passionist retreat house on the Coelian Hill in Rome, as by that stage the health crisis made it impossible to travel further afield. Our Holy Week retreat was led, in College, by Fr Edmund Power, OSB.

Rosanna Giacometto continues to see many of our seminarians for one-to-one human formation sessions. Fr John Sakai SJ from the Gregorian University, Fr Antonio Delfau SJ from the Jesuit Curia and Fr John Breen from the Beda have also provided valuable assistance in this area.

As it was not possible to welcome visitors to the College, much of the input normally given by visiting speakers had to be given electronically, by means of Zoom or other such programmes. This included our safeguarding training from Liam Ring and our voice-coaching sessions from Tish Nicoll. It also affected our first Human Development weekend, given from the United States by Fr Philip Bochanski, the Director of Courage International, on the theme ‘Clarity and Charity: Understanding the Church’s Approach to Same-Sex Attraction’. The second Human Development weekend was given in person by our own Director of Heritage Collections, Maurice Whitehead, on the theme ‘Understanding, protecting and promoting the cultural heritage of the Church: an introduction’.

The weekly pastoral classes during term-time include *Homiletics*, *RCIA*, *the ministries of Lector and Acolyte* and *Preparation for Diaconal Ministry*. These are led by the resident members of staff with occasional outside input. In these classes we emphasise the pastoral skills that

are needed in our particular English and Welsh context.

Pastoral opportunities in Rome were severely curtailed by the health crisis. Visits to nursing homes and even offering soup to the homeless were disallowed by Government regulations. A growth area was the provision of online catechesis, which a number of students did for their home parishes or dioceses. In Rome it was possible to continue providing catechesis for children preparing for First Holy Communion or Confirmation in local parishes, although much of the catechesis had to be given online. Vatican media work remained a viable option.

On 19 March it was announced that a new Rector would be arriving during the summer of 2021. A warm welcome to Fr Stephen Wang (Westminster)! On the same evening I announced that I was about to obtain Italian citizenship after trying for nearly four years. I duly took the oath on 31 March and received my passport on 23 June.

Missionary placements proved impossible both last summer and in the summer of 2021, but it is hoped that they can be resumed in the future.

In planning the *Villeggiatura*, we had to take account of the fact that many of our students had not been away from Italy since September. Moreover, the opportunity for most of them to be vaccinated in Italy seemed unlikely to arise before July. In order to give them a decent break and to give them the opportunity to be vaccinated at home, we decided to abbreviate the *Villeggiatura* this year. So, everything was telescoped into an 8-day period, instead of the usual 15 days. Lectors were instituted on 27 June, acolytes on 28 June, candidates were admitted on 2 July and deacons ordained on 4 July, after which the students were free to return to their homes.

It was on Sunday 4 July, then, that three of our students were ordained deacon at Palazzola – Toby Duckworth (Birmingham), Elliot Hanson (Cardiff) and John O’Lavery (Down and Connor). Daniel Ebert (Copenhagen) is due to be ordained in Denmark later in the summer.

During the year, two recent alumni were ordained priests: Fr Andrew Coy (Northampton) on 25 March and Fr Albert Lawes (Plymouth) on 25 June. *Ad multos annos!* Deacon Anthony Fyk is due to be ordained a priest in Portsmouth Cathedral on 31 July.

Financially, the College is still able to meet its running costs, although the declining number of students has brought its challenges. Rents received from the tenants in the various College apartments continue to provide a useful additional source of income.

The Roman Association has generously offered a further bursary for a new student beginning at the College in September 2021. It has been awarded to a Birmingham student: Luke Theobald. This bursary complements the existing bursaries awarded to two Portsmouth students.

In the meantime, building works have continued. The summer of 2020 saw the continuation of the clear-up operation of the cellar areas, reported last year. Now spare furniture is kept in a single space, and an inventory has been drawn up, making it easy to check what we have. Bruno the handyman has his own tool compartment there, while the crypt beneath the Martyrs’ Chapel will soon be usable for exhibitions of local artisans.

The “Broomhead” column in the colonnade next to the tank has been restored.

The graffito of the name of the pre-Emanicipation Apostle of the North is once again in full view, as are those of Wiseman and Errington. This particular job was made possible thanks to the generosity of a member of the Roman Association.

The Common Room Corridor has been repainted and restored. This was last done in 2004, thanks to a gift from the Roman Association. The floor now shines in a way that it did not even do in the last restoration. Various student rooms along that corridor have also been redecorated. There is now a rolling four-year programme for the redecoration of student corridors. This summer we will be sprucing up the 44 corridor.

The tank is now maintained by College staff (Vice Rector and Bruno). They had training in the methods of pool maintenance in the spring, and are able to keep the tank clean and safe with a weekly routine, monitoring filters, the pump, chlorine and pH levels. We will be acquiring a winter cover for the low season. We have also recently acquired some pool furniture, which was well used in the pleasantly hot June and early July.

The floor of the Archives Office was discovered to be unsafe in the Autumn. Maurice had noticed some subsidence and we thought it prudent to empty the office of furniture and shelving. Tonnes of rubble used in the original construction a century ago had had an effect on the stability of the

joists. The floor has at last been restored after months of waiting for the necessary authorisations. New shelving will go in the office to complement what is already there. It is hoped that a substantial newly-arrived donation of books on the history of the English and Welsh Catholicism will be housed there, and Maurice will be able to return to his office. In the meantime, for practically the whole of the current year, he gallantly relocated to a spare room on the Salone, and to the *Salotto*. An extra stop for the lift in the Archives Tower has been added, so that the lift now stops on the mezzanine level, outside the restored Archives Office. This work was made possible thanks to a generous donation from the North American Friends of the VEC.

The LED project has been completed, and much rewiring has taken place. The flats and properties are all occupied. The roof of one of the properties has had to be repaired, and work is almost finished there.

On behalf of everyone at the College, I'd like to thank the Old Romans for their support and their prayers in the course of the eight years I have spent as Rector, as well as their generous contributions to the work of the College. It is greatly appreciated, and as I return to the back benches, I know that the new Rector will have many reasons to continue to thank the Roman Association.

Mgr Philip Whitmore

News from Old Romans

Arundel & Brighton

A modest number of changes from last year's report, with a small number of 'lockdown' clergy moves. Canon Tony Churchill is parish priest of Ashstead, Surrey. Tony celebrates his Golden Jubilee this year – *Ad multos annos!* Bishop Emeritus Kieran Conry is in Hampshire. Monsignor Michael Jackson continues to help assist in his retirement in the Hove area. Fr Tony Bridson is parish priest of Redhill, Reigate and Merstham. Fr Raglan Hay Will moves from Eastbourne to become parish priest of Haywards Heath. Canon Kieran O' Brien remains parish priest of St Joseph's, Brighton and of St John the Baptist, Kemp Town, Brighton.

Canon Bill Davern is parish priest in Epsom and celebrates his Ruby Jubilee. Canon Rob Esdaile is Parish Priest of Thames Ditton and celebrates his Pearl Anniversary of Ordination. Fr Jonathan How is parish priest of Godalming. Fr Tony Milner moves from Dorking to become parish priest of Southwick and Hangleton.

With the closure of St John's Seminary at Wonersh, Kevin Dring moves to Eastbourne as parish priest. Fr Stephen Dingley is parish priest of Effingham. Fr Stephen Hardaker is parish priest of Oxted. Fr Terry Martin is parish priest of Worthing. Fr Simon Hall becomes parish priest of Dorking. Canon David Parmiter is Dean of Arundel Cathedral. Fr Andrew Pinsent is at the Ian Ramsey Centre at Oxford University. Fr Bruno Witchalls is in Eastbourne as an assistant priest. Fr Aaron Spinelli is parish priest of Horsham. Fr Andrew Moss contin-

ues to work in the United States. Fr Tristan Cranfield is assistant priest in Eastbourne. And finally, Rev. Mark Woods continues as parish deacon at Worthing.

Fr Aaron Spinelli

Clifton

There are no changes since last year. Canon Tony Harding, six years on from the Diamond Jubilee of his ordination, is still our Diocesan Archivist. Michael Healy continues as PP of Witherwood (Bristol) and Chew Magna, Michael Robertson as PP of Fairford and Cricklade on the upper reaches of the Thames, Philip Beisly, across the Cotswolds, as PP of Dursley and Nympsfield, and Colin Mason as PP of Westbury-on-Trym with Henbury, Bristol. Alex (now Anselm Alexander) Redman is one of two parish clergy at Glastonbury, also serving Wells. Parishes across the Diocese are still being supplied, Covid permitting, from Mendip as necessary by Bishop (Emeritus of Portsmouth) Crispian (Sam) Hollis, and your correspondent Canon Thomas Atthill.

Canon Thomas Atthill

Gibraltar

On 1 January 2021, Bishop Carmel Zammit appointed Mgr John Pardo VG as parish priest of St Paul's Parish. He ceased as Cathedral Sub-Administrator. On 19 March he was also appointed Parish Priest of Sacred Heart Church. Mark Miles has been appointed Apostolic Nuncio to Benin and Togo. He was consecrated

titular archbishop of Città Ducale on 25 April 2021 in Gibraltar by Cardinal Pietro Parolin. *Ad multos annos!*

Mgr John Pardo

Hallam

We do actually have two 'movements' this year, of which later. Peter Kirkham is in retirement at Saint Joseph's, Worksop. John Ryan is still at Saint Bede's, Rotherham and Mark McManus at Saint Joseph's, Handsworth is now also chancellor. Adrian Tomlinson presides over all the Chesterfields from the Annunciation at Chesterfield, and over his new assistant, Dominic Jenkinson, but has lost his former assistant, Craig Fitzpatrick who seems to have shuffled across to the Diocese of Leeds, whence he continues as *officialis* of this diocese. Tom Clarke, Anthony Towey and Kevan Grady are as they were. Your correspondent continues at Hathersage and Bamford, but it feels a bit like a year-long supply as he has not actually seen the faces of most of his parishioners, concealed as they are by their masks!

Fr John Metcalfe

Leeds

Changes from 2019 are indicated in **bold** type.

- Right Reverend Marcus Stock, Bishop of Leeds
Bishop's House, 13 North Grange Road, Leeds LS6 2BR
- **Most Reverend Arthur Roche, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments**
00120 Città del Vaticano, Italy
- Most Reverend John Wilson, Archbishop of Southwark

Archbishop's House, 150 St George's Road, London SE1 6HX

- Mgr Basil Loftus
'Braeval', Helmsdale, Sutherland, Scotland KW8 6HH
- Mgr William Steele
Mount St Joseph's Home, Shire Oak Road, Leeds LS6 2DE
- Rev. John A Kelly
4 Hinsley Court, Leeds LS6 2HB
- Rev. Gerald Creasey
5 Hinsley Court, Leeds LS6 2HB
- Rev. Peter Nealon
St Malachy's Presbytery, Nursery Lane, Ovenden, Halifax HX3 5NS
- Canon Kevin Firth
St Joseph's Presbytery, 22 Gisburn Road, Barnoldswick, Lancashire BB18 5HA
- Rev. Christopher Willis
Chaplain to the Carmelite Monastery, Wetherby and Vicar for Religious; residing in Harrogate
- Mgr Andrew Summersgill
St Stephen's Presbytery, Castle View Terrace, Skipton BD23 1NT
- Rev. Russell Wright
St Patrick's Parish, 7900 Bee Ridge Road, Sarasota, FL 34241, USA
- Rev. Malachy Larkin
Sacred Heart & St Patrick's Presbytery, Bolton Brow, Sowerby Bridge HX6 2BA
- Rev. David Bulmer
St Joseph's Presbytery, Church View, Low Street, Sherburn-in-Elmet LS25 6HZ
- Rev. Timothy Swinglehurst
(Episcopal Vicar for Education)
'Ashlea', Hinsley Hall, 62 Headingley Lane, Leeds LS6 2BX

- Mgr Paul Grogan
St Winefride's Presbytery, 54 St Paul's Avenue, Wibsey, Bradford BD6 1ST
- Rev. Stephen Brown
St Wilfrid's Presbytery, Petergate House, 11 High Petergate, York YO1 7EN
- Rev. Gregory Knowles
First Martyrs' Presbytery, 65 Heights Lane, Heaton, Bradford BD9 6HZ
- **Rev. Steven Billington**
St Peter and St Paul Presbytery,
St George's Walk, Standbridge Lane, Wakefield WF2 7NR
- Very Rev. Canon Matthew Habron (Cathedral Dean)
Cathedral House, Great George Street, Leeds LS2 8BE
- Rev. Dennis Cassidy
Parish of St John Mary Vianney, Immaculate Heart of Mary Presbytery, 294 Harrogate Road, Leeds LS17 6LE
- Rev. Michael Doody (Pastoral Director)
Venerable English College, Via di Monserrato, 45, 00186 Rome, Italy
- **Rev. John Carlisle**
English Martyrs Presbytery,
Teddington Avenue, Huddersfield HD5 9HS
- Rev. Marc Homsey
(Chaplain to the Universities of Leeds and Director of Youth Service)
Leeds Universities Catholic Chaplaincy, 5 St Mark's Avenue, Leeds LS2 9BN
- Rev. Martin Kelly
St Mary's Presbytery, 2 Clarence Street, Halifax HX1 5DH
- Rev. Anthony Rosso
St Joseph's Presbytery, Queen's Road, Ingrow, Keighley BD21 1AT

- Rev. Sean Crawley (Bishop's Secretary)
Cathedral House, Great George Street, Leeds LS2 8BE
- Rev. Elliott Wright
St Robert's Presbytery, Robert Street, Harrogate HG1 1HP
- Rev. Benjamin Hilton
Cathedral House, Great George Street, Leeds LS2 8BE

Canon Matthew Habron

Liverpool

Not a great deal has changed for the Old Romans of the Archdiocese of Liverpool since last year's *The Venerable*. The big event in the Archdiocese was *Synod 2020*, which eventually happened in June 2021! A major contribution was made by a small team led by Peter McGrail, from his base at Hope University. If anything has been missed, it is because Mgr Peter Fleetwood is still commuting between Copenhagen and Tórshavn, but has applied for residence in the Faroes, so life should stabilise soon. Brian Newns is in Ince Blundell Nursing Home, should you wish to contact him. Paul Rowan can be contacted at Beaulieu School in St Helier in Jersey, where he is still teaching and celebrating Masses. Archbishop Paul Gallagher is still living "under the shop" in the Apostolic Palace, having recently received the outgoing British Ambassador to the Holy See, Sally Axworthy, into the Catholic Church (Pope Francis received her husband a few years ago). Archbishop Patrick Kelly, at the priests' community in St Marie's, Southport, wrote that he is having problems with mobility, so I'm sure he would appreciate prayers (and maybe even a letter). Mgr John Furnival is at Ss Peter & Paul, Crosby, with Mgr Brian Murphy in the White House, next door. Andrew

Robinson is at Oscott College, teaching Scripture, and Philip Gillespie is the Rector at the Beda College. Gerald Anders serves the parishes of Tarleton and Mawdesley. Mark Drew was recently seen learning Danish and Faroese before supplying in Tórshavn during August. He is based at St Joseph's, Penketh. John McLoughlin is on the other side of Warrington, at St Stephen's, Orford. Francis Marsden is at St Mary's, Chorley and looks after St Joseph's, Anderton. Kevin O'Brien is at Holy Cross, St Helens. Michael O'Dowd is at St Agnes, Eccleston. John Poland is the Archbishop's secretary and works locally and nationally on projects involving Canon Law. David Potter is at St Albert's, Stockbridge Village. Aidan Prescott is Chancellor, and parish priest at St Clare's. Tony Slingo is parish priest at the Heartstone community, which covers Ainsdale and Woodvale. Covid and living hundreds of miles away mean I have, sadly, not seen anything of Paul Crowe, Paul Robbins or Tony Murphy.

Mgr Peter Fleetwood

Menevia

Fr Michael Burke continues to work in the Diocese of Orlando, Florida. Last November he was diagnosed with stage-4 melanoma cancer and has been undergoing immunotherapy treatment since then. Thankfully, this has proved very successful, and he should no longer need treatment from September. Fr Liam Bradley has left the parish of Haverfordwest, although he continues his ministry at Withybush Hospital. Since Easter he has been the Lead Chaplain to Dyfed-Powys Police Force overseeing the multi-faith chaplaincy team, offering pastoral support and sitting on the Police Ethics Committee. Fr Liam's sacramental life centres around the Trappist

community of nuns at Holy Cross Abbey, Whitland, where he is the named chaplain. For his part, Mgr Clyde Hughes-Johnson continues to enjoy retirement at Brecon.

Fr Liam Bradley

Northampton

It was good to have the ordination of Andrew Coy at the Cathedral in March. Andrew is staying in Northampton as an assistant priest. Fr Paul Hardy has had a difficult start to his retirement with ongoing health issues, but Canon John Koenig is flourishing in his new abode in Wellingborough. Mgr Kevin McGinnell still has his education portfolio and his parish of Holy Ghost in the heart of Luton. Fr David Barrett remains at Olney at Our Lady Help of Christians and St Lawrence's. Mgr Sean Healy after twenty years has now stepped down from his responsibilities as Vicar General, but he continues as parish priest of St Teresa's, Beaconsfield and St Dunstan's, Bourne End. He is still hopeful that Fr Andrew Coy will take over as the Northampton correspondent for next year!

Mgr Seán Healy

Plymouth

This year we have lost two of our senior brethren. Canon Kevin Rea who began his Roman career in exile at Stonyhurst, died peacefully at Nazareth House, Plymouth on 28 January 2021 age 96, and Fr Michael Downey at Sherborne on 21 April 2020. Between them, they totalled 134 years of priesthood! But both had restricted funerals, as a result of Covid. Mgr George Hay and Mgr Adrian Toffolo, both ex-Rectors of the VEC, are also resigned from ecclesiastical office, the former living in

Kingskerswell, Devon and the latter in his paternal ancestral home in Friuli.

Mgr Robert Draper, now relieved of Vicar General duties, continues as parish priest in Sherborne, and Fr Michael Wheaton remains as chaplain at Exeter University from which he also serves Crediton. Fr James Barber who had been assistant priest in Barnstaple, has now moved to Poole where he is assisting in the two main parishes and involved in school chaplaincy work. Fr Albert Lawes was ordained in June 2021 and has taken up his first curacy at Sacred Heart Parish, Exeter where he has hospital and prison chaplaincy work.

Of those who spent some time at the VEC, we remember Fr Guy de Gaynesford who acts as chaplain to a Community of Sisters of Mary Morning Star in Lynton, and who helps at Ilfracombe. And Fr Mark Skelton, Dean of Torbay and Parish Priest of Teignmouth, who also has Diocesan responsibilities in Safeguarding and ongoing Clergy formation. And in these notes we do not forget the Russian Orthodox priest, Hieromonk Porphyrios, alias Robert Plant, who lives and ministers in Exeter.

Mgr Adrian Toffolo

Portsmouth

After a year of gradually returning to the joy of open churches and public Masses, one of the highlights for the Diocese this year has been the ordination to the priesthood of Anthony Fyk. He was ordained on 31 July in St John's Cathedral, along with Fr Paul Nwune, by Bishop Philip Egan (1984). Fr Anthony has been appointed as Assistant Priest at English Martyrs, Reading.

Gradually we have been moving away from Zoom or Teams meetings to face-to-face ones. In September there was a Clergy Gathering at Chilworth, near

Southampton, led by Dr Judith Champ who reflected on the present situation and offered some excellent parallels with the history of the Church in these islands. There will be another meeting in late November on the theme, 'The Post-Covid Church: Let us Dream'.

Congratulations, thanksgiving and prayers for two Old Romans who celebrated significant anniversaries this year. Mgr James Joyce (1971) celebrated his Golden Anniversary of ordination and Fr Paul Haffner (1981) celebrated his Ruby Anniversary.

One move of an Old Roman has been announced so far this year. Fr Peter Hart (1980) is now parish priest of Our Lady, Fleet and Holy Trinity, Church Crookham.

Please also pray for the repose of the souls of two Portsmouth Old Romans who died in the past year. Fr Michael Feben (1964) died on 10 December 2020 and Mgr Canon Cyril Murtagh (1957) died on 18 August 2021. *Requiescant in pace.*

Fr Phillip Pennington Harris

Shrewsbury

May I begin with an apology for missing the deadline last year? I did send the Shrewsbury Report in, but typically was late and it ended up on the cutting room floor. Many congratulations to everyone for producing such a fine edition of *The Venerabile* last year in what must have been incredibly difficult conditions. The editorial team probably needed late copy like the proverbial hole in the head.

I'll try to make amends this year by a comprehensive sweep of all Shrewsbury Old Romans, with the year of ordination in brackets after names. Starting at the top, Chris Lightbound (1955) has not been in the best of health, and is now resident at

Nazareth House in Birkenhead, looked after by the wonderful Sisters there. Jim Robinson (1960) continues to enjoy retirement in his lovely Cheshire village, Plumley, near to Knutsford. Tony Myers (1966) is also retired and in Knutsford. John Rafferty (1969) retired from St Vincent's Altrincham three years ago, and has moved to nearby Hale, helping out a great deal in local parishes. Rod Strange (1969) continues down at St Mary's in Twickenham, while Chris McCurry (1970) is settling into retirement in Timperley, not far from his last Parish in Cheadle Hulme. Wherever Chris moves to, it would have to be large enough to take his Grand Piano, needless to say.

Two of our retired Priests celebrated Jubilees last year: Jim Robinson his Diamond in October, and Chris McCurry his Golden in September. Belated congratulations to them both – *ad multos annos!* This year, Peter Burke celebrates his Golden in December, so glasses raised to him then, please God not remotely.

Moving on from the *Pensionati* to those still on the Active List, Peter Burke (1971) is looking after both St Alban's Macclesfield and St Paul's Poynton. Michael Morton (1975) is at St Winefride's Sandbach and Stephen Coonan (1978) at Our Lady and St John's in Heswall, on the Wirral. David Long (1984) moved last year from Our Lady's Stockport to St Vincent's Knutsford – that leafy town is rapidly turning into a Little VEC – while Simon O'Connor (1989) continues at St Joseph's Winsford, on the edge of Crewe. Nick Kern (1990) heads up the Wythenshawe Team Ministry, originally seven Parishes but now working well together, while your humble scribe (1992) remains at St Werburgh's, Chester. Jonathan Brandon (2005) has charge of John Rafferty's old parish, St Vincent's

Altrincham, as well as serving as Bishop's Secretary. David Charters (2008), working for the Holy See Diplomatic Service, is now in New York, at the Observer Mission to the United Nations. Michael Coughlan (2013) was appointed last year as the new PP at Our Lady's, Holy Cross and St Paul's, a tough area of Birkenhead. A year behind him, Tony McGrath (2014) is at Christ Church, Heald Green, right under the flight path to Manchester Airport. He's also looking after St Benedict's Handforth, a sleepy enough Cheshire town that shot to prominence earlier this year. Who could ever forget Jackie Weaver? Tom Cunnah (2016), the Shrewsbury Bambino, juggles being PP of Holy Angels Hale Barns – serious WAG territory – with Judicial Vicar and Chancellor. How does he manage to be so calm, friendly and competent every time I ring him with my latest inane marriage enquiry?

Finally, many congratulations to David Irwin, ordained Deacon by Bishop Mark in our Cathedral in July last year. David is now discerning whether he is called to ministry here in the Diocese of Shrewsbury or in the Archdiocese of Tuam, where he has family connections. Our prayers go with him.

23 Shrewsbury Old Romans in my first report to *The Venerabile* in 2002; 19 today. You can't keep a good diocese down!

To finish on a personal note: it's always good to catch up with Old Romans at our University Chaplains meetings, regionally and nationally. Every best wish from all of us here in Shrewsbury to Stephen Wang, as he leaves the huge London University chaplaincy to become our new Rector, and to Philip Whitmore, a dear friend from my own time at the VEC, with huge thanks for all he has done over the last eight years. In particular, he always made us extremely welcome when I came to the College with

groups from the University here in Chester. Warmest best wishes, Philip, for a very good rest before you take up your next challenge.

Fr Paul Shaw

Southwark

A quieter year than last, but perhaps less gloomy as the shape of things became clearer. Bishop John Hine continues to enjoy retirement, while Bishop Paul Hendricks has been caring for the South West pastoral area of Southwark within the constraints of the present time. Many were those parish priests who had to seek delegation for the administration of Confirmation given parish delays and uncertainties. Bishop Nicholas Hudson remains engaged in his ministry north of the river, even if August saw him return to SE1 to celebrate the annual Mass in honour of Saint Oscar Romero. *Ben tornato!* Bishop Paul Mason, while continuing as Bishop of the Forces, now takes on the role of Lead Bishop for Safeguarding, thus strengthening the Board of the newly formed Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA).

Fr Tim Finigan – who remains in Lewisham – suffered a setback to his health in June 2021, relaying on Twitter his experience of a stroke which left him able to write fairly fluently but having considerable difficulty reading. We pray that his may be a full recovery.

Fr Stephen Langridge (St Elizabeth of Portugal, Richmond upon Thames) has developed further his coaching for Divine Renovation and he now coaches cohorts of six priests at a time in both English and Italian. (Any parish priest interested in an initial six-week “KickStart” coaching is invited to contact him.) Fr Richard Whinder reports that he is still enjoying life as parish priest of Holy Ghost in sunny Balham.

Next door, Fr Marcus Holden (St Bede’s, Clapham Park) is developing the work of the Agency for Evangelisation and Catechesis in his capacity as Episcopal Vicar.

The present author has left the hills and greenery of Purley to take up the post of Sub-Dean at St George’s Cathedral. Also resident currently at Cathedral House is Fr David Howell, who has moved on from St Saviour’s in Lewisham and is now engaged in data analysis for the Archdiocese. Fr Matthew O’Gorman (Corpus Christi, Brixton Hill) spent some time in hospital after having an ill-advised attempt at exercise interrupted by a disturbed woman determined to apply her beer can to his forehead. Not to be outdone, his assistant priest spent four weeks in the same hospital recovering from Covid. Things have now calmed in the parish and while lockdown saw Fr Matthew appointed parish priest, festivities have been delayed until the Archbishop is able to visit for his induction. Organising such engagements, when not fielding queries from all and sundry, is Fr Philip Andrews, who continues to serve as Archbishop John Wilson’s private secretary.

Fr Dominic Allain’s work with Grief to Grace in the past year has seen the organisation acquire its own retreat centre, ‘The Garden Enclosed’, by leasing a former Jesuit residence in Wimbledon, next to the Sacred Heart Church. This will provide a suitable base for retreats and support groups. When not in use for these it is hoped that it will be a place where priests may wish to stay for short periods of rest, retreat, or relaxation. Two priests and a lay brother will form a resident community to support the work of the Grief to Grace programme and to provide spiritual and counselling resources for survivors. They will pray for victims and survivors of abuse and offer Eucharistic adoration and reparation for the healing

of abuse survivors and for the healing and renewal of the priesthood following the clergy abuse crisis.

Many Southwark Old Romans are still tending to the same patches of the vineyard that they were caring for this time last year. Canon Michael Cooley remains as chaplain at St Peter's Residence, Vauxhall, and the following are as listed: Canon Leo Mooney (St Dunstan's, Southborough); Canon Michael O'Dea (Our Lady of Pity and St Simon Stock, Putney); Canon Martin Edwards (St Mary Magdalen, Wandsworth East Hill); Mgr Tim Galligan (St Vincent de Paul, South Battersea); Fr David Gummert (St Mary of the Crays, Crayford); Fr Stephen Boyle (St Anselm's, Dartford); Fr Simon Peat (St Winefride's, Wimbledon); Fr Victor Vella (Holy Innocents', Orpington). Fr David Stanley is retired but still active in pastoral organisations, and Fr Paul Connelly continues to be resident in the parish of St Anselm's, Tooting Bec.

Fr Francis Murphy

Westminster

Recent changes in **bold** print

- † Vincent Nichols
Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster
- † John Arnold
Bishop of Salford
- † Nicholas Hudson
Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster
- Mark Anwyll
PP, Our Lady of Muswell, Muswell Hill
- **Alexander Balzanella**
Assistant priest, Holy Rood,
Watford
- Keith Barltrop
PP, St Mary of the Angels, Bayswater

- David Barnes
PP, SS Anselm & Cecilia, Lincoln's
Inn Fields
- Andrew Bowden
Assistant Priest at Our Lady of
Lourdes, New Southgate
- Michael Brockie
Retired – resident in Chelsea
- Dominic Byrne
PP, St Theodore of Canterbury,
Hampton-on-Thames
- John Conneely
Judicial Vicar, Diocesan Tribunal
- Antony Convery
PP, SS Edward the Confessor, Golders
Green
- John Cunningham
PP, Immaculate Conception &
St Joseph, Waltham Cross
- John Dechan
PP, Our Lady Help of Christians,
Kentish Town
- Anthony Doe
Spiritual Director at Allen Hall
seminary
- Pat Egan
Retired – Ann Arbor, Michigan
- Michael Garnett
Santa Apolonia, Cajamarca, Peru
- Daniel Humphreys
PP, Our Lady of Mt Carmel &
St George, Enfield
- **William Johnstone**
Newly ordained – Assistant priest,
Welwyn Garden City parishes
- Stewart Keeley
PP, St Sebastian & St Pancras,
Kingsbury Green
- Roger Kirinich
Retired – living in Clifton diocese

- **Mark Langham**
R.I.P. 15th January 2021
- Robert LeTellier
Further Studies, Cambridge
- Hugh MacKenzie
Assistant priest, Westminster Cathedral
and chaplain to Hospital of SS John and Elizabeth
- Paul McDermott
PP, St Mellitus, Tollington Park
- Paul McPartlan
Professor, Catholic University of America, Washington DC
- Shaun Middleton
PP, St Mary's, Cadogan Street, Chelsea
- **Philip Miller**
Senior University Chaplain in Diocese of Westminster
- Peter Newby
PP, St Margaret's, Twickenham; and chaplain to St Mary's University
- James Neal
PP, St Gabriel, South Harrow, and St Bernard, Northolt
- Seamus O'Boyle
PP, St John the Evangelist, Islington; and Episcopal Vicar for Safeguarding
- **John O'Leary**
Rector of Allen Hall seminary
- **Brian O'Mahony**
Sub-administrator, Westminster Cathedral
- Jim Overton
Retired – resident in Somers Town
- Terence Phipps
PP, Immaculate Conception & St Joseph, Hertford
- Antonio Pineda
Assistant Priest, St Joseph & English Martyrs, Bishops Stortford
- Dermot Power
Associate Spiritual Director, Allen Hall
- **F. Javier Ruiz-Ortiz**
Vice-Rector and Dean of Studies at Allen Hall seminary
- Paschal Ryan
PP, Holy Redeemer, Chelsea, and Episcopal Vicar for the Western Area
- Nicholas Schofield
PP, Our Lady of Lourdes & St Michael, Uxbridge; and Diocesan Archivist
- Alexander Sherbrooke
PP, St Patrick, Soho Square
- Gerard Skinner
PP, St Francis of Assisi, Notting Hill
- Michael Tuck
Retired October 2020 – living in Sunbury
- Mark Vickers
PP, Holy Ghost & St Stephen, Shepherds Bush
- Chris Vipers
PP, St Mary, Moorfields & St Joseph, Bunhill Row
and Director of Agency for Evangelisation
- Frank Wahle
Retired – resident at Baker Street
- **Stephen Wang**
Rector of the *Venerabile*
- **Philip Whitmore**
Sabbatical
- Ben Woodley
Assistant Priest at Our Lady, St John's Wood

Fr Philip Miller

Obituaries

Nicholas Coote

12 March 1935 – 19 November 2020

When I arrived at the *Venerabile* in October 1963, Nicholas Coote was the Senior Student. Although intellectually formidable, he was from the start welcoming, friendly and good-humoured. That time, of course, was very different from nowadays. There was, for example, just one telephone in a booth along the Cardinals' Corridor, but it was not meant to be used, except in emergencies. On one occasion, Nick decided to use it in any case, but it was answered to his surprise by the Rector, Monsignor Tickle. 'Mr Coote,' Jock remarked sonorously, 'if you wish to speak to me, you have only to cross the corridor.'

Nick was a convert, attracted to Catholicism as a schoolboy at Rugby, where he was head boy. He went on from Rugby to read history at Oxford and was received into the Church there. He had arrived at the *Venerabile* in 1957 as a student for the Diocese of Plymouth. As Senior Student, he was ordained priest as was customary in those days at Palazzola in the summer of 1963.

By 1969, however, Nick had come to recognise that his decision to be ordained had been a mistake and soon afterwards he married Pam Hughes and entered a fifty-year long happy marriage. All the same, where he was not mistaken was in his commitment to his faith, to his service of the Church, and in his generous support for the *Venerabile* which is perhaps a story for another occasion.

From 1983 to 2001 he was one of the Assistant General Secretaries to the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. There were those in Rome who at first looked askance at a man who had left active ministry holding such a position. But when the Bishops issued a statement on a delicate moral matter, the Roman authorities were fulsome in their praise and Cardinal Basil Hume took the opportunity to inform them that the document had actually been drafted by Nick. Thereafter no further criticism was ever heard.

Soon after he had retired, Nick was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, from which he suffered severely for the final twelve years of his life, becoming increasingly debilitated both mentally and physically. Assisted by devoted carers, Pam's unfailingly loving care for him was an inspiration to all who witnessed it.

What a fine man. It was a privilege to have known him.

Mgr Roderick Strange

Mgr Mark Langham

28 November 1960 – 15 January 2021

Mark Langham was born in London on 28 November 1960. He grew up in Whitton with his parents Bernard and Maureen and two sisters, Maura and Eilish, and Gladstone the dog. He was educated at the Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School in Kensington,

where his name is shown on boards in the new hall listing former students who went on to be ordained. He went from there to Magdalene College, Cambridge to study Classics, changing after two years to study History, from 1979-83. Mark became involved with the Catholic chaplaincy at Fisher House. He was awarded Master of Arts in 1983.

After university Mark worked for a year in the housing benefits office of the London Borough of Hounslow. It was during this time that he was accepted as a student for the priesthood and in 1984 he went to Allen Hall, the diocesan seminary in Chelsea. After two years his priestly formation took him to Rome, to the Venerable English College, until his return to his home parish of St Edmund of Canterbury, Whitton for ordination to the priesthood by Cardinal Basil Hume on 16 September 1990.

Fr Mark's first appointment was to Westminster Cathedral where he served as a Chaplain from 1990 to 1992 before being appointed Precentor in 1993. The following year he was appointed Sub-Administrator, until 1996. Fr Mark then left the Cathedral to take up his next appointment as Assistant Priest at Bayswater. After a year he was appointed parish priest. In 2001 Fr Mark left Bayswater and returned to the Cathedral, this time as Administrator and remained in this post until 2008. It was during this time, in August 2002, that Fr Mark was appointed Chaplain to His Holiness with the title Monsignor. Mgr Mark was very conscious that the Cathedral served its own parish as well as the whole diocese and also the Church in England and Wales. He met and got to know the great and the good, and the not so good. He said that, above all, Westminster Cathedral is a house of God, a place where prayer comes naturally. He made Clergy House more comfortable for the Chaplains and their guests and ensured that the roof terrace was fit for purpose – plants and parties! He was a regular contributor to the Catholic Teachers Certificate programme run at Vaughan House adjacent to the Cathedral. Teachers and catechists benefitted from his succinct and engaging presentations. While at the Cathedral Mgr Mark worked closely with the Chaplains, staff, volunteers and parishioners. He valued everyone and was respectful of people. He oversaw the installation of several mosaics, and the accessible steps by the West doors, the fruit of patient working with various interested parties. He engaged with colleagues at Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral, and cathedral choirs visited each other's churches and participated in Vespers and Evensong during the week of prayer for Christian unity.

Mgr Mark's next appointment took him back to Rome to work at the Vatican from 2008 until 2013. He was appointed to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, working as secretary to the Anglican and Methodist dialogues. He understood the culture and theology of various Christian traditions and strongly believed in the symphonic nature of the Church wherein the gifts of other churches and communities are given and received. A very traditional English Catholic (and with an Irish Catholic mother), Mgr Mark's book on ARCIC and the Caroline Divines (theologians who lived during the reigns of the two Kings Charles) reveals a careful appreciation of the Anglican tradition. He told few of his friends that he was working on the doctorate which was the book's genesis. It shows the analytical mind of a scholar at ease in two fields, the Divines and ARCIC, which he genuinely knew and loved deeply.

On his return from Rome to take up his appointment in Cambridge as Chaplain in 2013, living at and working from Fisher House on Guildhall Street, those who knew

him from his student years now encountered Mgr Mark as a man who had blossomed into a gifted and charismatic priest. His eight years as Chaplain were characterised by stylish personal flair and what has been described as ‘exceptionally warm and genial pastoral wisdom’. He was good at remembering names and birthdays, and he was ever ready to celebrate. His enthusiasm for his life-giving Catholic faith was something he wished to impart to others. He led pilgrimages, including to Rome where he was given access to people and places others would be denied. Mgr Mark loved the Church and the priesthood. He celebrated Mass at Fisher House in a way that included the participation of all in their proper way. His homilies, imaginative and engaging, gave encouragement and hope to students and staff, as did the social life of the chaplaincy.

Mgr Mark lived with illness for many years and kept this to himself apart from a few of his closest confidants. He was grateful for the treatment he received at Addenbrooke’s hospital. On 6 January 2021 he returned to London for the last time to receive end of life care at the Hospice of Saints John and Elizabeth. Mgr Mark died peacefully on 15 January 2021.

May the soul of this faithful priest, who brought light and love to many, rest in peace.

Mgr Martin Hayes

Report of the Friends of the *Venerabile*

MICHAEL LANG

It is four years since a group of members met in Palazzola for the 2017 Annual Meeting and we now look forward to June 2022 when we have booked the Villa for the Friends to meet solely for recreational purposes. I believe that Anthony Coles has received over 30 booking forms for this entirely social event.

It was in July 1980 that, at the request of my sister, I first visited Palazzola as a member of her Parish Group led by Fr Mike Healy and Fr John Marsland. At that time, little did I imagine that I would be looking forward to my 39th visit in 2022 and, if I were to search through and analyse the various visitor books then, my sister Mary could be thanked for at least 150 visits from members of the extended Lang family. Recently I was told that my great-grandchildren are now looking forward to joining the devotees of DOP (Dear Old Palazzola).

Due to Covid restrictions we have held five committee meetings using Zoom since our last meeting in person during February 2020. Earlier in the year we decided to hold the 2021 AGM using Zoom and so on 11 September we gathered around our computer screens.

Earlier this year Mgr Philip Whitmore informed us that he was to be replaced as Rector at the end of the academic year. I would like to put on record my thanks to Mgr Whitmore for the support that he has given to me as Chairman of the Friends and wish him well as he returns to Westminster after eight years as Rector. The Friends now welcome Fr Stephen Wang as the new Rector of the College.

I would also like to record my thanks to Lady Sarah Gough who is standing down after 10 years on the committee. Following her election at the AGM in Leeds in November 2011, Sarah's contribution to the committee has always been positive and invaluable. Thank you and God bless you Sarah.

But now let us look at some positive happenings. We were able to provide the funds to enable the College to buy a new car for the students and I am pleased to report that they chose to purchase a hybrid car which enables them to use it within the city without restrictions.

We contacted a used postage stamp company and have started to collect used stamps. We have discovered that this is an easy way to make some money and so I appeal to you all to collect stamps from any mail which you might receive. At the moment there is a shortage of British stamps and so the price is high and the price for Vatican stamps is very high! Most of us receive a large number of Christmas cards: please collect the stamps and then send them to me after Christmas.

We also contacted Amazon and joined the range of charities using their 'SMILE. AMAZON' scheme. I appeal to you, please select 'Friends of the *Venerabile*' as your chosen charity when you go to purchase anything from the Amazon group and then place your order using the website "smile.amazon" and not "amazon". You will be amazed how quickly the income will rise if we were all to use this facility!

And now some negatives. We need to address the falling membership as we have

lost members (some due to the direct effects of Covid and some due to the indirect effects with people having to review their charitable donations). Please do your best to attract new members by guiding interested people to our website.

Due to the “restrictions” we (the committee) were unable to attend the priestly ordinations this year, but to use an old proverb

– “It is an ill wind...” As a result of “streaming” we were able to be virtually present.



MICHAEL LANG
is Chairman of
the Friends of the
Venerabile.

Friends of the Venerabile

(The Venerable English College, Rome)



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- Be kept in touch with the College and its students, helping them in their formation as priests.

What we do

We contribute towards additional facilities at the College and Palazzola. Recently we have paid for a new car to be used by the students.

For further information

Please visit our website: www.friendsoftheenglishcollegerome.org.uk

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House List 2020-21

Formation staff

WHITMORE Philip (Westminster),
Rector
FLYNN John (Salford), Vice Rector
DOODY Michael (Leeds),
Pastoral Director
GRECH Konrad S.J., Spiritual Director
McAULEY James (Portsmouth),
Academic Tutor

2nd Cycle (Year III)

ELLUL Peter (Malta)
MUSCAT Aayrton (Malta)

2nd Cycle (Year II)

BALZANELLA Alexander (Westminster)
BILLINGTON Steven (Leeds)
FYK Anthony (Portsmouth)
JENKINSON Dominic (Hallam)
WYGNANSKI Piotr (East Anglia)

2nd Cycle (Year I)

IRWIN David (Shrewsbury)
HOLT Torbjørn (Oslo)
O'LAVERTY John (Down and Connor)

1st Cycle Theology (Year III)

DUCKWORTH Toby (Birmingham)
EBERT Daniel (Copenhagen)
HANSON Elliot (Cardiff)
PITSON Marc (Leeds)

1st Cycle Theology (Year II)

DONLEAVY Hugh (Liverpool)
HAUSCHILD Edward (Portsmouth)
HELLEVIG Trym (Oslo)
O'FARRELL Mark
(Waterford and Lismore)
SHARROCK Theodore (Salford)
TEIGEN Joachim (Oslo)

1st Cycle Theology (Year I)

BENCH David (Birmingham)
FINNEGAN James (Liverpool)
FYLES Martin (Liverpool)
MEEHAN William (Hamilton)
O'BRIEN Joseph
(Hexham and Newcastle)

1st Cycle Philosophy (Year II)

BROWNE Ryan (Portsmouth)
LEDUM Mathias (Oslo)
TORRES AIRAVA Viktor (Helsinki)

1st Cycle Philosophy (Year I)

HAWKES Ryan (Portsmouth)
HENRY Jonathan (Birmingham)
OTTERSEN David (Oslo)
RYAN Jack (Portsmouth)
SINCLAIR Benjamin
(Hexham and Newcastle)

Other

HUGHES CAREW Sion
(Anglican Exchange)

E&W Seminarians	17
Other Seminarians	10
Total seminarians	27
Student Priests	6
Anglican Exchange	1
Total students	34





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R O M E



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