

**THE  
VENERABILE  
2023**



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# Contents

## Editorial

Ryan Browne	5
-------------	---

## Features

Memories of a 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Pope: Benedict XVI RIP Mgr Philip Whitmore	7
--	---

How I Learned to Love the Synod Dr Austen Ivereigh	12
---	----

What Am I Living For? Life, Death and Friendship Timothy Radcliffe OP	18
--	----

A Third Spring Revisited Mgr John Armitage	25
---	----

In Memoriam: Queen Elizabeth II. Queen Elizabeth Turned Privilege into a Life of Christian Service Revd Dr James Harvey SJ	31
--	----

Homily for Solemn Vespers at the Venerable English College on the Eve of the Coronation of King Charles III Fr Stephen Wang	35
---	----

Happy and Harmonious. The Coronation of King Charles III: A Moment for Renewed Reflection on the Relationship Between Crown and Catholics Rev. Mr James Finnegan	39
--	----

Now and Then: A Short Theological Reflection on Time, Rome and The Venerable Revd Dr David Nixon	46
---	----

The Humour of History: On the Relationship Between the Venerable English College and the Society of Jesus Fr Konrad Grech SJ	50
--	----

Why You Have Widened My Heart Sr Valentina Stilo FMVD	56
--	----

## News from the College Heritage Collections, 2022–23

Professor Maurice Whitehead	61
-----------------------------	----

## House Reports

Intellectual Formation Report Mr Julian Paparella	71
--	----

Schola Report 2022–23	
Rev. Mr James Finnegan	73
Sports Report 2022–23	
Rev. Mr Antonio Bajlovic	75
Wiseman Society Report	
Rev. Mr David Bench	76
<b>The Year in Pictures</b>	
Mr Barnabas Mercer	77
<b>The College Diary 2022–23</b>	92
<b>Leavers’ Profiles</b>	
Rev. Mr Antonio Bajlovic	104
Fr Toby Duckworth	105
Rev. Mr William Meehan	106
Fr John O’Lavery	107
Mr Benjamin Sinclair	108
<b>The Roman Association</b>	109
The Council	109
The Roman Association Diocesan Representatives	109
The 153 <sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting Palazzola 2022 Minutes	111
News from Old Romans	113
Roman Association AGM 2023, Rector’s Report	123
Fr Stephen Wang	123
<b>Obituaries</b>	
Rt. Rev. Hugh Christopher Budd	129
Fr Gerald ‘Gerry’ Creasey	130
Canon J. A. ‘Tony’ Harding	132
Michael Hodgetts KSG	133
<b>Report of the Friends of the <i>Venerabile</i></b>	
Michael Lang	134
<b>2022–23 House List</b>	136

# Editorial

RYAN BROWNE

This issue of *The Venerabile* begins with a personal confession. This confession arises from glancing outside of my bedroom window at the Venerable English College, which overlooks the garden towards the conglomeration of roman architecture. My confession is that I'm quite a terrible gardener. You see, upon my window ledge I have a garden box, which I fill with some seasonal flowers, bought from the Campo de' Fiori. However, my forgetfulness to water them, coupled with the lack of direct sunlight, means that even the most robust flowers can wither under my care.

Despite my lack of a horticultural flare, there's something about the organic nature of flowers which I find quite beautiful. In fruitful times the flowers succeed and thrive. In other times they can wilt; perhaps even be pushed to the point of death. Even so, they form the fertile ground in which future generations may flourish. I think this organic cycle is very much reflected in the human experience, especially from the perspective of Christian anthropology. We know we're on the journey towards the light of Heaven, but we don't always see it, it can be a little foggy, particularly as we battle against the elements that life throws at us. But, our very faithfulness to the ground that we're planted in, through our respective vocations, provides the fertile ground for the Church to keep growing.

As all of this personal musing buzzes through my mind, a quick Google search of the word *Seminary* offers a brief distraction. Rather expectantly, the traditional definitions are flagged up, 'A place for the training of candidates for the priesthood,' or 'A college that trains students to be priests.' There was one phrase that surprised me: *breeding ground*. This sounds a bit off the mark, perhaps even a little dirty and distasteful. But, the more I think about it, it sounds more accurate. Seminary is a *breeding ground*, because it is a place where the vitality of the Christian life is realised, whether that be in an individual's flourishing or falling flat on one's face! It's quite organic, not too dissimilar from the natural processes I started this editorial with.

This point brings me to a highlight for me from the past year. For the first time since I entered the Venerable English College in 2019, this year we had a formal signing of the *Liber Ruber* in the college church on the Feast of the English Martyrs. Just before the signing took place, Professor Maurice Whitehead, our Archivist, gave us some thrilling stories of our forebears. Henry Humphrey Evans Lloyd, Robert Forster (a seminarian turned wine-merchant in London), to mention only a few. In recollecting these men, Maurice made an excellent observation that resonated quite strongly with the community. We often remember the esteemed Martyrs in the history of the College, what we tend to forget though are the thousands of other men who have been moulded at the English College, who had their own personal joys and challenges. Perhaps, more plainly put, our fellow Christian disciples. Let me be clear, it is the Martyrs who testify to the noble and long-established title of *Venerable* for the English College, by their example. What characterises the English College as *extraordinary* in its mission however, is that it is a place set aside for men to learn the

immense love of God, so that they can show and teach this same love to others through their humanity; broken and offered in service, whether one goes forward for ordination, or not.

In recognition of the many challenges the world finds itself today, this year's edition of *The Venerabile* hones in on the delicacy of life today in the Church, further afield in society, and within the very confines of our own seminary. The first article, written by Monsignor Whitmore, focuses on the death and legacy of Benedict XVI. In the second, we hear from Dr Austen Ivereigh about his experience of his work for the Synod on Synodality. The third article is a beautiful reflection from Timothy Radcliffe OP on the notions of life, death, and friendship. In the fourth article Monsignor John Armitage, who led our Holy Week retreat this year, offers his thoughts on the missionary age that the Church finds herself today. In the following three articles, our attention turns to the death of Queen Elizabeth II and the coronation of Charles III, reflections offered by James Hanvey SJ, Fr Stephen Wang and Rev. Mr James Finnegan, respectively. Our attention is then turned inwards towards the Venerable English College itself. The eighth article is a glance into history from David Nixon, who was an Anglican exchange student at the Venerable English College in the 1990s. The ninth article, our Spiritual Director, Konrad Grech SJ, reflects on the influence of the Jesuits in the history of the English College. Then, in the final article of this edition, Sister Valentina Stilo, the Pastoral Formation Coordinator at the English College, offers her reflections on her experience as a consecrated missionary working in the seminary this year.

I sense that all of these articles make at least some reference to the fact that we are a delicate species in a delicate world, which is continuously remoulding itself. The Church is not boxed off from this. Mercifully, we have the Lord and each other to rest upon and to root us in truth and love. This is the joy of the Christian life and we must not be afraid to embrace this joy.

I must finally add my gratitude to the help of so many people in the development of this issue of *The Venerabile*: Fr Christopher Warren, Fr James McAuley, Rev. Mr. William Meehan, Mr Barnabas Mercer, Mr Ryan Hawkes, and Mr Jack Ryan. They have helped immensely in preparing this year's edition. I hope that *The Venerabile 2023* will offer us all some food for thought to reflect upon our own humanity and discipleship in this ever-changing world.

*MIKE LANG, R.I.P*

*As we go to press, we have just heard the very sad news that Mike Lang died on the morning of 20<sup>th</sup> October 2023. Mike has been Chairman of the Friends of the Venerabile since 2013. He has been a devoted and generous friend of the VEC for over forty years, with a great love for the seminarians, the priests, the College, and for Palazzola. We are so grateful to him for his friendship, for all that he has given to us as a College, and for all the sterling work he has done for the Friends in recent years. We pray for the repose of his soul, and we pray especially for his dear wife Teresa, for his family and friends, and for all those who mourn him at this time. May they receive comfort and consolation from the Lord.*



**RYLAN BROWNE** is a fifth-year seminarian for the Diocese of Portsmouth, currently studying Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University.



# Memories of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pope: Benedict XVI RIP

MGR PHILIP WHITMORE

It is an honour to be invited to contribute some reflections on the legacy of Pope Benedict XVI, for whom it was my privilege to serve in the Secretariat of State throughout his 8-year pontificate (2005–2013). Others will be in a better position to evaluate his vast output as theologian, Prefect of the then Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) and Pope. My contribution draws on my experience of working for him in the Roman Curia and particularly translating many of the documents and addresses of his pontificate into English. These included large parts of his “Jesus of Nazareth” trilogy, produced during the years of his Papacy.

The friendship that developed between Cardinal Karol Wojtyła and a young priest-theologian from Bavaria during the Second Vatican Council was to prove decisive for the history of the Church over the following half-century. Not long after Cardinal Wojtyła was elected Pope in 1978, it fell to him to appoint a new Prefect for the CDF, and his choice of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, by this time Archbishop of Munich, was based on personal experience of the German theologian’s exceptional qualities. Ratzinger had chosen the episcopal motto “Cooperatores Veritatis”, meaning “fellow-workers in the truth”, taken from the Third Letter of John, and he was to prove a loyal and utterly reliable fellow-worker to Pope St John Paul II in the defence of Catholic truth. In these years, the world came to know the rigour of Ratzinger’s thought and his commitment to preserve the saving truth of the Catholic faith from any developments that might endanger it. Inevitably this brought the Wojtyła-Ratzinger leadership of the Church into conflict with certain theological developments in the later years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, leading to a somewhat negative evaluation of Cardinal Ratzinger’s influence from large sections of the media. The result was a fearsome reputation as “Panzerkardinal”, even as “God’s Rottweiler”. The prevalence of this reputation led some to respond with surprise, even with dismay, when Cardinal Ratzinger was elected Pope in succession to St John Paul II in 2005.

This was no unthinking “lurch to the right”, but rather a recognition that the gentle and



*Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger on the occasion of his visit to the English College in 1994 to launch the Catechism in English, pictured with Bishop David Konstant of Leeds.*

scholarly Dean of the College of Cardinals hardly deserved his unflattering reputation. By this time, generations of bishops coming to Rome for their five-yearly “ad limina” visits had been most favourably impressed by the reception they were given at the CDF, despite their negative expectations coloured by popular caricatures of the Cardinal. When meeting him personally, their experience was of a simple and holy man who listened to what they had to say, who understood, sympathised, and offered them enlightened advice, putting his finger on the heart of the problems they faced and pointing them towards thoroughly pastoral and practical solutions. These qualities were well known to those who had personal dealings with him and to those who studied his writings with an open mind. They were to win him many admirers all over the world after his election to the Papacy.

It is not unusual for a world leader to acquire a reputation that fails to do justice to him or her, but it has been said of Pope Benedict that the difference between image and reality was greater for him than for any other world leader. We had a particular taste of this during his Apostolic Visit to Great Britain in September 2010, a visit that surpassed expectations to a greater degree than any of his other journeys. Such had been the negativity surrounding the visit during the preceding months that many loyal Catholics were privately hoping it might be called off. They need not have worried. From the moment the Holy Father set foot on British soil in Scotland, the enthusiasm of his reception drowned out the negative voices. It was fascinating during those four days to observe how the public narrative changed. The “controversial” visit became a “landmark” visit as the kind and gentle demeanour of the Pontiff dispelled the myths.

While memories of the visit fade, the abiding legacy consists in the addresses that Pope Benedict delivered during those days. One of the most widely-reported was the one given to Parliamentarians at Westminster Hall, but I remember with particular fondness the address he gave to schoolchildren. Delivered at St Mary’s University in Twickenham, the talk was streamed live to every Catholic school in England and Wales. Pope Benedict encouraged the children to aspire to become “saints of the 21<sup>st</sup> century”. This theme certainly resonated with young people generally, as the following day, outside Westminster Cathedral, their spokesman Paschal Uche assured the Pope that young Catholics in England aspired to precisely that. Some readers will recall that Pope Benedict met English seminarians at St Mary’s College, Oscott, shortly before his return to Rome. A large group photograph was taken, but there was no opportunity for an address — and I like to think this experience may have prompted him to write his fine Letter to Seminarians, published a month later on 18 October 2010. Indeed, some published editions of the letter feature the Oscott group photograph on the cover, with one or two rather familiar faces!

The Westminster Hall address (17 September 2010) explored one of Pope Benedict’s most characteristic themes — the call for a dialogue between faith and reason. This had been a prominent element of his thinking before he became Pope (cf. his conversations with Jürgen Habermas in *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*). During his Papacy, he developed it most notably in the address given at Regensburg University on 12 September 2006, one of his most brilliant addresses, although sadly it did not receive the attention it deserved, because worldwide comment focused on a particular brief quotation in the third paragraph. One of the abiding lessons of his pontificate is that the world of culture, reason and philosophy needs a mutually nourishing encounter with the

world of religion, faith and theology. Each without the other risks leading us down blind alleys.

A variation on the faith-reason theme is the truth-love theme, beautifully expressed in the homily that he gave as Dean of the College of Cardinals on 18 April 2005, immediately before the conclave that elected him to the Papacy. “Love without truth would be blind; truth without love would be like ‘a clanging cymbal’ (1 Cor 13:1).” This homily, from the Mass *Pro Eligendo Romano Pontifice*, contains his famous reference to the “dictatorship of relativism”. The Cardinals listening to him on that occasion would have been left in no doubt that, were they to elect him, they would be choosing a Pope with a profound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of 21<sup>st</sup>-century Western culture and a clear vision for a way forward based on dialogue rather than confrontation. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that is exactly what they chose.

From the earliest days of the pontificate, the profound learning of the new Pope and his incisive powers of analysis made themselves felt. A detail that I find particularly telling is that from his first encyclical onwards (*Deus Caritas Est*, 2005), he broke with tradition by referencing secular texts in his footnotes, even Nietzsche! One of the key statements of that first year was the Christmas address given to the Roman Curia on 22 December 2005. Speaking of the Second Vatican Council, in which he had taken part as a young theologian, he contrasted the different hermeneutics that had bedevilled its implementation, speaking of a “hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture”, to which he preferred a “hermeneutic of reform”, a renewal in continuity with the heritage of the past. This vision of continuity was to colour many of the decisions of his pontificate.

Among the many achievements of his years in office, one that held a particular place in his heart was the writing of a three-volume study of “Jesus of Nazareth”. Had he not been elected Pope, he would undoubtedly have produced a much lengthier series of scholarly tomes on this topic, following in the footsteps of Romano Guardini as well as many Protestant theologians whose work he respected. He had a particular goal in mind, which is beautifully set out in the Foreword to Part One, “From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration”. He wanted to bring about a dialogue between the analytical approach of historical-critical exegesis and the faith-based approach of exegesis conducted within the life of the Church, in other words, an encounter between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history. This could be understood as an application of the faith-reason proposal to our reading of the Gospels. Through God’s providence, this work reached a vastly wider audience than it might have done had the author not been the Pope and had he not been constrained by the demands of his office to produce a text of relatively modest proportions. In fact, it was largely dictated in German, and subsequently transcribed and translated into a great many languages, as the Successor of Peter could scarcely devote the time needed to writing on such a scale.

The origins of this trilogy in the spoken word are largely what make it so accessible. As we read it, we can almost hear him speaking! Pope Benedict had a remarkable ability to express complex thoughts in a few well-crafted sentences and in the process to put his finger on the heart of the matter. Having been a university lecturer as a young adult, he had developed the skill of expressing himself orally early in his life, expounding complex ideas as simply as possible, presenting arguments and counter-arguments and then drawing his

conclusions; this skill served him well throughout his life as a writer. His biographer, Peter Seewald, once said of him that he had a unique ability to “speak in paragraphs”. This is the skill that so struck the bishops who visited Cardinal Ratzinger on their “ad limina” visits as well as the Cardinals gathered in conclave. It is the key to the freshness of his many homilies and addresses, characteristically dictated by him. It is the key also to the brilliance of many of the books that were effectively transcribed interviews. “Salt of the Earth”, “God and the World” and “Light of the World” were all originally conversations with Seewald.

Pope Benedict often quotes the Fathers in his writings, and a particular favourite of his was Saint Augustine. Indeed, his doctoral dissertation was devoted to Augustine’s ecclesiology. It has often struck me that Augustine also used to dictate his texts. In many ways, Pope Benedict seems like an Augustine for the modern era.

One of my favourite texts from the pontificate is the second encyclical, *Spe Salvi* (2007), on the virtue of hope. It is a particularly fine example of Pope Benedict’s powers of analysis and his openness to a wide range of currents of thought. In his account of Christian hope, he takes us through many of the alternative utopias that have been proposed throughout history, including Marxism. He acknowledges what is good about them, but then he puts his finger on their shortcomings and illustrates how Christian hope offers something much greater and more secure. He does not shy away from challenging topics, such as the relationship between justice and mercy, and he offers a convincing account of the place of Purgatory in the economy of salvation.

Sometimes it is said that Pope Benedict’s three encyclicals cover each of the three theological virtues: faith, hope and charity. After *Deus Caritas Est* and *Spe Salvi*, many were expecting a third encyclical devoted to faith. Strictly speaking, Pope Benedict’s third and final encyclical was not on the subject of faith, but a contribution to the Church’s social teaching, *Caritas in Veritate*. But Pope Benedict did go on to declare a Year of Faith, beginning on 11 October 2012, the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, and ending on the feast of Christ the King, 24 November 2013. And true enough, he drafted an encyclical on faith with a view to issuing it during the Year of Faith. What no one could have known, though, was that just a few months into the Year of Faith, he would resign from the Papacy, which meant that the encyclical on faith, *Lumen Fidei*, issued on 29 June 2013, was in fact the first encyclical of Pope Francis, although the Holy Father does acknowledge his debt to his predecessor’s preparatory work in §7 of the text.

That decision to resign from the Papacy shocked the world. Many books will no doubt be written analysing the reasons for it and the effects it had. While no one was expecting it, it was nevertheless an utterly characteristic choice for an 85-year-old who understood only too well that his powers were declining. In his humility, he was the first to recognise that he was not indispensable, and if he could no longer deliver what the office required of him, he had no wish to cling to power. It was the kind of radical move that only a conservative could get away with. On an entirely different scale, his decision to remove the tiara from the Papal insignia early in his pontificate was another example of that kind of radical thinking. No one could accuse Pope Benedict of failing to appreciate the traditions behind the Papal insignia. And as far as I’m aware, no one did.



*Pope Benedict XVI looks out over Lake Albano towards Palazzola from Castel Gandolfo.*

In those final weeks before he relinquished his office, his fertile mind continued to produce most wonderful discourses. One that stands out particularly for me was his address to the clergy of Rome, given on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2013, three days after his shock announcement. He claimed modestly, and I believe accurately, that he had not prepared an extended discourse and so he was simply going to offer “a few thoughts” on the Second Vatican Council, as he saw it. A “few thoughts” from such a gifted speaker nevertheless resemble a model discourse by anyone else’s standards, and what followed was a masterly account, all the more compelling for being a first-hand account, of what happened at the Council and how its implementation ran into subsequent difficulties.

Like any fictional work, the film “The Two Popes” scarcely does justice to the characters involved. In one important respect, though, the film conveys an accurate message: for all their differences in style, the two Popes had enormous personal regard for one another. It fell to Pope Francis to bury his illustrious predecessor, just as Pope Benedict had buried his while still a Cardinal. Many of us are hoping that the Holy Father’s successors will see fit to include some of Pope Benedict’s wonderful writings in the breviary, so that they can continue to nourish us for centuries to come.



**MGR PHILIP WHITMORE** is the current Rector of St James’s, Spanish Place. He served in the Secretariat of State in the Holy See under Pope Benedict XVI. He was Rector of the Venerable English College from 2013–2020.

# How I Learned to Love the Synod

DR AUSTEN IVEREIGH

It is said that once you've had a tour of a sausage factory, you'll not want to eat another sausage. The Catholic equivalent — attributed, I think, to Cardinal Manning — is that if you want to keep your faith in the barque of St Peter, stay away from the engine room of Rome, where it can be chaotic and smelly. But being close to the synod on synodality this past year, I have a different story to tell. The process by which the Church develops and grows has been a little demystified for me, but it has also been re-enchanted. I now get — in ways that were not clear to me before — how the Spirit acts in the assembly of the faithful, opening new horizons; and what Pope Francis means when he says it's redundant to talk about a “synodal Church”, because, as St John Chrysostom said, Church and synod are synonymous. What is the Church but the faithful walking together towards Christ, open to the action of the Spirit?

I was on the team in Spring last year that drew up the national synthesis report for England and Wales, and last Autumn was one of the *elenco degli esperti* — the Italian term “expert” is capacious — who met in Frascati to draw up the global synthesis report, which became known as the ‘Document for the Continental Stage’ (DCS). In both of these experiences I learned, concretely and practically, what it means to synthesize the fruits of a deep listening to the faithful. But I also saw in action what had always seemed to me abstract, namely the *sensus fidei fidelium*, the faithful's instinct of faith, and what *Lumen Gentium* 12 means when it speaks of the “infallibility in believing” of the whole body of faithful when it “manifests a universal consensus”. I saw how the teaching authority of the Church is exercised in dialogue with that Spirit-guided wisdom, and how the Church truly grows when it is what St John Henry Newman called the *pastorum et fidelium conspiratio*, the breathing together of faithful and their pastors, in which the hierarchic gifts of stable church office (the ordained ministry) are complemented by the charismatic gifts distributed among the whole community.

I've come to realize that this is the *modus operandi cogitandi et vivendi* depicted in the Acts of the Apostles. It is how Jesus created the Church: so that it would always be able to develop and grow, and remain alive. Pope Francis's revitalization of the missionary and evangelizing energies of the Church is precisely here, in the rebirth of synodality in our time he has enabled. His constitution of the Roman Curia published last year is explicit about this. *Praedicate Evangelium* (“Preach the Gospel”) says that the mission of the Church is to witness to communion, to the life made possible by Christ's self-donation; that communion “gives to the Church the face of synodality: a Church, that is, of mutual listening, in which everyone has something to learn: the faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: each listening to the other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit ... to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches”. The reform and renewal needed for this are to “enable the community of believers to come as close as possible to the experience of missionary communion lived by the Apostles with the Lord while He was

on earth, and, following Pentecost, in the first community of Jerusalem under the effect of the Holy Spirit.” Synodality in practice today connects us by an umbilical cord to that lived experience, and is the gift Jesus has given us to enable the Church to navigate the storms of our time through into a new era.

There can be little doubt now that we are in transition to that new era, as the Latin-American bishops’ 2007 document of Aparecida grasped. That document, written by Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, was fruit of the deepest discernment of our times by the Church anywhere in the world since Vatican II. In this decades-long “change of era” the document identifies, the old transmission belts that passed on and supported Christian values via law, culture and institutions are frayed almost to breaking point. Our empty churches and seminaries and the drama of the western Church’s loss of people, relevance and credibility are both a sign of this, and a warning of what will continue if we are not willing to embrace the conversion that begins with a deep listening to the Spirit. That conversion, which Aparecida understood, and which has informed the Francis pontificate, has yet to be fully grasped in the rich-world Church.

The temptation is to respond to the anxiety of secularization with gnostic programmes: either to seek a way out of the crisis through institutional, structural and doctrinal reforms that make the Church “credible” to liberal modernity, or, on the other, to retreat behind defensive, hostile attitudes and to take refuge in some kind of idealized past. As the Pope warned the German Church in 2019, every time a church community seeks to resolve its problems exclusively by its own methods and strengths, it ends by either perpetuating or aggravating those problems.

Although the synod on synodality has surfaced these temptations, the *sensus fidelium* in the reports — the voice of the “body” of the faithful, rather than particular individuals or groups — is recognizably different: a humble, confident, spirit, one that has no illusions about the need for change, but which also trusts that the Lord is already at work to guide that change. It sees a Church in crisis, yes; a Church that is in need of reform, certainly; a Church better able to recognize what the Spirit is already doing and to proclaim and perform both truth *and* mercy — absolutely. But the faithful trust that the Spirit is doing something important to enable these, and see the signs of it above all in synodality itself. People have on the whole experienced synodality — where it has been done well, as spiritual conversation — with a kind of astonished joy, as something authentically ecclesial, as natural and right for the Church. People like being asked about their faith lives, about the difference their faith makes, and how they see the Church. It gives them a sense of agency, a glimpse of possibility that the Spirit really has been poured out on them at Baptism, and that therefore it makes sense for them to come together, to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

But for me, the most important and moving testimonies are from people who have experienced a transformation in their own sense of belonging to the Church, a new feeling of ownership. In reading dozens and dozens of synod reports — diocesan as well as national — the picture emerges very strongly that the People of God feel called to take responsibility for the life and mission of the Church, and that the synod has allowed them to experience this, often for the first time. There is a deep love of priests and gratitude for all they give and enable, but abhorrence of clericalism, which both creates and is justified

by the passivity of the people. Clericalism is seen in reports from across the world as a egregious corruption, a spiritual impoverishment, a violation of the Gospel understanding of power that stymies the gifts being poured out on the Church at this time, especially on women. Ridding the Church of clericalism “so that all its members, including priests and laity, can fulfil a common mission” in the words of the DCS means recovering a Gospel understanding of authority as service and partnership, freeing people for the mission to which they are called.

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In a fascinating new book, so far only in Italian, the Czech priest-prophet Fr Tomáš Halík takes up the challenge identified by Aparecida which this pontificate has made its own. *Pomeriggio del cristianesimo: Il coraggio di cambiare* (“The Afternoon of Christianity: Courage to change”) dares to ask what the future of Christianity is, and what form the Church of the future will take. Authentic renewal will come not from the desks of bishops or conferences of experts, he says, but from the very resources of conversion Christ gave his Church: an authentic spiritual conversion which requires humility, deep listening, and trust in His grace. The most vital resource the Church has at this time — Christ’s own gift to the Church — is synodality, which is why Francis said in 2015 it was the path “which God expects of the Church of the third millennium”.

Fr Halík’s book borrows the psychotherapist Carl Jung’s metaphor of different times of the day to describe the stages of human life: “morning” is youth and early adulthood and “noontime” the mid-life crisis, when what seemed secure and sure is revealed to be inadequate and is shaken apart. The afternoon represents maturity and old age, a certain humility and patience. Applying these to Christian history, Halík sees the first millennium and a half as the time of the Church building up its institutional and doctrinal structures. The crisis of noontime, which shook these apart, began in the Renaissance and the Reformation and has taken us through the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, secularization and atheism through to today’s *apatheism*, or religious indifference, in which belief is privatized, and antithetical to institutions.

Now we are entering the afternoon, says Halík, in which “Christianity seeks in the plural postmodern and postsecular society a new home, new forms of expression” (p. 124). Afternoon Christianity will be, to use Yves Congar’s phrase, not another Church, but a Church that is other than what it has been, just as the Church throughout history has taken on new forms and ways of being — Byzantine, Gregorian, Tridentine, Roman — that are different from what came before. The Church of the afternoon is still to be discovered, but *how* it will be discovered is clear: by learning at every level to listen and discern. A synodal Church, attentive to the wounds of today’s world, can be a school of life and wisdom in the service of humanity, better able to facilitate the encounter with Christ from which all vocation and mission spring.

In February Fr Halík was invited to open the European ecclesial assembly in his home city of Prague, one of seven regional assemblies across the world to consider the DCS, the synthesis we drew up in Frascati. In his “spiritual introduction”, he said mission today could no longer be “an attempt to push seekers into the existing and mental boundaries of the Church” but rather those boundaries “must be expanded and enriched precisely by



the experiences of seekers” — an idea captured in the title of the DCS from Isaiah 54: *Enlarge the Space of Your Tent*. Halík spoke of the need of “a humble, kenotic ecclesiology” in which we learn to recognize the risen Christ, as his disciples had to, by the signs he performs. This emerging Church, which does not just teach but listens, is a school of life and wisdom, a place of encounter and dialogue, a battlefield hospital attentive to wounds, capable of enabling an ever more plural and fragmented humanity to find an authentic communion.

But for this transition not to go wrong, the Church must find its courage and its trust in Christ’s promises. Halík said in Prague: “Many ‘fishers of men’ today have similar feelings to the Galilean fishermen on the shores of Lake Gennesaret when they first encountered Jesus: ‘We have empty hands and empty nets, we have worked all night and caught nothing.’ In many countries of Europe, churches, monasteries and seminaries are empty or half-empty. Jesus tells us the same thing he told the exhausted fishermen: Try again, go to the deep. To try again is not to repeat old mistakes. It takes perseverance and courage to leave the shallows and go to the deep.”

Faith at this time requires a *syn-hodos*, a shared journey into the future, a journey that, in Halík’s words, requires abandoning paralyzing fear (*paranoia*) in favour of receptivity to the idea that the Lord really is with his Church, and there is nothing to fear from the future (*pronoia*). But it requires an open, discerning disposition, to “come out of ourselves” (*salir de sí mismo*, Francis says in Spanish; *uscire di se stesso* in Italian). It is what we do in prayer. As Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, the synod relator, said recently, “if we stay faithful to the bridegroom (Christ), the synod will show us the way.”

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This past year I have met and seen many examples of a distrustful, even paranoid, response to the synod. There have been claims that the synod has realized some people’s worst fears. Examples of this I have found to be the case on Twitter, where some alert me to what they claim is the synod’s true purpose: to introduce heresy under the guise of a sinister modernization programme. I have often been told that the whole thing is “rigged by the liberals” to secure a pre-determined outcome.

On the other wing, another kind of paranoia set in early: people agreed that the synod was rigged, not by liberals but by bishops who would ensure that *plus ça change, plus c’est le même chose*. This was expressed sometimes as a weariness — “we’ve said all this before, and nothing happened” — but most often assumes that “real change” equates to a wishlist of pre-determined reforms that will make the Church look like other Churches and credible to liberal modernity. At the top of the list is the ordination of women, at least to the diaconate, which (it is assumed) is a question of natural justice. When the synod reports (national and global) failed to reflect this viewpoint, it was described as proof that the thing was rigged.

But the fact is, the *sensus fidelium* in the report starts from and goes to a very different place. Almost universally they see the full and equal participation of women in the life and mission of the Church as key to its evangelizing credibility, and women’s leadership and ministry as vital to recognize the diversity of charisms in a synodal Church. In a whole

section — paragraphs 60 to 65 — given over to women in the DCS, there is just one line on the ordination question (saying it is a closed issue for some, but not for others), which reflects the weight given to it in the reports (between us, the 114 national reports were read at least three times). The concluding document of the Prague assembly similarly notes the disagreement on the issue of ordination, emphasizing instead a consensus call for the Church to take “concrete and courageous decisions on the role of women within the Church and on their greater involvement at all levels, including in decision-making and taking processes.”

What the synod has revealed, in other words, is the Spirit’s call to the full, active participation of the faithful in the life and mission and decision-making processes of the Church, requiring, on the one hand, formation to enable co-responsibility, and on the other, synodal processes of consultation and decision-making that express the spiritual agency of the faithful. Both of these are considered vital to the evangelizing mission of the Church in our time, and focus not on opening the clergy to women and married men but on the ordinary faithful being allowed to assume the responsibility of their baptism.

Not coincidentally, the synod on synodality has so far reflected precisely the four principles of “authentic” reform Yves Congar laid out in his magisterial 1950 text, *True and False Reform in the Church*. The first is the primacy of *pastoralità*, or pastoral concerns; that is, the purpose of reform is better to enable the Church to carry out its mission of evangelization. It is not a programme, a re-engineering exercise, as if the Church were itself the object, as in the German so-called ‘Synodal Way’, which despite its name is not a synod in any canonical sense. What is under discussion in a synod, as Pope Francis says in our book *Let Us Dream*, are not “traditional truths of Christian doctrine” — which a synod has no authority to alter — but “how teaching can be lived and applied in the changing contexts of our time.”

The second Congarian principle is communion, or avoiding isolation and pride. This calls for a certain humility: we express ourselves boldly yes, but we do not own the truth, and trust in the wisdom of the Church, and the surprises of the Spirit, which surpasses our narrow visions. In *Let Us Dream*, Francis calls this “a respectful, mutual listening, free of ideology and predetermined agendas”, which is why the paranoid and lobby groups cannot accept the synod, and have stood apart from it, glaring. For all its obvious defects and weaknesses — the resistances and misunderstandings, the relative lack of participation — the synod on synodality has done an astonishing job of listening without prejudice to all the voices, even of the most distant and poor, across the world.

The third hallmark of true reform is renewal through a return to the *principle* of tradition, that is, to thinking with and in the tradition, which takes into account both doctrine as it has developed and the growth in the awareness of the *sensus fidelium*, as well as the needs of today, in a process of discernment determined finally by the bishops. Synodality itself is a good example of reform from the tradition principle. Synods, common in the Patristic period, later atrophied as the Church took on more of the character of a state, and are under Francis being revived in a radically inclusive way in keeping with the needs of our time.

The final principle is patience with the time reform takes. The Church, says Congar, dislikes ultimatums from reformers, which are often signs of power games. We

saw this spirit in some of the reports — “unless x or y happens, people will continue to leave the Church” — and it has been especially prominent in the German synodal way, whose purpose is to restore credibility in the eyes of society through parliamentary-style deliberations resolved by majority votes, with the ordinary faithful as bystanders. The Catholic tradition of synodality as revived by Pope Francis is just the opposite: it involves a careful listening to all the faithful followed by a discernment by the bishops, whose conclusions inform, but do not bind, the final discernment by the successor of St Peter.

What I have seen this past year, being close to at least part of the engine room of church renewal, is the authority of the Church working as it should, as the Second Vatican Council — reviving the early-Church understanding — intended it to. Numbers taking part were low relative to the whole Massgoing population (around six to eight percent) yet still unprecedented; this has been the broadest consultation in the history of the Church, possibly of the world. But more importantly, the experience for those taking part has been transformative. People have spoken boldly, and listened humbly; and clergy and bishops, too, have grown in their awareness of the *sensus fidelium*.

What is remarkable is to see how closely the Pope’s own diagnosis of the Church’s crisis in the western world which he makes in *Evangelii Gaudium* and elsewhere echoes what the faithful see and understand: a Church too often closed in on itself, that has become distant from the people, and does not recognize the gifts the Spirit is pouring out on the faithful to enable the Church to evangelize. A bold change in mindset is needed to enable this, which synodality is helping to bring to birth. The priorities of the Francis pontificate, in other words, are those of the *sensus fidei fidelium*, and that beautiful convergence — that *pastorum et fidelium conspiratio* — suggests that this is, after all, a fruitful time, in which it is not reasonable to expect that the Spirit will lead us out of the noonday eclipse into the brighter afternoon of Christianity.



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# What Am I Living For? Life, Death and Friendship

TIMOTHY RADCLIFFE OP

This is an adapted script used in a 2022 lecture series titled *What am I living for?* at St Martin-in-the-Fields, London.

When I was very ill recently, I jotted down some memoirs. This was an act of gratitude for my life which I thought might not last much longer. What I discovered was that my life has largely been shaped by friendship. Father Bede Jarret who refounded the Dominican community in Oxford more than a hundred years ago, wrote of friendship as “being to me the most beautiful thing on earth”.<sup>1</sup> So, when I was asked to talk about for what I live, I wanted to talk about friendship. But I was asked to talk about illness and death! Hence the long title. So, I hope I will not be like the mythical German professor who wanted to lecture about elephants but was told to talk about mice, and so he lectured on why elephants are afraid of mice running up their trunks!

When I came to make my final commitment to the Order *usque ad mortem*, until death, the big question for me was this: Could I flourish and be happy in this odd way of life which ruled out marriage? Part of me longed for an exclusive relationship with another person. I would be the most important person in the world for them and they for me. Without that, would I shrivel up and become a dried-up old stick? It did not help that I joined the Order in 1965, just three years after sex was invented, according to Philip Larkin. Sexual fulfilment seemed like a right.

Thomas Merton loved to tell his novices a story from the desert fathers. There was a rich woman who wanted to have a pet hermit on her estate; it was the latest lifestyle accessory, like a personal trainer. One day to test his holiness, she sent along a beautiful prostitute. He said to the prostitute: “I’m a dried-up stick; you are wasting your time.” The rich woman shouted, “That man’s a phoney; throw him out.” I looked at the old friars in my Province and saw that most of them were not at all dry old sticks, humanly alive and happy. They had remained young in heart. That gave me the courage to proceed. But just a few years later, drat it, when I was ordained, I fell deeply in love. It happened to be with a woman, not that it matters. I had given myself to the Order for life, and here was someone who also loved me with whom I could share my life. Wasn’t this the relationship for which I had longed? Had I made a dreadful mistake? We both came to see that we must love each other as we are. She believed in my Dominican vocation and I in hers. It was as this friar that I am that I must love her as she was and she me. She came to stay at Blackfriars so that she could understand my life just as I must hers. Forty-five years later, we are still the closest of friends. Over many years, with occasional muddles and mistakes, I came to believe that we all called to participate in the mystery of the divine love, but differently. Forgive me for a vastly oversimplification, but otherwise I will never get around to illness or death.

God's love is particular, for each of us as we are in our uniqueness. And at the same time, it is universal, excluding no one. As they say: the good news is that God loves you. The bad news is that God loves everyone else as well. Every one of us is called to live both the particularity of God's love and its universality. And here is where the gross oversimplification comes. Some of us are called to be rooted in the soil of a particular passionate love of another. The sacrament of this is marriage but it can take different forms. But if this is your vocation, you will be summoned beyond that exclusive relationship. It will be prised open by the arrival of children, friends and even strangers. The particular love may be your soil, but it needs to overflow in wider friendship, otherwise one gets bogged down in a narcissistic introverted relationship which D.H. Lawrence called *egoisme a deux*. Two Brahmin women were said to have fulfilled the command to give alms by swapping equal gifts. Be warned: they were reincarnated as poisoned wells! So, every passionate committed love also needs the outreach of friendship if it is to flourish.

Some people, priests, religious and some lay people, are called to be planted in the soil of God's wide-open love. To love the stranger at the door, to belong to whoever turns up. Think of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Think of the wonderful outreach of St Martin-in-the fields to the homeless. When I fell in love, I discovered that this was my soil, the humus, in which I could put down my roots and flourish. But this does not get us odd bods out of forming profound loving friendships with individual people. Unless we learn to love particular people then our love will be cold and empty, like dried up old sticks. St Aelred, the twelfth century Cistercian Abbot of Rievaulx, warned religious against "a love that in addressing itself to all, reaches no one."<sup>2</sup> W.H. Auden joked: "we are here on earth to do good to others. What the others are here for, I don't know."<sup>3</sup>

A hundred years ago, Dom Hubert van Zeller, a novice at Downside Abbey, wrote to Bede Jarret, our English Dominican Provincial, in alarm when he fell in love with someone known only as P. We do not know whether P was a man or a woman. It does not matter. Bede wrote back:

"I am glad because I think your temptation has always been towards Puritanism, a narrowness, a certain inhumanity... Your tendency was almost towards the denial of the hallowing of matter. You were in love with the Lord but not properly in love with the Incarnation. You were really afraid... I believe P will save your life. I shall say a Mass in thanksgiving for what P has been, and done, to you. You have needed P for a long time. Aunts are no outlet. Nor are stout and elderly Provincials."<sup>4</sup>

When I quoted this in a book that was translated into French, I noticed that 'stout and elderly Provincials' was translated as 'fat old women from Provence'! So, we all are called to share in the mystery of God's love in all sorts of ways. Through spousal love, and through wide open charity, through *eros* and *agape*, but I believe that every Christian also needs to flourish through friendship. We are disciples of the one who said to us "I call you friends." All forms of Christian discipleship include the

art of friendship. What about hermits, I hear you ask? On spec, I googled ‘Hermits and friendship’ and discovered the ‘Hermits and friends colouring book.’ The best hermits are famous for their friendships. Think of St Antony the Great, the desert father whose friendships were legendary.

For all of us, I suspect, the challenge is to reach out in friendship without being uprooted from one’s particular soil. For example, how can one become a person of deep friendship without undermining one’s marriage or one’s religious life. Friendship is a sign of the Kingdom, when

“the wolf shall live with the lamb and the leopard lie down with the kid... They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isiah 11.6,9).

Can you think of any easy friendships between men and women after the Fall until Jesus walked with a band of friends, women and men, to Jerusalem? We Dominicans are officially called The Order of Preachers. And the earliest Dominicans in the thirteenth century preached through deep friendships between men and women. St Dominic clearly loved the company of women. When he was dying he confessed that he “has been more excited by the conversation of young women than being talked at by old women.”<sup>5</sup> Blessed Jordan, his successor, wrote the most beautiful love letters to a Dominican nun, Blessed Diane d’Andalò, overflowing with mutual tenderness. St Catherine of Siena was surrounded by her circle of beloved friends — men and women, old and young, lay and religious — known as the *caterinati*, the Catherine people.

Today, relationships between men and women have often become uneasy, fractious and fraught. Studies show that in America, men and women have become afraid of intimacy. We preach the Kingdom by reaching out in friendship. That is why sexual abuse in our Churches is so poisonous and destructive.

It is high time that I said something about the nature of friendship. I will not attempt a definition. In my experience, the ground of friendship is the delight in being with another. You bask in his or her presence. Being with them lets one flower and flourish in a way that no other does. You *need* to be with them. In the liturgy we often say, “The Lord be with you.” That is the divine friendship. Not God necessarily doing something. Just being with us.

C. S. Lewis said this being with a friend is founded on seeing things together. Lovers look at each other; friends look in the same direction. I quote:

“‘Do you *care about* the same truth?’ The [one] who agrees with us that some question, little regarded by others, is of great importance can be our Friend. He need not agree with us about the answer.”<sup>6</sup>

Earlier today I preached at the memorial service in Oxford of a friend. He was a scientist, an agnostic Jew, a lover of art and a poet: Simon Altmann. We did not agree about faith in God, but we loved to search for understanding together.

Owls can hunt in the dark because one ear is slightly higher than the other, so they can zoom in on their prey. Because our views are not quite the same, conversations with friends can be a delight. Gareth Moore, the Dominican philosopher was a good friend who alas died young of cancer. We loved to argue. One night at 10pm I went to ask if he could celebrate Mass at the local convent the next morning. We began to argue, and suddenly we became aware that the sun had risen. We had argued for eight hours and we had not even had anything to drink! Unusual for a Dominican. When Gareth discovered that his cancer was terminal, I asked him what he wanted. He replied: "I want to finish my book (which he did); I want to have time with my friends, and I want my death to be a gift to the brethren." Which it was. I am writing a book at the moment with another Dominican friend, Lukasz Popko. He is thirty-three years younger than me, Polish and a real Biblical scholar. It is our differences that makes conversations delightful.

My first job as a priest was to be a university chaplain in west London. My boss was a typical Catholic nun, Sister Gerry Hall. She loved extremely fast motorbikes and strong gin and tonics. Cardinal Heenan visited her convent when she as a young nun and afterwards wrote to the reverend mother that he was shocked to see a young nun in a mini dress. Gerry put on that same dress, zoomed around to Archbishop's house, stormed up the stairs and burst into the Cardinal's office. She said, "Your Eminence if you think this is a mini dress, you have no right to comment in women's fashion."

At the chaplaincy with Sister Gerry's help, almost fifty years ago, I discovered that most wonderful thing, a group of friends, men and women, whose friendship endures to this day. We were each more ourselves for belonging to this group. The closer we became to each other, the more individual we were. The more we were 'we' the more each of us was himself or herself.

But it is not always so easy. Each profound friendship brings into existence a dimension of my life and identity that has never existed before. I become someone I have never quite been before. Rowan Williams, in his brilliant book on Dostoevsky, says that every profound conversation unfolds another dimension of myself, which hitherto had only existed potentially. He quotes Bakhtin:

"Dialogue... is not a means for revealing, for bringing to the surface the ready-made character of a person; no, in dialogue a person not only shows himself outwardly, but he becomes for the first time that which he is — and we repeat, not only for others but for himself as well."<sup>7</sup>

Every profound friendship is an invitation for me to become someone new.

So, we are not quite the same person with our different friends. Who I was with Gareth is not quite the same as who I am with Lukasz. There can even be tensions, contradictions. I grew up in a warm and loving family that was in many ways conservative and traditional. When I became a Dominican, I became the brother and friend of people like Herbert McCabe who loved to go to the pub, and sing revolutionary Irish songs that would have horrified my family and old friends.

Who then was I? Was I many people? In Madeleine Thien's novel about Chinese immigrants in the US, *Do not say We have Nothing*, one of the characters says, "Don't ever try to be only a single thing, an unbroken human being. If so many people love you, can you honestly be one thing?"<sup>8</sup> So if we open ourselves to multiple friendships, we shall not have a neat, tightly defined identity.

When I was a student in France in the late sixties, the cry was "*il faut être coherent*." One must be coherent. No. We are fragmented people, work in progress. Coherence lies ahead, in the Kingdom. Then the wolf and the lamb in each of us shall be at peace with each other. St John says, "it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he [Christ] appears, we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3.2). If we have closed, fixed identities written in stone now, we shall never be open to the adventure of new friendships who will unfold new dimensions of who we are. I suppose that I have learnt not to worry about now fully knowing who I am.

A last word on friendship before I turn to sickness and death. In the Old Testament and in Aristotle, it is agreed that one could only be friends with good people. The good person could not befriend the wicked. Friendship was for the virtuous. If the wicked had friends, it was always to plan some naughtiness!

Jesus scandalised the world with impossible friendships. He ate and drank with prostitutes and tax collectors. I guess he enjoyed their company. How many bishops would hold parties for sex workers today? Why not? Come to think of it, I never have yet. Jesus reached out in friendships which overthrew all the boundaries, friendships which should not have been. At the Last Supper, he said "I call you friends" precisely to the disciples whom he knew would mostly betray him, deny him and desert him. He was murdered for his impossible scandalous friendships.

So that is our vocation too, to make friendships the world thinks impossible. This is a task. We fall in love, surrender to the gravity of attraction, but friendships are made and sustained. Pierre Claverie was a French Dominican, the bishop of Oran in Algeria. At his episcopal ordination, he said to his Muslim friends,

"I owe to you also what I am today. With you in learning Arabic, I learned above all to speak and understand the language of the heart, the language of brotherly friendship, where races and religions commune with each other. And again, I have learned the softness of heart to believe that this friendship will hold up against time, distance and separation. For I believe that this friendship comes from God and leads to God."<sup>9</sup>

For this friendship with Muslims, he was murdered along with a young Muslim friend, Mohamed Bouchihki. His funeral was attended by hundreds of Muslims who murmured, "He was our bishop too, he was the Bishop of the Muslims." At his beatification, a play by a young French Dominican was performed, called *Pierre et Mohamed*, a celebration of their friendship. Mohamed's mother was there and kissed the actor who played her son.

Just over a year ago I had my second operation for cancer. It was a gruesome operation for cancer of the jaw. It took seventeen hours. My jaw was reconstructed



from a leg bone. I had often put my foot in it, but this time it was my leg! I was warned that I might not be able to return to public speaking, but here I am. Though by now you may be wishing that I were not!

My first instinct was to treat the cancer as if it were an enemy to be beaten. I was its victim. It must be fought. But I remembered a friend, a Japanese Dominican, Shigeto Oshida. He called himself a Buddhist who encountered Christ. When he was young he caught tuberculosis. Three times he almost died. He said “The Master of my Zen, my guru, was my sickness.”<sup>10</sup> In the sanatorium, this highly educated person discovered the friendship of poor and simple people. He was at home with them. He founded an ashram not far from Mt Fuji, for Christians and Buddhists. In the garden there is a statue of the Buddha with the Christ child in his hand. He wrote: “I want to start a *madoi* of God (a living circle of friendship) in this area where poor people can live together.” His sickness taught him a love of simplicity which, he believed cured one of “the smell of the ego.”

So, during those five weeks in hospital and the long months of radiotherapy and recuperation afterwards, I tried not to think of myself as the victim of a malign enemy. My sickness could be my guru too. It began to demolish all sorts of silly little identities. I had thought of myself as an articulate person, a published author and public speaker. But when I came to after the operation in the Blenheim ward of the Churchill hospital, I was deeply disorientated. A gentle young doctor asked me where I was. I knew it was something to do with Blenheim, but it could not be the Palace. There was a remarkable absence of dukes. I was able to tell him who was the monarch. I was hoping he would ask me who was the Prime Minister. Then they did not change so rapidly.

I always love to be up early, eager for the tasks of the day. But for weeks I was passive. Nutrition and medicine flowed down tubes into me and waste flowed out. Despite the wonderful kindness of the doctors and nurses, I felt myself to be a lump that was injected and inspected. Even when the tubes came away, all that I could think of was whether the bedpan would come in time when I rang the bell.

My guru sickness taught me how profoundly my sense of self depended on the gaze and touch of those who cared for me. I had no other claims to importance. My identity was simplified, pared down. Any claim to superiority would seem just silly. I was just one of the patients. Here were my companions in affliction. We were all on the way to the Kingdom together, helping each other along. Charles Peguy said when we arrive together, God will ask of each of us, “where are the others?”

In Rome I often used to drop into the French Church to see Caravaggio’s painting of the Call of Matthew. People dispute as to which one is Matthew. I believe that he is the young man on the far left of the painting. He is curved over the pile of money, ignoring what is going on around him. The other disciples look at the Lord who is pointing to him. Are they saying, “Surely you don’t mean that slob, do you? I would be a much better disciple!” Or maybe they are saying, “Hey Matthew! He is calling your name.”

It also simplified my relationship with God. I found it almost impossible to pray. When I tried to say the Our Father I could not get past the first couple of words. In the

Old Testament, God calls people by name: Abraham, Moses, Samuel. And they reply with a simple single word, *Hinmeni*. Here I am. In hospital my relationship with God was pared down to no more than that. *Hinmeni*. Here I am. That is our deepest identity. Someone whom God calls by name. One replies. Here I am, lying in this bed unable to do more and not needing to do more.

I said at the beginning that friendship is most fundamentally the joy of being with someone. With him or her you discover yourself. In hospital you cannot make witty conversation with God or have profound mystical experiences, or dazzle God with one's achievements. One simply is with the one who revealed to Moses that his name is: I AM.

James Finley, an American disciple of the monk Thomas Merton, wrote:

“As a person ripens in unsayable intimacies in God, they ripen in a paradoxical wisdom. They come to understand God as a presence that protects us from nothing, even as God unexplainably sustains us in all things.”<sup>11</sup>

God is not there to fix things; the divine insurance policy. God is simply there. Emmanuel. God with us. The Lord be with you.

I do not fear death since I believe that it will be falling into the eternity of merciful love. But nor do I *want* to die. That's odd isn't it? If death is the door to eternal happiness, shouldn't one positively long for it, even if one is well and healthy? Each of us will reply differently. I would say that we Christians do not believe in an afterlife. We believe in eternal life. And eternal life begins now, whenever we love in any way, whether erotically or in friendship. So, the best way preparation for death is to live now. Now is the time to make friends. Today is the only day that exists, and it is the time for friendship.



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#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Meditations for Layfolk*. London, Catholic Truth Society, 1941, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Liz Carmichael, *Friendship: Interpreting Christian Love*, London 2004, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> D. C. Schindler. *Communion*, Fall 2006, p. 394.

<sup>4</sup> Eds. Bede Bailey, Aidan Bellenger and Simon Tugwell, *Letters of Bede Jarrett*. Bath and Oxford, Downside Abbey and Blackfriars Publications, 1989, p. 189.

<sup>5</sup> Ed. Simon Tugwell OP, *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*. Ramsey, Paulist Press, 1982, p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Ed. Simon Tugwell OP, *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*. Ramsey, Paulist Press, 1982, p. 66.

<sup>7</sup> Dostoevsky, *Language, Faith and Fiction*, London 2008, p. 133.

<sup>8</sup> Granta, London, 2016, p. 457.

<sup>9</sup> *A Life poured out*, p. viii.

<sup>10</sup> Shigeto Oshida, “The Mystery of the Word and the Reality.” International Congress on Mission, 1979, vol. II, p. 210.

<sup>11</sup> “Ripening,” *Oncing* 1, no. 2, *Ripening*, Fall 2013, pp. 37–8.

# A Third Spring Revisited

MGR JOHN ARMITAGE

As I started to prepare for this article, I remembered a previous article I had written for *The Venerabile* in 2011, called the Third Spring Sermon. It was inspired by the visit of Pope Benedict in 2010, and the challenges he presented to the Church: “At the dawn of a new age in the life of society and of the Church, St Bede understood both the importance of fidelity to the word of God as transmitted by the apostolic tradition, and the need for creative openness to new developments and to the demands of a sound implantation of the Gospel in contemporary language and culture.”<sup>1</sup> And to society in his speech at Westminster Hall he said, “Religion [...] is not a problem for legislators to solve, but a vital contributor to the national conversation.”<sup>2</sup>

In recalling the dawn of a new age in the life of society and the Church in the time of St Bede, Pope Benedict noted, in our own time, “the need for creative openness to new developments and to the demands of a sound implantation of the Gospel in contemporary language and culture.”<sup>3</sup> Earlier at St Mary’s, Twickenham, Rabbi Sacks had also affirmed the present challenges to the Gospel: “Each of us in our own way is a guardian of values that are in danger of being lost, in our short-attention-span, hyperactive, information-saturated, wisdom-starved age.”<sup>4</sup>

Recognising the dawning of a new age that faces both the Church and society, Pope Francis said that we are “not living in an era of change but a change of era.”<sup>5</sup> The preparation for the forthcoming Synod is a call firstly for the Church to read the signs of the times of the world in which we live, so that the Church may listen to “what the Spirit is saying to the Church.”<sup>6</sup> In 2001, St John Paul II reflected that, “Even in countries evangelised many centuries ago, the reality of a Christian society which, amid all the frailties which have always marked human life, measuring itself explicitly on Gospel values, is now gone.”<sup>7</sup> The challenges we face have been apparent for many years, they are no longer on the horizon: they are upon us.

The structure of Christendom as we knew it has gone, and as we stand on the threshold of a new dawn in the life of the Church, we seek to serve the society in which we live, a society that has lost its moral compass. When the prophets called, why did we not listen? The recent book *From Christendom to Apostolic Mission*, by the University of Mary (US), reflects that “In the space of one generation the bottom of the Christendom culture fell out. Catholic societies and Christian societies went from being strongly Catholic to aggressively secular. One reason for the rapid collapse was the overarching vision of the society that had been changing over a course of time, but the change was not perceived, and the institutions of the Church were not adjusting to it, they continued to be led under the attitude of *business as usual*. Our failure to keep a good look out leads to a reprimand from the Lord. “In the morning you say, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but how is it you fail to read the signs of the times?”<sup>8</sup>

The call for a New Evangelisation is clear enough, but the challenge we face is how do we understand what the “new” means? “New” does not mean never having existed before, for through the eyes of faith we experience a beauty, truth, and goodness, that is *ever ancient – ever new*. We are witnesses to the ancient unchanging reality upon which one’s life may be built. Because it is true, it sets us free; because it is beautiful, it touches our heart; because it is good, it changes us and the people we serve. “Behold, I am making all things new.” Therefore, this leads to, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”<sup>9</sup> Surely the “new” which the Church asks of us is described by Pope Benedict, it is “fidelity to the word of God as transmitted by the apostolic tradition, and the need for creative openness to new developments and to the demands of a sound implantation of the Gospel in contemporary language and culture.”

Pope St Gregory the Great sent Augustine on his mission to England when Rome was in chaos; the barbarians were “at the gates,” and civilisation as they knew it was collapsing. Yet Gregory sent monk missionaries to the farthest part of a crumbling Empire. The legacy of the monk missionary is still part of the charism of the English Benedictine Congregation founded in 1216. Jesus describes the chaos of the ‘ordinary times’ of our fallen world, “You will hear of wars and rumours of wars but see to it that you are not alarmed. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold.”<sup>10</sup> He then gives the solution, “the one who perseveres to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world”<sup>11</sup>. Augustine was afraid of going to England to preach the Good News to a barbarous, fierce, and pagan nation. So, no change there then!

The monks built a monastery, for the foundation of their mission would be prayer and fraternity. Over time a new type of monastic settlement would develop called Minsters. Religious houses of prayer, teaching, pastoral care, and Christian hospitality. They would cover a local area known as a *parochia* that would eventually develop into the parochial system, the origin of our present-day parishes. The gathering of local communities of believers was the bedrock of the mission of the Church, back to the Acts of the Apostles, and for most people today, the story of the Church is the story of the local Christian community; the parish in all its varied forms. Pope Gregory entrusted the mission to convert England to lay monks, led by a few priests; this same mission today is still entrusted to the lay faithful, sustained by the ministry of priests. The monks were part of a fast-growing lay monastic movement of men and women. In every age, the role of the laity in all its different forms is foundational to the life and Apostolic mission of the Church. In the midst of the darkness of their times, extraordinary acts of hope and courage were accomplished by those who persevered to the end. There is never a “*good time*” to preach the gospel, there is only the time in which we live. The test of any group is not what you do when the sun is shining, but how you rise to the occasion in the midst of the darkness that surrounds you.

The Second Spring arose from centuries of persecution and martyrdom, for truly the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Second Spring of the Church in our country. This Apostolic Mission was not to a people who did not know Christ, for England was a Christian country. Yet this society was fragmented with painful divisions in the body of Christ, it was a society increasingly affected by the rising

skepticism of the age. The Second Spring sought to restore the ancient Catholic faith of England. This Apostolic period rebuilt the Church, building schools, parishes, seminaries, extensive pastoral services to address the needs of the poor and a new chapter in the long story of religious life in our country. This is the Church in which we have all grown up and live. However, in our lifetime, we have seen much change in our world, and as this present era appears to be drawing to its close, our Apostolic Mission today is to a people who have largely rejected the Christian message and replaced it with the worship of the self.

If we believe that we are still in the period of the Second Spring, then we continue to labour under the influence of a Christendom that maintains the status quo. The Vatican document, *The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the service of the evangelising Mission of the Church*, sets out the picture and it pulls no punches. “The current Parish model no longer adequately corresponds to the many expectations of the faithful. Mere repetitive action that fails to have an impact upon people’s concrete lives remains a sterile attempt at survival, which is usually welcomed by general indifference.”<sup>12</sup>

Today, our parishes and Catholic organisations carry the weight of structures and expectations of a time that has passed, and these burdens can crush the life of our communities. The Pastoral conversion of our Parishes is a call for a renewed apostolic zeal, a new fire of the Spirit. The witness of the Catholic Parish is the principal means of evangelisation. Pope Saint Paul VI calls this witness “pre-evangelisation”, where “The wordless witness of these Christians stirred up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live: Why are they like this? Why do they live in this way? What or who is it that inspires them? Why are they in our midst? Such a witness is already a silent proclamation of the Good News and a very powerful and effective one. Here we have an initial act of evangelisation.”<sup>13</sup> Evangelisation raises a question in the life of another human being. It is a relationship, not a philosophy. It enables us to re-connect with a reality in our lives that is ever present. God’s love for us, and the encounter with this love, comes not through argument, but through human encounter, because “The Word became flesh... and lived among us.”<sup>14</sup>

So it is that Pope Saint John Paul II called for “heralds of the Gospel who are experts in humanity, who know the depths of the human heart, who can share the joys, the hopes, the agonies, the distress of people today, but who are, at the same time, contemplatives who have fallen in love with God.”<sup>15</sup> This was the evangelisation that converted the ancient world to Christianity. It “was not the result of any planned activity on the part of the Church but the fruit of the proof of the faith as it became visible in the life of Christians and of the community of the Church. Christians should be reference points of faith as people who know about God, in their lives they should demonstrate faith as truth, and thus become signposts for others.”<sup>16</sup> This faith spoke of a man who “knows what he is talking about”: the disciples on the way to Emmaus would say, “did not our hearts burn within us as he explained the scriptures and broke the bread?”<sup>17</sup>

Similarly to St Paul and St Augustine in the pre-Christian ancient world and England, evangelisation today requires redirecting hearts to God. Unlike the Second

Spring, the Church must say to today's post-Christian world, "that what you worship is unknown, this I will explain to you". Both Paul and Augustine were faced with the worship of idols, but St Gregory told Augustine that he should "by no means destroy the temples of their gods but rather the idols within those temples. [...] For, if those temples are well built, they should be converted from the worship of demons to the service of the true God."<sup>18</sup> In other words, whilst recognising the good in society, the Church must also recognise the worship of modern-day idols, understanding that "when a man stops believing in God, it's not that he believes in nothing; when a man stops believing in God, he will believe in anything."<sup>19</sup> And a belief in anything amounts to the loss of everything, namely God. "A culture that cannot name God ceases to be able to name evil for what it is and loses its capacity to name the ultimate good that can unite the aims of human beings to one another."<sup>20</sup> At a personal level, the worship of idols creates a profound emptiness, a fear that is so painful that we seek to fill it with anything, but nothing fits! Saint Augustine writes, "you have made us for yourself O God and our hearts are restless until they rest in you"<sup>21</sup>. There is a "God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man and women, ... that cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ."<sup>22</sup>

*Gaudium et Spes* echoes these words, "(that) nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men and women [...] Who realise that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds."<sup>23</sup> Today's idolatry is particularly visible in the confused understanding of freedom. "Present day culture and Christianity can in a sense, find common ground in the concept of freedom. After all, Christianity is a message of freedom and liberation. 'The Truth will set you free.' Modern culture has been marked by a strong aspiration for freedom... yet false ideas of freedom have alienated people from the truth and caused the death of millions."<sup>24</sup> Freedom is not only choosing what I want, for this leads me back to myself, my feelings, and my emotions. The true desire for freedom is formed by the journey from "I want", to "we need". This common freedom is discovered by the encounter with all that is good, beautiful and true, for only the truth sets us free.

"I have told you this that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete."<sup>25</sup> The litmus test of faith is always Joy, when knowledge of God and our Understanding of God are united, the consequence is Joy! It is not a feeling or emotion like happiness, it is the knowledge that we are loved; for when the desire of our heart discovers the love of our life, joy becomes a reality, not an idea or an emotion. It is given to us so we may live our ordinary lives in the most extraordinary ways. It is a form of companionship, an inner strength, that gives comfort; it is a presence that is gentle; and as I journey through life, I become aware that the one I seek is already seeking me. It is the reassurance I am never alone: I rejoice, for I have accepted and taken to heart that which will never leave me. We long for something greater than ourselves, for we are unable to produce joy on our own. It is pure gift, hence we are always surprised by Joy.

As the first martyr of the Reformation, Saint John Houghton and his companions started their journey from the Tower of London to the Tyburn Tree, St Thomas

More saw them out of his cell window and commented to his daughter, “Look, Meg! These blessed Fathers be now as joyfully going to their deaths, as bridegrooms to their marriage!” The dismantling and humiliation of the ancient structures of our Catholic faith — from the destruction of the monasteries and ancient shrines, to the suppression of the very heart of our faith, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass — brought the Church to its knees and changed England, Mary’s Dowry, forever. Centuries of Catholic life was ended, but through the blood of the martyrs and the quiet fidelity of the remnant Catholic community, the spirit of the faith was kept alive.

The Church is sometimes humiliated by the state or sometimes by the painful actions of its own members, but with the help of God’s grace, men and women may move from humiliation to humility. The Church is built and re-built on this foundation stone of humility, and we have much to be humble about today: we come to that crossroads where our eyes are opened and our hearts “burn with us.”<sup>26</sup> Our plans lie in pieces at our feet, and we move from our way of doing things to the humble submission, “behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your Word.”<sup>27</sup>

A prophetic insight was written in 1969 by a young priest called Joseph Ratzinger:

“From the crisis of today the Church of tomorrow will emerge — a Church that has lost much. She will become small and will have to start afresh more or less from the beginning. She will no longer be able to inhabit many of the edifices she built in prosperity. As the number of her adherents diminishes, so it will lose many of her social privileges. In contrast to an earlier age, it will be seen much more as a voluntary society, entered only by free decision. As a small society, it will make much bigger demands on the initiative of her individual members.”<sup>28</sup>

I have reflected on the two Apostolic Springs of Christian witness in our land, through fearful beginnings, establishment, destruction, persecution, and in our own time indifference, apathy and a new style of persecution brought about by a godless view of life. As we stand on the threshold of a Third Apostolic Mission, we may feel the uncertainty, and even the fear, of St Augustine 1,500 years ago. As St Gregory reassured Augustine, so let Saint John Henry Newman reassure us with words from his Second Spring Sermon of 171 years ago:

“But still could we be surprised, if the winter even now should not yet be quite over? Have we any right to take it strange, if, in this English land, the springtime of the Church should turn out to be an English spring, an uncertain, anxious time of hope and fear, of joy and suffering, of bright promise and budding hopes, yet nonetheless, of keen blasts, cold showers, and sudden storms?”

One thing I am sure of, that the more the enemy rages against us, so much the more will our Saints and (martyrs) in Heaven pray for us; the more fearful are our

trials from the world, the more present to us will be Our Blessed Lady. We shall not be left orphans; we shall have within us the strength of the Holy Spirit, promised to the Church and to every member of it. One thing alone I know, that according to our need, so will be our strength.” **Our need is great, our strength is greater!**<sup>29</sup>



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#### ENDNOTES

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- <sup>2</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, “Meeting with the Representatives of British Society.” London, 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2010.
- <sup>3</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, “Ecumenical Celebration.” London, 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2010.
- <sup>4</sup> Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks, “Address to Pope Benedict.” London, 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2010.
- <sup>5</sup> Pope Francis, “Meeting with the Participants in the Fifth Convention of the Italian Church.” Florence, 10<sup>th</sup> November, 2015.
- <sup>6</sup> International Theological Commission, “Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church.” Rome, 2018.
- <sup>7</sup> Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter: *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 40. Rome, 2000.
- <sup>8</sup> Matt. 16:2-3.
- <sup>9</sup> Rev. 21:5.
- <sup>10</sup> Mk. 13:7.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> *The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish in the Service of the New Evangelisation*, CTS, 16.
- <sup>13</sup> Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation: *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 20. Rome, 1975.
- <sup>14</sup> Jn. 1:14.
- <sup>15</sup> Pope John Paul II, “Address to the Symposium of the Council of the European Bishops’ Conference.” Rome, 11<sup>th</sup> October, 1985.
- <sup>16</sup> Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.
- <sup>17</sup> Lk. 34:32.
- <sup>18</sup> Saint Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*.
- <sup>19</sup> G.K. Chesterton.
- <sup>20</sup> Thomas Joseph White OP, *First Things, The Metaphysics of Democracy*.
- <sup>21</sup> Saint Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 1,1.5.
- <sup>22</sup> Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*.
- <sup>23</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1. Rome, 1965.
- <sup>24</sup> Jacques Philippe, *Interior Freedom*.
- <sup>25</sup> Jn. 15:11.
- <sup>26</sup> Lk. 24:32.
- <sup>27</sup> Lk. 1:38.
- <sup>28</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Faith and the Future*.
- <sup>29</sup> St John Henry Newman, *The Second Spring Sermon*, 1852.



# In Memoriam: Queen Elizabeth II Queen Elizabeth Turned Privilege into a Life of Christian Service

REVD DR JAMES HANVEY SJ

It seemed as if some sort of stability might finally arrive. The British government had been in a terminal state since Prime Minister Boris Johnson's "partygate." The Downing Street "Covid jollies" stood in contrast to the dignified but lonely presence of Queen Elizabeth II at the funeral of her husband, Prince Philip, in St. George's Chapel in April 2021. She symbolized the situation of so many who had lost a loved one during the pandemic but had complied with the government's rules on large gatherings and social distancing. For several long, hot summer months, the country was held hostage by the interminable Conservative Party leadership election. Crises seemed to multiply while the government went into paralysis waiting for the outcome: the Ukrainian war, the sudden and crippling rise in energy costs, inflation, stagnation, strikes, the National Health Service buckling under pressure.

In all of this, the queen continued the reassuring customary rhythms of her year and made her regular summer progress through Scotland to her holiday retreat at Balmoral Castle in Aberdeenshire. On Saturday, Sept. 3, Liz Truss was elected as the new leader of the Conservative Party. On Tuesday, she met with the queen at Balmoral, who asked her to form a new government. The unwritten British constitution continued its seamless operation and, through the monarch, the peaceful transfer of power was once more effected.

The Queen's first prime minister was Winston Churchill; Liz Truss was her 15<sup>th</sup>. Forty-eight hours later the Queen was dead.

The period of national mourning began. At Westminster Abbey, the ancient shrine of St. Edward the Confessor and final resting place of 17 monarchs, a single bell tolled 96 times; one for each year of her life. In this moment of great loss, crowds gathered at Balmoral, Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace, laying flowers with messages of affection, gratitude and deep respect. As queen and person, Elizabeth II was the focus of national identity and unity; she was so much part of people's lives.

The queen had visited every part of her realm and was patron of over 600 charities in the United Kingdom alone. She lived and served through World War II and oversaw Britain's relatively peaceful transition from an exhausted imperial power to become one among the nations of the world. She was the head of the 54 countries of the Commonwealth, and it is estimated that she had met over three million people during her long and active life. The queen was the reassuring centre of the nation as it endured domestic and international crises from terrorist bombings, foreign wars and pandemics, as well as celebrations and commemorations. By any standard, Elizabeth II was a remarkable woman, an international figure, who inspired respect and affection among all her peoples,

even those who would object to monarchies. Even so, perhaps only now, as we begin to see her life in whole, we also see something more.

In 1867, Walter Bagehot, wrote his influential book *The English Constitution*. Bagehot was interested in probing the actual workings of power in the unwritten British constitution. He considers it under two aspects: “the dignified,” or largely symbolic function, and “the efficient” function (the executive and legislative powers), or “how things were done.” The monarchy, he argues, is of incalculable value to a government. It serves to bring a “mystique,” investing the “efficient” exercises of power with a dignity and stability that reassures ordinary people, commanding their trust and obedience even through the normal turmoil of party politics.

Bagehot was a shrewd and pragmatic, if somewhat elitist, observer of the political scene of his day, and his book has been significant in shaping the expectations of monarchy. Certainly, all Her Majesty’s governments understood the national value of a respected queen and the international benefits of a royal ambassador. It is generally recognized that throughout her long reign, Queen Elizabeth never put a constitutional foot wrong. Even so, I think she unconsciously exposes a flaw in Bagehot’s analysis.

In a media-hungry age, if the queen’s role had only been that of ceremonial spectacles and popular crowd-pleasing events, it would quickly have been exposed as an illusion — an entertaining Sunday evening diversion like “Downton Abbey.” Indeed, on many occasions the press and glossy fashion magazines have done their best to turn it into such a production. They never succeeded. As the depth of the public mourning now reveals, the queen herself was substance and not illusion. She was always the queen, never a celebrity.

The key, so often missed by the media but intuitively grasped by her people, was that for her, monarchy was not about privilege; it was about vocation. It was not something she had chosen; it had been asked of her, and, with her whole life, she assented. In that gracious “yes,” whatever the challenges, criticisms and vicissitudes, personal as well as political, the queen showed us how to convert privilege, whatever its form, into service.

In a time when democracy itself is precarious and so much political discourse is seen as vacuous, self-serving rhetoric, we need embodied substance, words tested by deeds and marked by the constancy of a dedicated life. When we have become accustomed to distrusting the offices of government and the incessant claims and counterclaims of “fake news,” Bagehot’s “efficient” organs of the state can themselves seem to be the very products of manipulation and illusion.

In the life of Queen Elizabeth II, however, we begin to see a strange paradox: Her stability and authenticity present us with the capacity of monarchy to rescue democracy. Not through theater or spectacle but by character and deep personal faith. With a monarch who can show how to convert privilege to service, authoritarian populism faces a constitutional as well as personal obstacle. A prime minister can be strong, but she or he cannot rise to be an authoritarian leader; the crown protects people against such volatile hegemonies. It is the queen who, beyond the petty party struggles, became the touchstone of what is genuine and of lasting value and the measure of public service.

The most sacred element in the liturgy of coronation is the anointing. It is a deeply private and intimate moment that is hidden from view. The Holy Spirit is invoked. While the anointing recalls the Old Testament anointing of Israel’s kings, it also recalls the

*Queen Elizabeth II during a meeting with John Paul II in 1980 at the Vatican. (From the Archives of the Venerable English College).*



anointing of Christ. In the ancient rite this moment has a sacramental force. In it the monarchy ceases to be a ceremonial role only; it becomes a sacred office. To those in her close circle, the queen on several occasions spoke of how significant her anointing was for her. She was overcome with a great peace; it was a sacramental moment that never left her. It was also received by her in deep faith — a faith that she was not embarrassed to profess.

We can speak lightly and, perhaps, skeptically about the grace of office. In Queen Elizabeth, we saw that grace working. Like all grace, it worked through nature. We saw it working through 70 years in her own generous nature and gifts; we saw it fulfilled in her fidelity to her vows as queen and lived in a life of duty, sacrifice and service. Through her, we can glimpse how grace may work through the conventions of public office and tradition that allowed the queen to be both a symbol and a person, a person of deep humanity, warmth and humour.

Whether in the service of the nations of the United Kingdom or the Commonwealth, there was also a quiet diplomacy — a ministry — of reconciliation. There are many moments when that grace was in evidence but none more so than her visit to the Republic of Ireland in May 2011. In her presence and gestures there was healing and reconciliation of a still painfully alive history between the two nations and between the North and the South. As with so many of her subjects and citizens of the Republic, it was a personal as well as political history, something she acknowledged in her speech at Dublin Castle. “Indeed, so much of this visit reminds us of the complexity of our history, its many layers and traditions,” she said, “but also the importance of forbearance and conciliation. Of being able to bow to the past but not be bound by it.” With consummate delicacy, and fully aware of the unstable power of symbols, the queen planted new seeds of reconciliation that continue to bear fruit. Such sensitivity does not come from constitutional forms; it comes from a deep, personal grasp of what is needed humanly as well as politically; for in Ireland, history is always personal. It was a moment when memory could begin to heal. This surely is the example of patience and self-transcendence that realizes the full grace of office.

Even though Queen Elizabeth II has died, a new reign has commenced. King Charles III, following the example of his mother and grandfather, George VI, may yet introduce us to an aspect of monarchy that seems to have completely escaped Bagehot: the prophetic role of the sovereign. Of course, prophecy is a gift or charism and is not automatically conferred

with the crown. We often think of it as a dramatic gesture or intervention, but prophecy is about transformation rather than information and it can also take other forms. There is certainly something prophetic in the faithful dedication to duty and service that manifests the best values of public office, especially when there are so many counterexamples.

In an older sense, such dedication can speak of a sacred covenant between power — monarchical or democratic — and the people. It is not dramatic but a constant true note and, as such, it can act as a quiet prophetic presence able to renew and correct the political order when necessary. In his mother, Charles III will have recognized this and will have learned from her the wisdom of such understatement and example. We can see it, too, present in all our communities: those whose faithful, dedicated service upholds our lives and preserves our humanity.

The fact that the crown is above the calculating pragmatism of party politics allows it to have a longer, deeper and more comprehensive view of people's needs and the enduring good that societies must build. The virtual absence of any reflection on the ecological crisis during the campaign for Tory leadership was astonishing. It was an example of the pragmatic myopia that politics is prey to. Yet long before care for the environment was either fashionable or urgent, Prince Charles was speaking about it. In practical projects and support for rural and urban communities, he has shown how we can live in a better way with the earth, our common home. This is just one example of many where the new king has already shown his capacity for foresight and an ability to translate vision into effective action for the common good. Already he has made a difference to so many lives, especially the young, through the unsung work of his charitable network, the Prince's Trust.

All of these efforts require the sort of vision and commitment over many years that political parties, even those in government for a long time, can rarely achieve. The work of the common good takes time and dedication that can be lost in the distracting ephemera of contemporary life. In the queen and now in her son, King Charles, we can see that this "dignified" dimension of government can, in fact, recognize and remind us of the dignity of every member of the nation — something that "the efficient" dimension can speak of but may forget in practice. The quiet prophetic work of monarchy has the capacity to call us to be our best selves as members of our communities and our nations.

Despite her death, her memory and her legacy does not fade. It remains not only as an example but a question to all who enjoy the privileges of birth, wealth, intellect and power. Can you convert your privilege into the grace of service? *Noblesse oblige* — something democracies cannot afford to forget. For this reason, the queen's life has been a gift, and her memory will remain a blessing.

This article can also be found at America Magazine: *Queen Elizabeth turned privilege into a life of Christian service.*



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# Homily for Solemn Vespers at the Venerable English College on the Eve of the Coronation of King Charles III

FR STEPHEN WANG

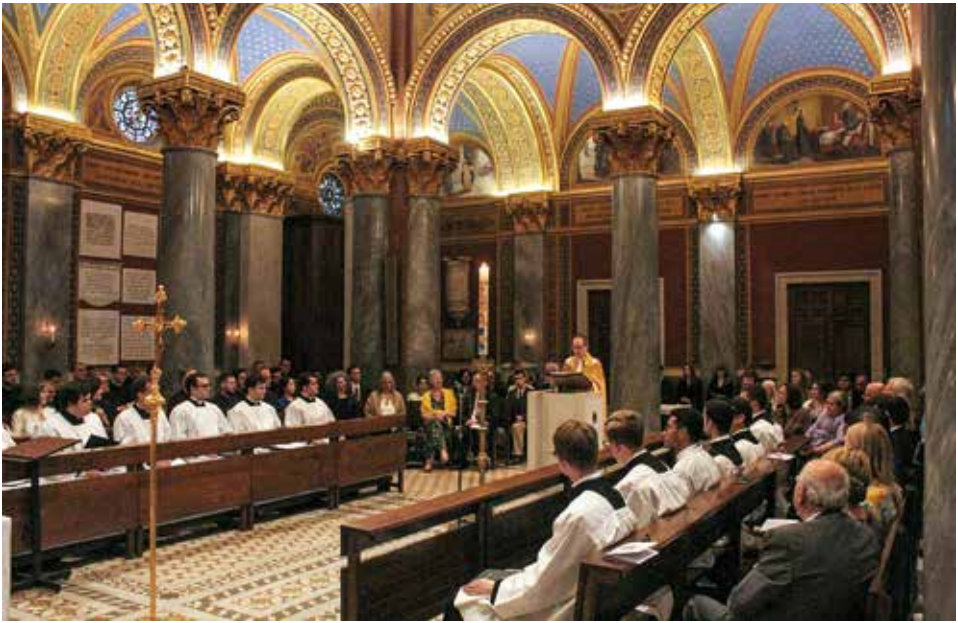
Let me quote Tom Holland, the well-known English historian. He writes in the *Guardian*, “Watching a coronation is the constitutional equivalent of visiting a zoo and finding a triceratops in one of the enclosures.”

It’s the sheer strangeness of it all. You are going about your business as an ordinary, twenty-first century citizen, walking the streets of London, and suddenly you see a golden coach passing by; there are orbs and crowns and sceptres and spurs and swords; you step into a time machine that takes you back a thousand years to the coronation of King Edgar, the great-grandson of Alfred the Great; and the rite of anointing takes you back even further into the bronze age rituals of ancient Israel, to the royal consecrations of Saul and David and Samuel.

Another sign of the strangeness is the vast array of coronation memorabilia — most of it of questionable taste. I’m sure many of the seminarians have already bought their coronation mug or commemorative coin set. And I assume the keen ones have snapped up a John Lewis coronation teddy bear, or a coronation themed “Colin the Caterpillar sponge cake” from Marks and Spencer, or even a limited-edition bottle of Heinz “Tomato Kingchup” to have with their barbeque tomorrow lunchtime.

Yes, it’s all very strange. But it’s a bit less strange if you are a Christian. Perhaps the most important moment in the whole celebration tomorrow will be the anointing. King Charles, seated on the Coronation Chair, will be anointed with oil produced from the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. He will be consecrated to serve his people and to govern them wisely, justly and religiously.





This is something we are very familiar with as Christians. Each one of us has already been anointed at our baptism and our confirmation. We know what it means to consecrate our lives to something, to someone, to the Lord — even if we are not always good at living that out.

The idea of consecration is not just a relic from the past but part of a living tradition for us, and it seems very natural that a monarch, a head of state, would assume office not by seizing power but by offering his life in service. We all have different missions, different vocations, but the heart of every vocation is to give your life for others, and to do it for the Lord.

I like the fact that the anointing will take place behind a specially constructed canopy, beyond the prying eyes of TV cameras and Instagrammers. It's partly about privacy and modesty — it's an intimate moment when the King has to partially disrobe. But it's also about recognising the sacredness of the moment.

Now be careful: it's not that you make something sacred simply by concealing it, any more than I can make one of our seminarians holy by hiding them in a cupboard. If only it were that simple. No, you don't make something holy by hiding it. But if something is already sacred, if it has a significance that points beyond this world, if it's something that is done for God and not just for the watching congregation, then you might want to keep it hidden from the public gaze.

Every liturgy has its *sotto voce* moments, and most liturgical spaces have a screen or at least a demarcation between a public area and an inner sanctuary. It's not actually to exclude those outside from the liturgical action, it's to help all those present, wherever they are placed, to appreciate the significance of what is taking place. The act of concealing has the effect of highlighting and intensifying the moment. Let's wait and see how this works tomorrow.

We are here to celebrate, but I don't think we should be afraid of acknowledging some of the ambiguities and tensions surrounding the coronation. Republicans, of course, are unhappy that another monarch is being crowned. Secular humanists are unhappy that we have a Christian monarch and an established church. Anglo-Catholics, I presume, are uneasy about the King's promise to maintain "the Protestant Reformed Religion" in the United Kingdom. There are legitimate questions about costs and national priorities. And there may even be some hard-core absolutists who want to take the word "constitutional" out of the phrase "constitutional monarchy".

Here is my non-expert take on things: The whole point of having a monarch is that they are a source of unity beyond all these ambiguities and disagreements. A monarch, paradoxically, does not represent just the monarchists, like a triumphant prime minister represents the winning party. No, a monarch is meant to unite and represent the whole country and every individual citizen.

I don't think that the constitutional monarchy of the United Kingdom is a perfect political system. But one of the advantages of having a monarch is that they stand slightly outside the politics and the inevitable factions of civil society. And the point of a *hereditary* monarch, strangely, is that no-one has chosen them, but everyone has inherited them. They belong, in theory, to everyone. They are there not because they are gifted or elected or even because they are liked, but simply because they are there! It's the being there that matters, as long as they do the basics and do their duty. And if they are also liked, and even loved, then that is a big bonus too.

There are ambiguities for us here at the Venerable English College as well. We were founded in 1362 as the English Hospice, but by the time of Henry VII we had become a royal foundation and were known as the King's Hospice. My predecessors, the Wardens of the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, were royal appointees. You can see the royal coat of arms in various places around the College.



But then during the time of the English Reformation we came under the authority of the Pope and of a line of Cardinal Protectors. And when this missionary seminary was officially founded in 1579, in the age of the martyrs, it seemed to many of our compatriots in England and Wales that we were working against our country and against the monarchy. This is the opposite of the truth.

Fr David King put it very well in his homily for the Feast of the English Martyrs yesterday. He said that the English martyrs gave their lives not out of hatred for an apparent enemy but out of love. It was love for their neighbour, their country and their monarch, that sent them back to England and Wales to share the Catholic faith. And it's the same love for country and compatriots that motivates our seminarians today to go back to England and Wales, to Northern Ireland and to the Republic of Ireland, to Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden.

The most important thing this evening is that we are praying together. It is such a gift that we can pray this Solemn Vespers with many ecumenical brothers and sisters, united in our love for Christ and our love for our country. We are praying for King Charles III, for Queen Camilla, and for their people.

We ask, in the words of the final prayer this evening, that God may grant to King Charles “wisdom in the exercise of his high office, so that, always revering God and striving to please him, he may constantly secure and preserve for the people entrusted to his care the freedom that comes from unity and peace”.

Freedom, unity, peace: this is what a good monarch is striving to achieve. He is not seeking benefits for himself but blessings for others. We pray, simply, that Charles may be a good king, and that by giving his life in service for others he may be richly blessed himself.



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# Happy and Harmonious. The Coronation of King Charles III: A Moment for Renewed Reflection on the Relationship Between Crown and Catholics

REV. MR JAMES FINNEGAN

## Introduction

The Coronation of the Sovereign traces its roots to Edgar's ceremony of 'king making' in 973 by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, St Dunstan. Edgar, who had convoked the best part of all the clerics, jurists and Duke of the Mercians, Northumbrians and West Saxons, was crowned in a ceremony at Bath that was drenched in religious symbolism, and celebrated on the Feast of Pentecost.

Since the coronation of Edgar, the liturgical structure of the crowning of the sovereign has not, in essence, changed. The King, or Queen regnant, still takes the coronation oath, he is still anointed, *Unxerunt Solomenem* is still sung — though now in the form of *Zadok the Priest* — as is the *Te Deum*, he still receives the regalia, he is still enthroned, given homage, and processed-out to an elaborate series of celebrations.

Whilst the religious format of the coronation is well documented throughout history, starting with the exceptionally detailed accounts of Ss Dunstan and Oswald, so too are the celebrations that follow the sacred service. Whilst one might stop short of thinking of these great processions and banquets as *entirely* secular — they seem to be almost linked to the recognition and homage that form part of the sacred ceremony — they are certainly markedly different from what has happened (since 1066) inside the Abbey. From the 1,770 pitchers of ale served at the coronation banquet of Richard I; to Londoners filling the streets and singing

Sing up, heart, sing up, heart and sing no more down  
For joy of King Edward that weareth the Crown

along the processional route of Edward VI; to George IV's quails and capon extravaganza in Westminster Hall, 1821.<sup>1</sup> Britons — and those beyond our sceptre isles — have feted their new sovereigns with exorbitant aplomb.

The celebrations that took place in the English College to mark the Coronations of their Majesties this year were certainly no exception to, and perhaps even the global zenith of, what it means to mark a new occupant of St Edward's Throne. From Solemn

Vespers in honour of St Edward the Confessor, complete with organ and brass, a full schola, clerics in choir and *Magnificat du Ton Royal*, to a great banquet afterwards with a jazz band in the garden and a manned bar, nobody on the Via di Monserrato could claim ignorance of what was happening in number 45 (not least because those passing walked beneath 10ft banners and flags of several commonwealth realms). Yet, whilst we celebrated our new King and Queen well — and well into the night — the coronation was also an occasion to open up a space for conversation about the relationship between Catholics and the Crown.

Where some fizzed with loyal excitement at the idea of celebrating their (or *a*) new monarch, others felt far less comfortable with the notion of being subjects of the Supreme Governor of the Church of England. Some were intrigued to observe the rich ritual and hear (for the first time in their lives) *Zadok the Priest* performed in the context for which it was written, whilst others brooded glumly, remembering the days of their happy youth in the early 16<sup>th</sup> Century when coronations were still catholic.

There can be little doubt, English Catholics have accumulated historical baggage, especially over the last 500 years, which is embossed with the Tudor Crown; from Ireland, to the martyrs, to the Church of England, the relationship between Catholics and the Crown is a difficult one, but not statically so.

The Coronation of King Charles III presents an opportunity to examine the evolving relationship between the British monarchy and English Catholics, including the challenges and opportunities it presents for the monarch, the church, and the United Kingdom as a whole.

## The British Monarchy and the Church of England

Henry VIII, granted the title *Fidei Defensor* in 1521 by Leo X for his *In Defence of the Seven Sacraments* (a rebuttal of Martin Luther's writings which were then in circulation in England), was considered to be a thoroughly Catholic — and Renaissance — prince. Yet, troubled by the lack of a male heir for the House of Tudor, and with an eye positively strabismic in its wanderings for the younger Anne Boleyn, Henry began a series of ecclesiastical legal proceedings to declare null his marriage to the Spanish Catherine of Aragon. The break with Rome did not come as an unexpected bolt in the darkness, but as the culmination of a catalogue of church and state processes.

By 1530, Henry was making it clear to the Pope that he and he alone reigned supreme in England, and that Rome should hear absolutely no appeal from Queen Catherine as to the validity of their marriage. Throughout the early 1530's, Henry continued to consolidate ecclesiastical power; he had the parliament of the English Church recognise him as head of the Church in England; he ordered clergymen to discontinue payments to Rome; and, in 1533, Rome itself was struck-off as a court of appeal in church cases.

Anne Boleyn would eventually be crowned on 1<sup>st</sup> June, 1533, in a ceremony conducted by the crypto-protestant Dr Thomas Cranmer, which for the only time in history saw a Queen consort be crowned with the St Edward's Crown.<sup>2</sup> If this was an attempt to show Anne's legitimacy as Queen, then it was a strong and clear one

that Henry — so desirous for unitary power as he was — would let another wear the symbol of his authority, and yet that action itself was a flagrant gesture of schism with the authority to which Henry and the English Church were once so proudly beholden.

Both the Act of Succession of 1534, which recognised the children of Anne Boleyn and Henry as lawful successors to the throne, and the Act of Supremacy, of November 1534, declaring Henry as the Supreme Head on Earth of the Church of England, were what Pepinster has defined as “the final curtain coming down on England’s loyalty to Rome.”<sup>3</sup> This great break with Rome, however, did not mean a complete sundering between England and the ancient Faith; Henry opposed the theological system of Lutheranism, and continued to celebrate the sacraments of the Church. He desired the ways in which he had been raised, and of which he had been once lauded as a valiant defender, but he wanted it all without a Pope who could limit his own power.

### Anti-Catholic Sentiment in English (and British) Coronations

It was not until 28<sup>th</sup> January 1547 that England took a notable step towards becoming a truly Protestant nation. The reign of King Edward VI marked a transformative era in British history when Protestantism gained ascendancy. Edward, ascending to the throne at the tender age of 9, had as his mentors Edward Seymour — who was also Regent for the boy king between 1547 and 1549 — and Dr Cranmer, both fiercely and unapologetically protestant. As such, Edward’s coronation in 1547 was a pivotal moment in the struggle between the Protestant faith and Catholic traditions, and the ceremony underscored the decisive shift toward Protestantism as the English Church was reformed under Edward’s reign.

During his coronation service, any trace of the old religion was whitewashed. Cranmer proclaimed him not just king, but also ‘Supreme Head of the Church elected by God and only commanded by him.’ Lloyd notes that Cranmer preached a sermon in which the young Edward was compared to Josiah from the Books of Kings, who had wiped out idolatry, making his point perfectly clear by stating: ‘England must stand inviolate against any intrusion from papal authority.’<sup>4</sup> Not only was the whitewashing of any trace of popery evident during the service (as it was all throughout Edward’s six years on the throne) but also at the celebrations of the succeeding days. Lloyd goes on to note:

“[...] the following days saw jousting tournaments and a series of sermons by clergymen, eager to ingratiate themselves with the new regime. Their themes were unrelentingly pro-Protestant and, as the Roman Catholic Spanish ambassador noted ruefully, the clerics were desperate to ‘vie with one another in abusing the old religion.’”<sup>5</sup>

It was not just elements of Catholicism that were missing from the Coronation of Edward VI. The Duke of Norfolk, imprisoned in the Tower of London, was also absent from the service. When Edward read a general pardon for prisoners upon his arrival at the Abbey, a notable exception was Norfolk, who had been charged with treason

during the latter days of Henry VIII's reign. The first Duke of Norfolk, Thomas Howard, had been appointed Earl Marshal — an office which is still held by the Duke of Norfolk today — in 1483, though — as Strong notes — this position was not held consistently by the Howard family until 1672.<sup>6</sup> It was not until 1824, however, the Duke of Norfolk could exercise his office as Earl Marshall without having to appoint a deputy, and whilst remaining a Catholic.

Lasting beyond 1824 however, and perhaps the most violent display of anti-Catholicism in the coronation service, was the declaration against transubstantiation, which began to be formulated after the flight of James II in 1688. In the same year, John Petyt, who was the keeper of the Tower records, put forward a legal-historical case that the people had a right to choose or depose a new sovereign, “based on (the) assertion that the original contract between the king and his subjects was in the coronation oath, and that James II had violated this by failing to keep faith with St Edward's laws and therefore with the sacrosanct ancient constitution.”<sup>7</sup>

A committee of 39 was established in 1689 to reexamine the coronation oath, and to make sure that the events of the ‘abdication and vacancy’ might never happen again. The committee was made up of 30 Whigs and 9 Tories, rendering a Whig interpretation of the oath — and control over its revision — inevitable. It is important to note that the declaration and the new coronation oath are, in fact, two separate entities entirely, but appearing at the same time, and in the same key. The words of the declaration were first used in 1702, the first half of which reads as follows:

I, N., by the Grace of God, King/Queen of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, so solemnly and sincerely do solemnly and sincerely in the presence of God, profess, testify, and declare, that I do believe that in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper there is not any Transubstantiation of the elements of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ at or after the consecration thereof by any person whatsoever: and that the invocation or adoration of the Virgin Mary or any other Saint, and the Sacrifice of the Mass, as they are now used in the Church of Rome, are superstitious and idolatrous.

It was not until 1911, with the coronation of George V, that the declaration was absent from the coronation service. Edward VII had been mindful of his Catholic subjects, and of their potential alienation, and wanted his heirs be freed from the burden of making what he realised to be an anti-catholic declaration “in such a crude way.”<sup>8</sup> The traditional formula was amended, and the declaration against transubstantiation has never been taken since.

### **The Coronation Ceremony of King Charles III**

The Coronation of Charles III and Queen Camilla on 5<sup>th</sup> May did not err from the traditional structure that such ceremonies have followed since that of Edgar in 973. Though many may have lamented romish copes, the absence of the Cap of

Maintenance and breeches, and the Lord President of the Council's bare arms; the Recognition and Oath, the Anointing, the Investing, the Crowning, Enthronement, Homage and Procession were all spectacularly present.

The events in the Abbey showed us just how far we have come since 1911 when a greater desire for working class representation at the Coronation of George V bore fruition in the keeping of six seats for the Trade Union Congress and other workers' societies.

The congregation this time was a veritable who's-who of the charity, voluntary, and campaigning worlds. With music from Handel to Lloyd-Webber, the Abbey Choir to a Black Gospel ensemble, Weelkes to Walford-Davies, Purcell to Roxanna Panufnik; it was a celebration of properly catholic tastes. One might be tempted to suggest that the eclectic mix of music and ceremonial participation was simply a bending to the will of an increasingly 'woke' society demanding an absolute equal representation; others, and conversely, will have been disappointed — infuriated even — at a series of tokenistic gestures to create a veneer of inclusion and multiculturalism when, beneath the surface, the age-old institutions of hereditary rule and feudal privilege have remained.

Pepinster, in an article in the *Tablet* published a week before the Coronation, notes that one of the perennial themes in the thought of Charles III has been that of 'harmony'. She notes that the lack of this ideal informs many of his bugbears: contemporary architecture, humanity's relationship with the environment, in peoples' relationship with one another.<sup>9</sup> All of the innovation that one might have observed in the Coronation must be seen through this lens of our monarch's desire for harmony; for music that isn't just 'modern', but well crafted; for a representation of people that isn't fearfully beholden to the *mens populi*, but is in harmony with it; for a beauty, truth and order that speaks as much of the institution as it does of the people for whom the coronation is the existentially defining ritual.

### **The Role of Religion, and Harmony, in the Coronation of Charles III**

If coronations, the central, identity-defining ritual of the British people, resound in harmony with society whilst retaining the institutional, historical character of the action itself, then nowhere else can this be more clearly seen than through the religious expressions within the ceremony.

At the head of procession was carried the Cross of Wales, at the centre of which was set a relic of the true cross, gifted by Pope Francis, the Chrism oil had been consecrated in Jerusalem two months before by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III (alongside the Anglican archbishop in Jerusalem), and in what would have been an unbelievable, even scandalous action at the 1953 Coronation of Elizabeth II — a Catholic clergyman prayed a prayer of blessing over the newly crowned king alongside representatives of other Christian denominations.

All of this is a demonstration of the ideal of harmony which characterises the thought of Charles III. Whilst representatives from other faith traditions were met at the door of the Abbey, as the King processed out to a richly diverse London, country

and commonwealth, the Coronation of the man so often — and sometimes with suspicion — remembered as being the one who wishes to be known as ‘Defender of Faith(s)’ was guarded as an expressly and exclusively Christian affair, and harmony, in conjunction with that, meant for him that Catholics, non-conformists, Orthodox must pray over and bless the newly-anointed king.

Perhaps this is an expression of what was suggested to Pepinster, that the underpinning the King’s thinking is the idea of perennialism, the notion of a single truth underpinning each religious tradition, different though they are.<sup>10</sup> This, however, seems unlikely. Catholic representation at the Coronation seems to be more than just a gesture of inclusivity. The most recent census taken in the United Kingdom has demonstrated that we are no longer a majority Christian country; why not have a humanist offering a speech on altruism, or a Muslim reading from the Quran (as had been suggested by Lord Harries — former Bishop of Oxford — in 2014 as a ‘creative act of accommodation’), or a Hindu offering the King a mala as part of the investiture?

The reason is more than the fact that the Coronation is understood — by both the Church of England and the monarch himself — as necessarily an expressly Christian rite, but ‘extra-establishment’, *Christian* participation is demonstrative of the fact that the King, a committed Anglican, is much more comfortable with expressions of the Christian Faith different to his own.

## A Moment for Renewed Dialogue

The Coronation of King Charles III marks a clear turning point in the relationship between Catholics and the Crown. The divisions that were created in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century under the House of Tudor, and deepened by cultural anti-catholicism have been, and will continue to be long lasting and painful. We have touched here on how anti-catholicism has been embedded in British culture through Acts of Parliament relating directly to Monarchy, Supremacy and Succession; but more complex is the history, and deeper are the wounds that divide.

Reflecting on a rite which was administered through the liturgy of the Holy Roman Church for longer than it has been by Anglican clerics, the inclusion of Catholics within the liturgy of the Coronation might seem to some as insignificant, patronising even. In the English College we are, perhaps, even more sensitive to the actions in history of the English Crown, who once had spies positioned across the Via di Monserrato, and who — in the most torturous ways — gladly put to death our forebears, the relics of whom rest before us in the College Church.

Seminarians and priests of the College who attended a conference with the Holy Father last academic year will also remember that Pope Francis expressed his dislike for the word ‘balance’ in favour of ‘harmony’. Finding harmony, we must admit, is difficult, it is a long process.

There are still great challenges which lie before us on the road to dialogue, great divisions which, more often than not, seem insurmountable. Indeed, it is crucial to recognise that the relationship between the British monarchy and Catholics has not always been harmonious. Centuries of historical baggage, marked by struggles and

tensions, are embedded in the history of the Crown. The challenges posed by the English Reformation and a subsequent anti-Catholic culture have left their mark, shaping perceptions and attitudes over centuries.

Yet, in the Coronation of King Charles III, we witness a significant shift towards a more inclusive and harmonious future. The celebration of Catholic participation in the ceremony and the recognition of the diversity of faith expressions signal a willingness to bridge historical divides and engage in a renewed dialogue. This dialogue between Catholics and the Crown must be ongoing, fostering understanding and empathy, addressing historical grievances, and promoting mutual respect. The Coronation of King Charles III stands as a symbolic moment, calling for a genuine and sustained effort to build bridges of unity and create an atmosphere of respect for all religious beliefs within the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth.



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#### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Lloyd, *The Throne*, 196.
- <sup>2</sup> Lloyd, *The Throne*, 121.
- <sup>3</sup> Pepinster, *Defenders of the Faith*, 35.
- <sup>4</sup> Lloyd, *The Throne*, 126.
- <sup>5</sup> Lloyd, *The Throne*, 127.
- <sup>6</sup> Strong, *Coronation*, 290.
- <sup>7</sup> Strong, *Coronation*, 228.
- <sup>8</sup> Lloyd, *The Throne*, 220.
- <sup>9</sup> Peppinster, 'King of Harmony' in *The Tablet*, 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2023, 5.
- <sup>10</sup> Peppinster, 'King of Harmony' in *The Tablet*, 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2023, 5.

# Now and Then: A Short Theological Reflection on Time, Rome and The Venerabile

REVD DR DAVID NIXON

David Nixon took part in the Anglican exchange programme at the Venerable English College 1990–91. In October 2022 he returned to the college as part of his sabbatical, to retrace old steps. He reflects here on his journey from the past until now.

I still don't quite know why I wanted to spend some time at the English College towards the end of my clergy sabbatical, but it felt like the right thing to do, notwithstanding that I was rather anxious about the whole thing. There was no issue here about laying down ghosts from the past, and it had never crossed my mind to re-visit St Stephen's House in Oxford, which was where I had studied as an ordinand. Perhaps the intensity of that whole experience thirty-two years previously — a semester at the *Venerabile* as a third year Anglican exchange student — which in a sense launched my ordained ministry, encouraged me as I looked back, and as I looked forward into the next stages of priesthood. And so from the outset, let me pay tribute to and thank the Rector Fr Stephen for his hospitality especially in the first weeks of the new academic year, his colleagues, the present student body, and all those in the Porters' Lodge who suffered my practising Italian again.

Everybody wanted to know what had changed at the College, and in thinking about this I observed two things: the fallibility of my memory (for example, I had to ask how to get access to the gallery above the Church, and where the Library was), and more importantly, that this process entailed some further reflections about Rome and the nature of time itself. These thoughts form the heart of this essay, but firstly let me say something more concrete to answer the question that was put a number of times.

The obvious starting point for an answer is that what has changed most is me — and that even if I was seeing and experiencing exactly the same things as thirty years ago, it could not feel the same as I am different. Three decades of ordination and full-time ministry in the Church of England has an effect (I was going to say 'takes its toll') hence the need for a sabbatical. But the changes in both our Churches are almost more striking: women had not been ordained to the priesthood, let alone the episcopate, when I stayed before; LGBT issues were much less apparent than now, we had more money, more priests and greater confidence. Both our Churches have suffered from extensive damage through scandal; John-Paul with whom I shook hands was Pope and there were around fifty students in residence. Beyond the Churches, we read books rather than looking at a website, and phone calls were made from a booth near the entrance and (I think) paid for depending on the number of 'clicks' on a monitor.



What has not changed is the curiosity about the thinking and practice of the Church of England, and so I again enjoyed some quite serious discussions with bright and talented people about funding, structures, sacraments, and so on. A very good question was put to me by a student about what I saw as the advantages of being a priest in the Roman Catholic Church, and a friendly Jesuit pointed out that the journey across the Tiber was a very short one. We compared educational systems and pedagogical methods between British universities and those in Rome, and in 2022 I swam for the first time in the tank, to the sound of classical piano music emanating from the ground floor. This time I noted that the seminarians seemed much more relaxed and able to laugh about themselves and each other in a kindly way. I was delighted to note that preparations had already begun to mark the coronation of King Charles III, Defender of the Faith, and Supreme Governor of the Church of England.

I tried to immerse myself in the rhythm of the College day, with some of my own reading and writing in the morning, and tourist visits in the afternoon. It felt like a combination of retreat and pilgrimage, with just a hint of exile. I had come away from my regular surroundings almost brutally; I was visiting ‘old friends’ in the geographies of the Campo dei Fiori and the Piazzas Navona and Minerva; but I missed home, loved ones and familiar routines. In between finding a new *pasticceria* from where to supplement my afternoon cup of tea, and talking about the invasion of African hornets, something rather strange was happening. Often when we look back over the years and decades, it seems like an unbridgeable gap and we ask. “Where have all the years gone?” At this moment, I felt like an ordinand again, with all the future in front of me and so much to learn, but also without losing the wisdom I might have acquired. I experienced something again of the energy, joy and hope which infused those seminarians I chatted with, and the spirit which engaged us in the Caffè Peru was not just of the liquid variety. Symbolically, I greeted my younger self again in a photo on the Monserrà corridor wall.

A trip to Rome is almost always a deep dive into history. We see the objects which tell us how they lived centuries or millennia ago: the frescos from Livia’s garden, or statues more recently on display in the Museum of Rescued Art, or the water gardens at Tivoli. A good museum will help us learn more about ourselves now as we seek to comprehend the past, not least in the ways in which human beings have constructed reality and meaning. A visit to a city is more often about its past than its present, for even when we say a building or a work of art is ‘contemporary’ or ‘futuristic’ it has already aged, even if only slightly. Living in the present as a tourist might much more be involved with hotels, restaurants and transport, all of which can prove challenging.

Some of the same is true for our historic Churches — the risk is that our faith is elided with a visit to an ancient building, however beautiful, and our Churches turn slowly into museums, living in the past, perhaps explaining the present but with no future orientation. The oddity here is the extent to which the Scriptures believe this process, in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. God’s ways are not our ways according to Isaiah (55.8), and that this applies to time is made clear in the psalms:

For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night. / You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass

that is renewed in the morning; / in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;  
in the evening it fades and withers. (Psalm 90. 4-6)

The Wisdom writers also understand a God of time and eternity, one who sets ‘a time to be born, a time to die’ and so on (Ecclesiastes 3. 1-8). Although the New Testament echoes some of this same outlook, for example in 2 Peter 3.8 (‘with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.’), there is nevertheless a different approach to time here. Firstly, there is an urgency especially seen in Jesus’ words in the opening of Mark’s Gospel: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news” (Mark 1. 15). There is the same urgency in Paul’s epistles concerning the expectation of Christ’s return. And secondly, there is a future orientation towards the Kingdom of God, already started in the person of Jesus according to St Luke’s account (4. 16-21), and focussed primarily on people who are disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginal. The Kingdom is far from complete, and we are invited by Jesus to join in with the work he has already initiated. From my time at the Gregorian, I still recall the description of this eschatology: *già, ma non ancora* (already but not yet.)

Perhaps the Eucharistic liturgy is the best place to understand Christian conceptions of time, and how much that contrasts with a visit to a historic city. Our confessional rite does look backwards, but according to Stanley Hauerwas in *A Community of Character*, it is ‘to allow us to make our past our own through incorporation into our on-going history’. He goes on to comment on the wider Christian narrative:

we need a story that not only provides the means to acknowledge the blunders as part of our own story, but to see ourselves in a story where even our blunders are part of our on-going grace, i.e. are forgiven, and transformed for ‘our good and the good of all the church.’

So, the past and the present coalesce at this point, as we turn towards the future. In our scripture readings, we hear the story of God’s relation with human beings and the whole of creation from the past, as a means to try to comprehend what God is doing now, to read ‘the signs of the times’. Equally, we look to Scripture as a guide (but not a manual) to how we should live now and in the future. Our intercessions are often about what we hope God will do for individuals, groups and whole societies. The account of the Last Supper, the death and resurrection of Jesus, are endowed with that special quality of anamnesis, in which remembering is also about making these events a present reality for and with the Christian community. But here the community is not static: Eucharistic participation is intended to change us, to transform or transfigure us towards being more like the Kingdom, more like the ever-loving Trinitarian relationship. Time is given almost dizzying configurations in this formal liturgy, but always with a future orientation.

I had begun my sabbatical with the intention of trying to recover from the tiredness of Covid administration — from the lockdowns, from the incessant Zoom meetings and Zoom worship, from the rapid decision-making in uncertainty, and above all from

absorbing and containing everybody's anxieties and griefs, including my own. I had hoped also to make some decisions about the immediate future: to look more seriously towards retirement, to consider a different role or a different parish, or to continue where I was. I recognised as well that I did not have that inner freedom necessary for good decision-making. This visit to Rome and the VEC, together with the reflections initiated here, have blown apart this cosy timescale. As I looked back on those thirty years, and somehow almost miraculously and surreally incorporated them into the present, I now look forward to the next thirty years of ministry, always remembering that time is in God's hands. According to Jewish tradition: if you want to make God laugh, tell God your plans.



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# The Humour of History: On the Relationship Between the Venerable English College and the Society of Jesus

FR KONRAD GRECH SJ

## Introduction

In recent years, the Society of Jesus has feted a number of anniversaries, each with a year-long programme. These include:

- the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Restoration of the Society of Jesus, 1814–2014;
- the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of St Aloysius Gonzaga, 1568–2018;
- the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the conversion of Ignatius of Loyola, 1521–2021;
- the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the canonization of St Ignatius and St Francis Xavier (together with Teresa of Avila, Philip Neri and Isidore of Madrid), from 12 March 1622 to 12 March 2022.

This year, 2023, is another important date in the long history of the Society of Jesus: it is the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishing by Fr. General Mutio Vitelleschi, SJ, of the English Jesuit Province on 21 January 1623, with Fr. Richard Blount, SJ, as its first Provincial Superior.<sup>1</sup> It is also the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Suppression of the Society of Jesus on 21 July 1773!<sup>2</sup>

While the founding of the English Jesuit Province is a cause for celebration and gratitude, that of the Suppression is a call to reflection, commemoration and recognition of a stark reality, that religious Orders serve a purpose only as long as they are needed within the Church!

## The English Province, 21 January 1623

The English Jesuit Province has its own rich history.<sup>3</sup> One can say its origins stretch back to 1580 when Pope Gregory XIII approved the English Jesuit mission to Elizabethan England, composed of Fathers Edmund Campion, SJ, Ralf Emerson, SJ, and their superior, Robert Persons, SJ. In the previous year, 1579, the same pope had requested that the Society of Jesus administer the newly established Venerable English College in Rome.<sup>4</sup>

Several English Jesuits and priests of the secular clergy therefore returned home and many suffered martyrdom, during the period from 1580 to 1679, Edmund Campion being the first martyr in 1580 and David Lewis the last in 1679. Among the martyred Jesuits,

one can find seven former members of the Venerable English College, Rome — among them Robert Southwell, Henry Morse and David Lewis.<sup>5</sup> The latter two students of the VEC joined the Society of Jesus after their ordination: Robert Southwell and David Lewis subsequently became members of staff, Southwell as academic tutor, Lewis as spiritual director. On finishing their term at the Venerabile, they were sent by their superior to the English mission where they both met a martyr's death.<sup>6</sup>

With the General Suppression of the Society, English Jesuits (not officially recognised in England, and so not officially suppressed, since the papal brief was not read or put into effect) benefited also from and took advantage of the ongoing Jesuit structure which had survived in Russia under Catherine the Great. Consequently, the college founded by Robert Persons at Saint-Omer in 1593 and which in 1762 had moved to Bruges, finally, after an arduous journey, arrived at Stonyhurst in 1794, where it still is carrying out its mission, now adapted to the needs of the times.<sup>7</sup>

The restoration in 1803 of the English Province (since 1985 the British Province), occurred a decade before that of many other European provinces which were erected at the time of the General Restoration in 1814. From then onwards, the English Province also flourished, establishing colleges and missions throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It still is a hub of apostolic activity notwithstanding the diminishing numbers of its members.<sup>8</sup>

## The Society of Jesus and the Venerable English College

The archives of the Venerable English College in Rome house a large collection of documents from which one can trace the history of almost two hundred years (1579–1773) of the Jesuit administration of this important English seminary in the heart of Rome.<sup>9</sup> Jesuits formed members of the diocesan clergy in order that they might return home to minister to recusant families and indeed to reconcile their compatriots to the Catholic faith. A small number were admitted simply as lay students and not as prospective candidates for the diocesan priesthood. Every student had to sign the *Liber Ruber* and, in a later development, seminarians had to take the missionary oath, promising to serve after priestly ordination on the English and Welsh mission. The *Liber Ruber*, begun by the Jesuits in 1579, also served to forge a collegiate identity in the new English College in Rome.<sup>10</sup> The Venerabile was, besides being a seminary, a formation house for martyrdom, a fact that the College's illustrious neighbour and onetime spiritual director, Fr. Philip Neri, recognised as he used to salute the students whenever he happened to meet them coming out of the College.<sup>11</sup>

The English College was not intended to be a Jesuit college *per se*: its passage in 1579 from being a seminary under the direction of the diocesan clergy to one under Jesuit administration one was as unexpected as it was lasting — until the Jesuit link was severed by a force beyond the control of the Society of Jesus, namely the Suppression.<sup>12</sup>

What were the background causes for the handing over of the secular clergy-run English College under its rector, Dr Morys Clynnog (c. 1525–1580?), to Jesuit administration? The initial cause seemed to have been the disturbances between the English and Welsh students. This led to a majority of students appealing to Pope Gregory XIII to ask the Jesuits to run the College. This appeal was not made in order to snub the

English or Welsh diocesan clergy. There were three other more substantial reasons behind this request. First, the Jesuits trained men for missionary enterprise and not ecclesiastical comforts; secondly, the Society of Jesus was experienced in the administration of seminaries and so could help reconcile the divisions between the English and Welsh students; thirdly, a Jesuit-administered College would help set the foundation for future collaboration and a sound working relationship between the Society of Jesus and the secular clergy of England and Wales.<sup>13</sup>

These reasons could be understood within the wider context of the enhanced reforming zeal for priestly formation and education inaugurated by the Council of Trent and which was taken on board by post-Tridentine popes, including Gregory XIII, who did not hesitate to ask the like-minded Jesuit General, Everard Mercurian, SJ, that the Jesuits run the College. The transition took place quicker than the official publication of the papal Bull setting up the English College in Rome on 1 May 1579.<sup>14</sup>

Once under Jesuit administration, from 1579 the fledgling institution was soon moulded along Jesuit lines. Indeed it was often perceived externally as being a Jesuit college, given that the existing set-up fitted the Society's collegiate model so well.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, there was a slight difference from other Jesuit colleges proper: as the seminarians attended the Jesuit *Collegio Romano* for their academic curriculum, fewer Jesuits were involved in the running of the College. Nevertheless, Jesuit influence, from the academic curriculum, to music and drama, spirituality and the daily and Sunday timetable, not to mention the discipline at the College, was immense: out of a student body of 1,097 seminarians between the years 1579 and 1685, twenty percent joined the Society.<sup>16</sup> Many more joined throughout the years until 1773.

## The Universal Suppression of the Society of Jesus

Pope Clement XIV's Brief, *Dominus Ac Redemptor*, issued on 21 July 1773, universally suppressed the Society of Jesus.<sup>17</sup> Pressure on Clement XIV from the Bourbon monarchs and their ministers had been intensifying for a long time. In fact, the process of suppression in the different Catholic kingdoms and duchies had started years before the Universal Suppression in 1773 and the list was long: Portugal, 1759; France, 1764; Spain, 1767; Naples — the kingdom of the Two Sicilies, 1767; New Mexico, 1767; Parma, 1768; The Philippines, 1768; and Malta, 1769.<sup>18</sup> The papal brief, which did not condemn the Society in any way, but mentioned only the necessity of peace and tranquillity within the Church, was put into effect in Rome on 16 August 1773.<sup>19</sup>

All Jesuit houses, whether in Rome or elsewhere, were surrounded and the Papal Brief read out. It was also read in the refectory of the General's Curia, la Residenza del Gesù, where the Fr. General Lorenzo Ricci and members of his Curia were assembled. The following day Fr. Ricci and his close assistants were transferred to the Venerable English College where they were 'hosted' for slightly more than a month before being imprisoned in Castel Sant'Angelo.<sup>20</sup>

Following the promulgation of the Brief, the Jesuit Order was suppressed wherever the Brief was read and put into effect. Ironically, the Society survived in Catherine the Great's Russia, in Fredrick the Great's Prussia, and in George III's England, where the

Jesuit English Province had never previously been recognised. In New France (Quebec), territory which had then been newly acquired as recently as 1759, individual Jesuits continued carrying out their mission even though the Society was dissolved in 1773.<sup>21</sup>

## The Suppression and the VEC

Following Fr General Ricci's escorted arrival under guard at the Venerable English College, he was allowed to move freely for eight days, before being confined to upper rooms, believed to be in the area of the present Nuns' chapel, referred to by the present College resident [Jesuit] spiritual director as the Ricci chapel.

He was a 'guest' at the College for over a month, from 17 August to 23 September 1773.<sup>22</sup> Fr. Ricci was then imprisoned (some authors say harshly — Termanini, others say mildly — Caraccioli) together with his closest collaborators, the assistants, in Castel Sant'Angelo, until his death two years later on 24 November 1775.<sup>23</sup>

What about the Jesuit staff who ran the Venerable English College? We have an account in the VEC archives:

On the same day the rooms of the (Jesuit) fathers were visited and money collected from each one. On the following day Fr. Ferdinand Giovannucci, a roman priest, was given to the college as rector. Meanwhile ordinary secular clerical dress was prepared for the use of the fathers. In the meantime, soldiers kept Fr. Ricci, the ex-General, in custody in the upper part of the College until he was taken away to Castel Sant'Angelo.<sup>24</sup>

What was the seminarians' reaction to the Jesuits' expulsion from the College? According to the diary of John Kirk (1760–1851), the last student to arrive at the College during its time under Jesuit administration, they demanded English superiors and wanted to keep intact the "former abuses", whatever they were, "in place under the Jesuit Fathers".<sup>25</sup>

It seems that they were not alone in this. In addition, the students "received secret advice" from the ex-Jesuits and the students of the Scots' College. This resulted in the students becoming more "fixed in their plan".<sup>26</sup>

Those students who did not want to submit to the new regime were expelled from the College and others were transferred to the English College, Douai.<sup>27</sup>

This situation resulted in the Vicar Apostolic of the London District sending a letter to Cardinal Andrea Corsini, the Cardinal Protector of England and of the College, then recently appointed to this post on 13 March 1773, asking for an English superior and threatening not to send any more young men to study in the College, presumably if his demand were not met.<sup>28</sup>

## The Society of Jesus Today

The 2014 bicentenary of the restoration of the Society of Jesus was a year marked with gratitude and reflection on the present-day Society. What does the 2023 commemoration of the Society's suppression evoke? What does the Order in fact stand for now?

Since its universal restoration in 1814, the Society of Jesus has had many vicissitudes. There were dark and painful periods such as periodic expulsions from countries such as Spain and France, and the kingdom of Naples in the nineteenth century. There were times of fervour, growth, and even internal renewal especially with the advent of Vatican Council II and Father General Pedro Arrupe, SJ, when Jesuits returned to the 'sources' of their charism and a rediscovery of the Constitutions and the Spiritual Exercises in all their integrity as St Ignatius meant them to be.

The Society's relationship with the popes who followed Clement XIV, starting with Pius VII and his successors, was cordial and respectful. In recent times, starting with Pius XII (with whom the Society enjoyed close ties) and his successors, up to and including Pope Francis, relations have been ones of mutual respect, albeit with Pope John Paul II this was worked through during the early years of his pontificate. However, obedience to the latter pope, a Jesuit's hallmark and special charism, won the day.

Successive popes gave 'special missions' to the Jesuit Order, foremost of which was the spread of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the fight against atheism, as well as the giving of the Spiritual Exercises.

In recent years after a widespread discernment by all the Provinces of the Order, four universal apostolic preferences were chosen:

- to show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment;
- to walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice;
- to accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future;
- to collaborate in the care of our Common Home.<sup>29</sup>

## Conclusion

This anniversary year of the Suppression of the Society of Jesus and the imprisonment in Castel Sant'Angelo of its Father General, Lorenzo Ricci, and several other Jesuits, is no cause for celebration: nor indeed are the adverse effects these events had at the Venerable English College on the education and the formation of students for the priesthood.

However, since the author of this short article is the present resident spiritual director at the Venerable English College, great consolation can be found in the recent observation that "though the Society of Jesus has not played any part in the administration of the VEC since 1773, so many aspects of the life of the college today were so profoundly influenced by Jesuit spirituality and culture up to and well beyond 1685 that considerable evidence of the Jesuit presence in the college remains visible today".<sup>30</sup>

Like St David Lewis SJ, the present writer was ordained a diocesan priest, joined the Society of Jesus in the former Jesuit Maltese Province (presently the Euro Mediterranean Province) and several years later into his priestly ministry was appointed as spiritual director to the College, once again linking the Society of Jesus to the VEC. Celebrating and commemorating 1623 and 1773 offer an opportunity of both consolation and desolation, as well as gratitude to the mystery of Divine providence in both cases. History has a way of linking past and present and its own humour!





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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *Jesuits and Friends*, Spring Issue 2023, pp. 4–5.
- <sup>2</sup> Giulio Cesare Cordara, *On the Suppression of the Society of Jesus. A Contemporary Account*, translation and notes by John P. Murphy (Chicago, 1999); Philippe Lécrivain, *Les premières siècles Jésuites Jalons pour une histoire (1540–1814)* (Paris, 2016), pp. 552, 555.
- <sup>3</sup> For a more detailed history of the Jesuits in England, see Francis Edwards, *The Jesuits in England: From 1580 to the Present Day* (Tunbridge Wells, 1985).
- <sup>4</sup> Maurice Whitehead, “Established and putt in good order’: the Venerable English College, Rome, under Jesuit administration, 1579–1773”, in James E. Kelly and Hannah Thomas (eds), *Jesuit Intellectual and Physical Exchange between England and mainland Europe, c. 1580–1789: “The world is our house”?* (Leiden, 2019), p. 320; Michael E. Williams, *The Venerable English College Rome. A History* (2 edition, Herefordshire 2008), pp. 7–8.
- <sup>5</sup> *The Forty Four: the Martyrs of the Venerable English College Rome* (Farnborough, 2000), pp. 44, 63, and 69.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>7</sup> *Jesuits and Friends*, Spring Issue 2023, p. 5.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> Archivum Venerabilis Collegii Anglorum de Urbe (hereafter AVCAU).
- <sup>10</sup> Whitehead, “Established and putt in good order”, pp. 324–25; “The early years of the College’s history continued to be inspired by the missionary ideals and there was a close co-operation between the College at Douai and the Jesuits at Rome...” cf. Williams, p. 11.
- <sup>11</sup> St. Philip Neri, “*Salve flores martyrum*” cf. Williams, p. 12. A mural fresco in the College’s Church also depicts St. Philip blessing the seminarians, so strengthening the oral tradition within the College of this heartening gesture of St. Philip Neri, also a spiritual director of the seminarians.
- <sup>12</sup> Whitehead, “Established and putt in good order”. pp. 315–36; Williams, p. 13.
- <sup>13</sup> Whitehead, p. 320.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 320–21. The Society of Jesus had its own colleges in Rome, among them the *Collegio Romano* and the *Collegio Germanico* which formed future Jesuit priests. However, Jesuits were asked by several bishops to administer and run diocesan seminaries as part of clergy formation. Consequently, the Second General Congregation held in 1565 decided that the Society would not accept the administration of ‘episcopal seminaries’; it did, however, allow the General to make exceptions: see John O’ Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), pp. 232–39. One can deduce from the context that the VEC was an exception. Eventually exceptions became mainstream as the Society did take up such administration and running of ‘episcopal seminaries’ in the centuries that followed.
- <sup>15</sup> Whitehead points out that “both spiritually and intellectually, the VEC under Jesuit administration now stood in a direct lineage stemming from Loyola himself...”. See “Established and putt in good order”, p. 322. A cursory look at the College’s timetable, the students’ formation in spirituality, academic studies, music and drama indicate how the future priests were moulded to take up their mission, cf. Whitehead, pp. 326–332.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 326–31; for a history of the VEC including the period under Jesuit administration, see Michael E. Williams, *The Venerable English College, Rome: a history* (Leominster, 2008).
- <sup>17</sup> Cordara, *On the Suppression of the Society of Jesus*.
- <sup>18</sup> See Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suppression\\_of\\_the\\_Society\\_of\\_Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suppression_of_the_Society_of_Jesus): this and all URLs cited hereafter were accessed on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2023. Any bibliography dealing with Jesuit history will include the Suppression of the Society of Jesus, among them, Honoré de Balzac, *Histoire impartiale des jésuites*, 1824; Jean Lacouture, *Jésuites: une multibiographie. Vol. 1 Les Conquérants* (Paris, 1991), pp. 576–81; Alain Woodrow, *I gesuiti: una storia di poteri* (Rome, 1991); and Philippe Lécrivain, *Les premières siècles Jésuites Jalons pour une histoire (1540–1814)*, pp. 528–552.
- <sup>19</sup> Cordara, *On the Suppression of the Society of Jesus*, pp. 145–49 and 158; Sabine Pavone, Ricci, Lorenzo, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Volume 87 (2016), available at: [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lorenzo-ricci\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lorenzo-ricci_(Dizionario-Biografico)).
- <sup>20</sup> Pavone, *op. cit.*
- <sup>21</sup> Wikipedia, *Suppression of the Society of Jesus*.
- <sup>22</sup> *The Venerabile*, 16 (November 1952), Kirk’s diary. The VEC archives hold records about Fr Ricci’s stay and about the expenses of that stay: see AVCAU, Scrittura 50/3/1b.
- <sup>23</sup> See *Catholic Encyclopaedia* entry for Lorenzo Ricci (<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13033.htm>).
- <sup>24</sup> *The Venerabile*, 16 (November 1952), Kirk’s diary; and AVCAU, Scrittura 50/3/1b.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*; William, *The Venerable English College, Rome*, pp. 81–83.
- <sup>29</sup> *Universal Apostolic Preferences* (<https://www.jesuits.global/uap/>)
- <sup>30</sup> Whitehead, “Established and putt in good order”, p. 334.

# Why You Have Widened My Heart

SR VALENTINA STILO FMVD

The thoughts that follow are the fruit of my prayer, my reflections and my experience as a consecrated missionary this year — my first at the Venerable English College — in which I received the gift of meeting and growing with the seminarians and the formation team of the seminary. From a brief ‘dive’ into the Scriptures, I will try to highlight some aspects that I find particularly important in Christian and priestly formation.

The sacrament of Order reminds the Church of the freedom and gratuity of God’s gift to his people. The Priestly vocation comes from the love of God who, in His mercy, desires to sing a beautiful song of freedom and gratuity through the life of a limited, fragile, vulnerable human being. Through the existence of real men, with their talents and defects, Christ keeps telling us about a leadership which is care, promotion of the other, capacity to hold the tensions of a community so that each member can blossom and together with the others, be a sign and instrument of unity.<sup>1</sup>

“God always calls his priests from specific human and ecclesial contexts, which inevitably influence them; and to these same contexts the priest is sent for the service of Christ’s Gospel.” (*PDV5*) A priest is called from his people to his people. On the threshold of the third millennium, the Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* reminded us that forming priests for today means listening to those contexts from the perspective of Jesus’ own ministry. This is why the journey of seminarian formation aims not only to foster the adequate intellectual knowledge, which is very necessary and important to live out this vocation, but also to contextualise this knowledge within an experience with Jesus Christ in the community. The seminary can be the potter’s house (Jr 18: 1-10) where God, through the mediation of a community of peers and of more experienced Christians and priests, shapes the humanity of the seminarian, which is a “mystery itself”, characterised by talents, gifts, limits and frailty, “to bring all aspects of his personality to Christ”.<sup>2</sup> The seminary can be a place where the heart is widened to feel with Christ (Ph 2: 5ss), to walk at the rhythm of the Holy Spirit, leading to actions that taste of the Gospel.

A Psalm comes to mind: “I run the way of your commandments, for you have given me freedom of heart.” (Ps 119: 32).<sup>3</sup> Here ‘commandment’ does not refer simply to a ‘law,’ but to the revelation of God’s will: “The Torah shrine containing the rolls of the Torah [is placed] on the end wall (or the “apse”) of the synagogue. Occupying oneself with the Torah, then, means placing oneself within the space of divine life force constituted by the Torah. Thus, devotion to the Torah becomes the ‘elixir of life’ and a quasi-sacramental event.” *Mutatis mutandis*, seminarian formation is not a set of tasks or a time-table to fulfil, but an environment that invites the person to place himself within the space of God’s grace. Therefore, gratitude and freedom join in a life that runs the way of the Kingdom. Another translation: “I run the way of your commandments for you make my heart wide”, helps us to remember that a free person is someone whose affection has been deepened and rooted in the alterity of God.<sup>4</sup> The Other extends the heart of the Psalmist,

and of the reader today, from within, like the tent of which the prophet Isaiah speaks, makes the heart more sensitive, more aware of its own emptiness, and yet more open and capable to welcome the stranger, because it is more spacious inside.<sup>5</sup>

In the Bible, the heart is a very special organ: it is the centre of emotional life, but it is also the place where decisions are taken, being synonymous of mind or will and the source of thoughts, desires, and actions.<sup>6</sup> It is where projects, wisdom and discernment dwell, consequently, someone heartless is not insensitive, as we could infer accordingly to our contemporary usage, but foolish.<sup>7</sup> When God speaks to his people of the desire to transform their hearts, this does not refer simply to changing their feelings, but to an inner renewal (Ezk 18: 31; 36: 26) which will bring about a deep interiorization of the covenant (Jr 31: 32ff). This same image will be used by the New Testament, speaking of the circumcision of the heart where God pours out his Spirit (Ga 4:6; Rm 5: 5; 2 Co 1:22), empowering Christians to conform their lives to the life of Jesus, in the midst of many challenges. We could say that the heart is an image of the complexity of the areas that formation should involve, helping to integrate them and orient them towards the identity and mission of priesthood.<sup>8</sup> The stranger occupies a special place in the way God seeks to widen our hearts. The Gospel of Mark demonstrates this through the story of Jesus with the Siro-Phoenician woman. In Mark 7 (vv. 24-30)<sup>9</sup> this passage is preceded by a discussion between Jesus and the pharisees about what is considered clean and unclean and is followed by the healing of a deaf and dumb man (vv. 31-37) and the multiplication of loaves and fishes in foreign land (Mk 8, 1-10). Jesus is on a journey in the region of Tyre, a potentially hostile Gentile territory.<sup>10</sup> He hides in a house, but very soon is discovered. A woman runs to him and falls at his feet and asks him to heal her daughter who is possessed by a demon, but Jesus objects, saying that it would not be right to take away food from the children to give it to the little dogs. We know how the story ends: the woman replies to Jesus, transforming the metaphor of the dogs and obtaining the healing of her daughter.<sup>11</sup>

The conversation between Jesus and the Syrophoenician — doubly an outsider: a woman and non-Jewish, like the Samaritan woman in Jn 4: 1-42 — allows the first Christian community to enlarge their understanding of mission, giving a reason for Jesus' early teaching and his journey into Gentile territory.<sup>12</sup> "The history of Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman provides a hermeneutical key to the whole section. (...) The Gentile woman provides for subsequent generations a model of the 'outsider' — the woman who challenges readers against setting limits to those who would be called sons and daughters of God."<sup>13</sup> Jesus is pictured as someone who is not ashamed to let himself be touched, "allowing himself to be converted by human need (showing himself to be like the Father...). Jesus does not proclaim himself, does not jealously reserve for himself his being from God, but lets things develop, as God wants them to be!"<sup>14</sup> Jesus, demonstrates a particular dimension of incarnation — to take flesh, to assume history and particularity — overcoming the limits of his own views, of his own historical and ethnical perspective by deep listening to the totally other.

What does this whole story mean for us today? What does it have to do with seminary formation? The different, just by the fact of being different, questions us, compels us to go out from our comfort zone, to ponder what is mission today and how we can live it. I believe that the Venerable English College, with the unique history of its roots, is already

a powerful reflection on difference — English men being formed in a foreign land to go back to their own country, often to be killed for being different; strangers who are rejected. And in the present day there is a new reality of difference, a multi-ethnic community made up of English men, but also seminarians and staff members coming from other countries, such as Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Ireland, the Philippines, Canada, Malta, Italy, creating a fruitful heterogeneity. In addition, the presence of women and lay people within the formation team give a further enrichment. All of this in the context of Rome, where the universality of the Church is so evident where our seminarians have the opportunity to study with people coming from the whole world. We, the seminarians and the formation team, are surrounded by “the other”, the one that, with his or her touch reminds us the need to let God widen our heart, see what we cannot see alone, from our own perspective. Together we can journey in a pilgrimage of transformation to be a better witness of the Gospel in today’s cultures.

Contemplating Mk 7,24-30 from my context, that of a consecrated woman and a member of the VEC formation team, specifically, in the pastoral area, I reflected on what the process of “widening our heart” might mean. I discovered three possible movements: enduring rupture to wide our perception, connection as source of care, conversion to reality.

- i) **Enduring rupture to widen our perception.** Reflecting again on the meaning of “heart” in the anthropology of the Bible as the dwelling place of mind, will and decision, to “widen our heart” in our context can mean to extend our gaze, to deepen our perception in order to discern. The stranger breaks the uniformity of our perceptions questioning our way of interpreting reality. In the face of this rupture, we can run away, rejecting the challenge, affirming our own world view or endure the crisis to discover something new. When we do not run away but undergo the process, our perception of reality becomes wider because we have not excluded that which we cannot understand or control. A seminary that encourages contact with different nationalities and states of life educates the seminarians and their formators to widen their perceptions, because it exposes them to diversity in everyday life, which is where the seminarian can gather real material for discernment.
- ii) **Connection as source of care.** Jesus and the woman endure a difficult conversation. The woman, respecting Jesus’ view about the primacy of the Jews, adds a different perspective that shows closeness and possibility. Jesus recognises the power of her creativity and expresses his own, healing her daughter. Broadening perception implies a deepening in our capacity to feel-with, our sympathy and empathy for other human beings that, apparently, have nothing in common with us. From there, our heart is widened to speak only after having listened with respect, so that what we say is understandable and accessible to all. This is a very necessary movement for men, who one day will be in contact with many people and whose words can have an immense power of healing. From there, the dynamism and creativity of real care for each other blossoms, not centred simply in our own abilities, but in the capacity to see the gifts of the others (not only their needs) and our own, working together for the good of all.
- iii) **Conversion to reality.** Jesus starts his journey in a foreign land and gradually the real meaning of the journey unfolds. The meeting with the Syrophenician woman is a milestone in that pilgrimage. It is when the desires, studies and projects of each

seminarian meet with the reality of God's people that he can discover what type of priest he will be, in what way he will accompany, what feature of the beautiful Good Shepherd he will resemble. It is only meeting with the diversity of God's people that conversion to God, through conversion to reality, will take place. As I said, I believe that the VEC is a privileged space from which the seminarian can meet the universal Church and begin the journey to the existential peripheries he will have to embrace once he will be a priest. In this respect, "pastoral" can be not only the adjective that describe an area of development, but a way of living everything, the perspective that integrates one's life.

**"I run the way of your commandments for you make my heart wide" (Ps 119: 32).**

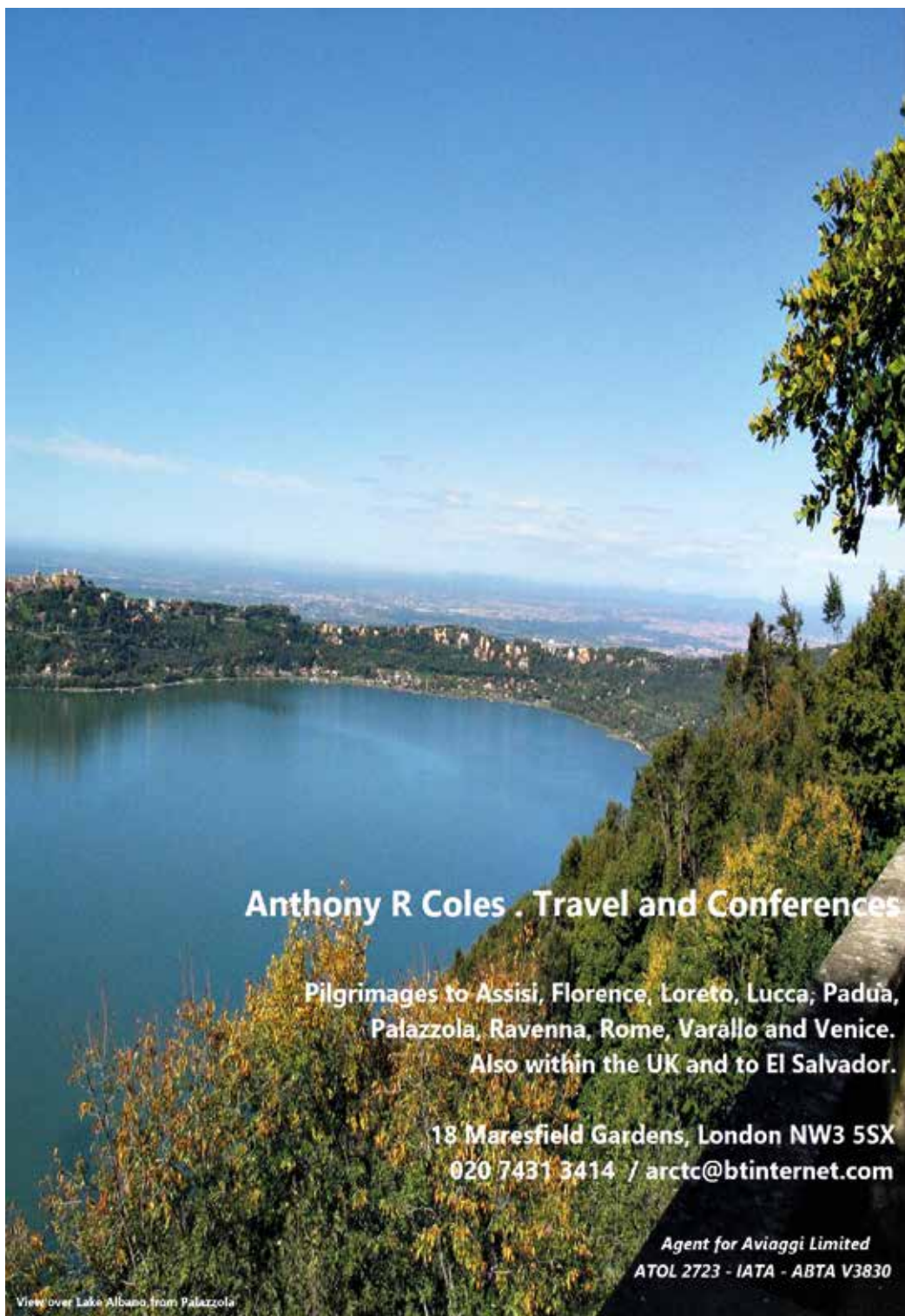
May the One who moulds our hearts to make them wider and wider, who brought about the Church to be the song of unity the world craves for, and priesthood to break the bread of life and communion at the table of nations, give us all the joy to grow in the way of His desires and the creativity to be Christians today.



**SR VALENTINA STILO FMVD** is currently the Pastoral Formation Coordinator at the Venerable English College, Rome.

#### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This is the way the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* refers to the Church.
- <sup>2</sup> The gift of priestly vocation. Ratio Fundamentalis Istitutionis Sacerdotalis, Congregation for the clergy, L'Osservatore Romano, Vatican City, 2016, pp. 28–29.
- <sup>3</sup> Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Eric Zenger. (English translation by Linda M. Maloney). Psalms 3. A Commentary on Psalms 101-150, Fortress Press, Minneapolis 2011, pp. 256–257.
- <sup>4</sup> Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Eric Zenger. (English translation by Linda M. Maloney). Psalms 3. A Commentary on Psalms 101-150, Fortress Press, Minneapolis 2011, pp. 247–299.
- <sup>5</sup> "Enlarge the space of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes." (Is 54:2).
- <sup>6</sup> Cf John L. McKenzie, Dizionario Biblico. Cittadella, Assisi, 1973, p. 216.
- <sup>7</sup> Cf Ibidem.
- <sup>8</sup> "According to the Apostolic Exhortation Pastores Dabo Vobis 131, there are four dimensions that interact simultaneously in the *iter* of formation and in the life of ordained ministers: the human dimension, which represents the 'necessary and dynamic foundation' of all priestly life; the spiritual dimension, which helps to shape the quality of priestly ministry; the intellectual dimension, which provides the rational tools needed in order to understand the values that belong to being a pastor, to make them incarnate in daily life, and to transmit the content of the faith appropriately; the pastoral dimension, which makes possible a responsible and fruitful ecclesial service. Each of the dimensions of formation is aimed at 'transforming' or 'assimilating' the heart in the image of the heart of Christ, who was sent by the Father to fulfill his loving plan. The gift of priestly vocation." Ratio Fundamentalis Istitutionis Sacerdotalis, Congregation for the clergy, L'Osservatore Romano, Vatican City, 2016, 89.
- <sup>9</sup> Parallel: Mt 15:21-28.
- <sup>10</sup> According to Josephus, the region of Tyre was hostile to the Jews, therefore, to name the place where Jesus is travelling can mean that Jesus is crossing a dangerous region. Cf Donahue, John; Harrington, Daniel; The Gospel of Mark. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 2002, 232.
- <sup>11</sup> In the rabbinic tradition at the time of Jesus, the Gentile were called "dogs". Dog is a person who do not know the Torah this is why Gentiles were considered inferior to the Jews. In v. 27, Marks uses the diminutive *κυνάρτιον*, probably referring to the scavenging streets dogs. In the lips of the woman, these streets dogs become house pets that eat of the bread crumbs, falling form the table where the children are having their meal. Yarbrow Collins, Adela, Mark. A commentary. Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2017, 367.
- <sup>12</sup> Cf Donahue, John; Harrington, Daniel; The Gospel of Mark. The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 2002, 237.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibidem, 238.
- <sup>14</sup> Guida, Annalisa, Vangelo secondo Marco. In I Vangeli. Tradotti e commentati da quattro bibliste. Ancora, Milano, 2015, 604. (Personal Translation)



## Anthony R Coles . Travel and Conferences

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View over Lake Albano from Palazzola

# News from the College Heritage Collections, 2022–23

PROFESSOR MAURICE WHITEHEAD

The changed title of this year's report reflects the developing nature of current work in recording, preserving, and promoting the College's precious heritage. Similar reports in *The Venerabile* in recent years have been entitled *News from the College Archives* and have been largely confined to archival matters. As a new project on the College's rare book collection, reported on below, was launched in November 2022, this year's account of ever-growing efforts in the heritage field is reflected in the new title.

## Archives

The academic year 2022–23 witnessed the most intense use of the Archives recorded to date, with 90 separate visits from researchers hailing from Britain (57), Italy (20), the USA (5), Spain (3), the Republic of Ireland (2), Austria (1), France (1), and Norway (1). During the period from September 2022 to July 2023, a total of 312 files were produced for consultation — a significant increase from the 120 files consulted by 61 researchers in 2021–22.

To help alleviate the extra pressure caused by such a sudden increase in usage, the College was happily able to call on the temporary services of a young historian, Jonathan Chant, who had recently completed his Masters in History at the University of York. Jonathan joined us for a 90-day period, ending in May 2023, helping in the Heritage Collections in a number of ways: this included sorting into preliminary order in the Reading Room, prior to eventual cataloguing, the 3,000 volumes on British and Irish Catholic history presented by an anonymous donor in 2019.



*Jonathan Chant in the Schwarzenbach Reading Room, at the end of his placement, May 2023*

Jonathan contributed greatly to the work of the Collections in many other ways during his time with us, and we wish him every success as he embarks on a PhD at Durham University on the history and development of the English College, Lisbon.

## Re-exploring the Piacenza connection

The year's work began in earnest with an international day conference held on Saturday, 24 September 2022, at *Palabanca Eventi*, the cultural headquarters of the *Banca di Piacenza*,

located in the *centro storico* of Piacenza. This initiative, which focused on the history of the Abbey of San Savino in Piacenza, was the result of an earlier joint approach to the bank from the VEC and from Graziano Tonelli, the recently retired director of the *Archivio di Stato di Parma*: this sought support for making better known the 15,000 folios of material on the abbey lands of Piacenza, some of them dating back to the thirteenth century, held in the VEC Archives, and a mass of complementary material held by the state archives in both Parma and Piacenza.

Our bid was successful and a grant of € 10,000 from the *Banca di Piacenza* allowed us to mount the conference: this attracted a large audience from the region of Piacenza and considerable media coverage.

The College's link with Piacenza dates back to 1581 when our founder, Pope Gregory XIII, realized that the existing endowment moneys of the English Hospice for pilgrims were insufficient to sustain the long-term development of the new seminary founded within the walls of the Hospice just two years earlier. In 1581, to alleviate this situation, Gregory XIII allotted to the English College in Rome the rental income of some 200 properties belonging to the abbey at Piacenza.

For a subsequent period of two hundred years, down to the 1780s, when the abbey lands were confiscated and sold, the College maintained a series of resident procurators in Piacenza, and sometimes also in Parma: these men, English, Welsh, and Italian, both clerical and lay, ensured that a regular income from abbey lands found its way to Rome to keep the English College afloat financially. Strategically located on the ancient *Via Francigena*, the pilgrim route from Canterbury to Rome, Piacenza became an important stopping-place for English and Welsh pilgrims, clergy, College staff, and students, between 1581 and the 1780s.

During the conference, a team of Italian historians revealed the largely forgotten history of the abbey of San Savino, and a substantial paper by Dr Emma Wall, an intern in the VEC Archives in 2019, and again in 2022, on the English College and its Piacenza links was read in her absence by Dr Johan Ickx.

The proceedings of the conference will be published in book format in November 2023, together with a summary listing of all the Piacenza material held in the VEC Archives. All the latter documentation has now been fully catalogued by our archivist, Elisabeth Lemmens, and awaits the detailed attention of historians: the plea of the late historian of the College, Monsignor Michael Williams (1922–2016), for in-depth research on this subject, first made in 1991, is now more relevant than ever.<sup>1</sup>



*Part of the unbound manuscripts in the College Archives relating to Piacenza, now catalogued, but awaiting protection and storage in acid-free boxes*



## Opening up the College's rare book collection

As reported in last year's edition of *The Venerabile*, Pamela Coote, a long-standing friend of the College, made a very generous donation of £150,000 in May 2022 to facilitate the opening up of the College's collection of some 16,000 rare books.<sup>2</sup> The bulk of that collection, separated from the modern seminary library collection in 1968, soon after the Second Vatican Council, had been stored on the mezzanine floor of the Second Library, largely untouched and literally gathering a thick layer of dust for fifty-four years.

After seeking the best professional advice, the College engaged the Rome-based firm, *MTS Conservazione e Tutela Beni Culturali*, to undertake a cleaning and salvaging operation. In November 2022, the *MTS* conservation team, led by Piero Muscedere, spent seven weeks cleaning and reshelving every book, peeling away the grime of more than five decades as shown below:



*Piero Muscedere (foreground) and his assistant, Alessandro Di Giammarco, gathering books for cleaning, 21 November 2022*

Piero, who led the technical team that moved and cleaned more than one million volumes in the Vatican Library during a major restoration project some years ago, proved to be an ideal person to manage the English College project, helping to bring the collection back to life.

## Cataloguing the rare book collection

Though the rare book collection was catalogued by Dr Josef Reinthaler of Innsbruck between 1927 and 1932, the surviving card catalogue provides only outline information and does not throw any light on the provenance of each volume.<sup>3</sup> The latter information is of fundamental importance in better understanding the development of the library since 1527, when the Hospice Library was re-constituted after the Sack of Rome which destroyed the original library founded in 1497 in the Hospice by its warden, Robert Sherborne (c. 1453–1536). Given the rarity and highly precious nature of the volumes, a sophisticated

and detailed virtual catalogue, including the names of donors over the centuries, is now needed.

Following the successful completion of the book-cleaning project, in April 2023 Dr Renaud Milazzo, from Nice, a specialist rare-book cataloguer, pictured below, was appointed to embark on a two-year project to begin the immense task of cataloguing the collection.

The challenge of generating a high-quality catalogue and making it available on-line has already begun, but to complete it will take several years and further funding from other sources in the future. In the few months since the start of the project, Renaud has uncovered important — and some incredibly rare — imprints that we simply did not know were in the collection. Many more surprises await us as the project advances.



*Dr Renaud Milazzo in the newly cleaned rare book stacks located on the mezzanine floor of the Second Library, April 2023*

### **Visits of Masters and Doctoral students**

As in previous years, we have welcomed to the Heritage Collections over the past twelve months a number of groups of Masters and Doctoral students from the United Kingdom and elsewhere. These contacts continue to enhance the good reputation of the College in the academic sphere internationally and often lead on to unexpected positive developments.

### ***The Northern Bridge Doctoral Training Partnership***

The visit to the College of PhD students from the Northern Bridge Doctoral Training Partnership on 6 June 2022, reported in last year's edition of *The Venerabile*, bore much fruit.<sup>4</sup> One of the students involved in the visit was Ellen Charlesworth, a Durham PhD candidate preparing a thesis on the use of digital technology by museums and galleries in the United Kingdom during the lockdown of 2020. Happily, Ellen applied for and secured from the Northern Bridge Consortium a work placement bursary to come and help in the VEC Heritage Collections from 6 February to 21 April 2023.

The timing of the first stage of Ellen's placement at the College was truly providential: Ellen was able to provide us with



*Ellen Charlesworth at work in the Schwarzenbach Reading Room, 16 March 2023*

top-level technical advice which was deployed in building a robust digital infrastructure for the cataloguing of the rare book collection begun by Renaud Milazzo at the beginning of April 2023. Without Ellen's help and advice, we would have struggled to find an optimal solution in so short a time — and the rare book cataloguing project would not be as advanced as it now is.

Owing to Brexit-related restrictions, Ellen was only able to be with us only for a limited time period: we hope to see her back at the Heritage Collections for a second work placement before too long.

### ***Visit of Northern Bridge Doctoral Training Partnership staff and students, 30 May 2023***

A dozen PhD students from the universities of Durham, Newcastle, and Northumbria, as well as from Queens, Belfast, all members of the Northern Bridge Doctoral Training Partnership, led by Dr Jon Quayle of Newcastle University, came to visit the College's Heritage Collections on 30 May 2023.

Based at the British School at Rome for a week-long series of visits to historic sites, the students, from a mix of disciplines, were learning about the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to research.



*Photographed here at the end of a workshop in which they enjoyed hands-on experience of analysing a range of materials from the College's Heritage Collections, the group proved to be particularly enthusiastic*

This was the fourth visit of students from the Northern Bridge Partnership. The first and third visits, in 2019 and 2022, produced first-class students who went on to hold internships in the College's Heritage Collections — Emma Wall (October 2019–March 2020) and Ellen Charlesworth (February–April 2023, and hopefully returning to Rome in 2024).

### ***Visit of University of Edinburgh students, 22 February 2023***

A group of fourteen History of Art Masters and PhD students from the University of Edinburgh visited on 22 February 2023, led by Professor Carol Richardson, an old friend

of the College. After a talk on the history of the Hospice and College, they were given a guided tour and concluded their visit with an archival workshop in the Third Library.

### ***Harvard University doctoral student workshop, 3 May 2023***

A group of ten doctoral students from the Harvard University Department of Music, led by their academic director, Kate Van Orden, currently Dwight P. Robinson Jr. Professor of Music at Harvard, and President of the International Musicological Society (2022–27), came for an archival workshop on 3 May 2023, exploring the early music and musicians of the Venerable English College.



*The students, pictured above, much appreciated the occasion, arranged at the request of Dr Alana Mailes, of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, who secured her doctorate in musicology at Harvard in 2022, having undertaken extensive musicological research in the VEC Archives*

### **Gašper Jakovac, the VEC's first Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Global Fellow (February–July 2023)**

The Slovenian scholar, Gašper Jakovac, who secured his PhD on early English Catholic drama at Durham University in 2018, arrived at the VEC on 1 February 2023 as the College's first Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Global Fellow — the most prestigious type of postdoctoral fellowship awarded by the European Union.

Gašper quickly established an excellent rapport with both staff and students. He brought with him to Rome his transcript edition of British Library Add. MS 11427, an as yet unpublished play of *circa* 1620, entitled *The History of Purgatory*, written by Robert Owen (*c.* 1555–1632), a recusant Catholic layman from Shrewsbury. Probably written for a private Christmas performance in a Catholic household in the 1620s as part of wider missionary activity in the Welsh Marches, the 2,167-line play provides a rare glimpse into the cultural and intellectual world of the English and Welsh Catholic community of Robert Owen's day, outlining its anxieties, hopes, and steadfast beliefs. An enthusiastic group of students and staff gave the text a sympathetic read-through, followed



*Gašper Jakovac at work in the Schwarzenbach Reading Room, 16 March 2023*

by discussion. Gašper is currently preparing a research-in-action workshop, which is to take place at the indoor Sam Wanamaker Playhouse in London in late spring/early summer 2024. The event is intended for the general audience and will include excerpts from *The History of Purgatory* performed by professional actors.

During his time in Rome, Gašper Jakovac uncovered in the College Archives, and in the Vatican Library and elsewhere, important and previously unknown manuscript and printed material relating to seventeenth-century English College drama performances and practice. We

look forward to maintaining close links with Gašper and to learning more about his discoveries once he has had an opportunity to analyse and write up his research.

### Coronation exhibition, May 2023

A display of documents, entitled *Celebrating Coronations Past: Snapshots from the Venerable English College Archives*, illustrating aspects of the coronations of 1911, 1937, and 1952 was organized for the coronation of King Charles III in May 2023 and was located in the corridor outside the entrance to the College church.

We were fortunate in being able to supplement College archival material with relevant items from a private archive. As a young Under-Secretary of State of the Vatican, Monsignor Eugenio Pacelli (1876–1958), the future Pope Pius XII, was present in London for the coronation of George V in 1911, and important mementoes of his visit there are preserved by the Pacelli family. Through the good offices of Dr Johan Ickx, copies of precious documents relating to the coronation in 1911 were provided by the Principessa Georgia Pacelli to whom we are very grateful.

The display included, for the first time at the College, digital images on a large screen prepared by Ellen Charlesworth: this was enjoyed by several hundred visitors who attended the College's own coronation celebrations.



*The Heritage Collections team after Solemn Vespers in honour of St Edward, King and Confessor, held at the College on the eve of the coronation, 5 May 2023*

*Left to right: Renaud Milazzo, Jonathan Chant, Elisabeth Lemmens, Gašper Jakovac, Maurice Whitehead*

## Improvement of lighting, June 2023

The lighting in the Archives' store, the Archives' office, and the Schwarzenbach Reading Room has long been far from ideal for consulting manuscripts. Thanks to the help of a private donor, work in upgrading the lighting to modern standards was completed in June 2023 and we are immensely grateful for the help received.

## Official visitors provided with a guided tour of the Heritage Collections

As in previous recent years, we have welcomed to the Heritage Collections numerous official visitors to the College. These include:

- Anne Marie Dragosits, harpsichordist, Vienna, Austria (31 October 2022)
- Forty-four jubilarian priests and bishops from England and Wales (24 November 2022)
- Mike and Maria Fischer, with Monsignor Anthony Wilcox (24 February 2023)
- Bernard Deprez, Leuven (6 March 2023)
- Mark and Suzanne Blundell, Crosby Hall, Liverpool (28 March 2023)
- Dr Christopher Skelton-Foord, Librarian, New College, Oxford, and Mrs Dorothea Mieke Skelton-Foord (29 March 2023)
- Dr Tessa Murdoch, British Art Network (27 April 2023)
- Angélique Sozza, Head of Public Relations, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (17 May 2023)
- Alison Kemp, Deputy Director (Europe), Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London (25 May 2023)
- Dr Anabel Inge, Deputy Head of Mission, British Embassy to the Holy See (25 May 2023)
- William (Woody) A. Kerr, Chairman and Treasurer of the Rome Chamber Music Festival, together with Mrs Catherine Kerr, and daughter, Sarah Kerr, of New York City and Charleston, South Carolina (12 June 2023)
- Jonathan Vlassopoulos, CEO of Napster, together with Mrs Jaime Vlassopoulos and their children, Mia and Theo, Nashville, Tennessee (13 June 2023)

## Donations of materials to the Heritage Collections, 2022–23

During the past year, the Heritage Collections have again attracted a number of generous donations, comprising manuscripts, printed books, including some from their authors, and vestments. These are recorded below and we are deeply grateful for these gifts.

### *John Ainslie*

A personal collection of liturgical music used at the Venerable English College between 1960 and 1970.

***Monsignor John Allen***

Miscellaneous additional personal papers of Fr Henry Edward George Rope (1880–1978), College Archivist, 1937–57.

***Elisa Bianchi***

Elisa Bianchi, *Demetrio Zenò, calligrafo e consulente letterario: tra libri a stampa e libri manoscritti nella Venezia del primo Cinquecento* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 2022).<sup>5</sup>

***Thomas Cooper***

James Harold McDonald, *The poems and prose writings of Robert Southwell, SJ: a bibliographical study* (Oxford: Printed [at the University Press] for presentation to members of the Roxburghe Club, 1937).<sup>6</sup>

***Pamela Coote***

In March 2023, Pamela Coote generously donated to the Heritage Collections two early modern chasubles:

- one of red velvet applied and embroidered with cherubim and with a cruciform orphrey, with maniple and stole, dating from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, but reworked, with velvet probably of the eighteenth century;
- a second chasuble, the applied fifteenth-century orphrey of which is embroidered in coloured silks and silver thread with the Crucifixion and three saints in the background and four figures in the foreground, mounted on mauve eighteenth-century silk, and lined with ivory damask. Provenance: Sawston Hall, Cambridgeshire.

These two donations complement the donation to the College some years ago, again by Pamela Coote, of a crimson damask chasuble, also originally from Sawston Hall, with an applied sixteenth-century orphrey with St Catherine and five other saints in the background and two in the foreground, and seventeenth-century silk (see illustration of the vestment being worn by Cardinal Edwin O’Brien in *The Venerabile*, 2019, p. 63).

All three of the above-mentioned items were purchased by Nicholas Coote, Pamela’s late husband, at Christie’s, South Kensington, on 7 October 1986 (Lots 102, 178, and 177, respectively).

Given that no pre-Reformation vestments of the English Hospice in Rome survive in the Heritage Collections today, the donation of these remarkable pre-Reformation vestments is all the more appreciated and welcomed.

***Daniel Huws***

Daniel Huws, *A repertory of Welsh manuscripts and scribes, c. 800–c. 1800*, 3 vols (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales and the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2022).<sup>7</sup>

***Fiorenza Rangoni***

Fiorenza Rangoni, *Van Dyck: il periodo romano* (Rome: Edizioni Efestò, 2020), a study of

Van Dyck and his links with George Gage (c. 1582–1638), based partly on material in the College Archives.

## Conclusion

Strategic direction for the future of the Heritage Collections continues to be provided by a dedicated Heritage Collections committee, chaired by Tom Harrison, a member of the Venerable English College Trust. It currently includes the Rector, Geoffrey Fielding, a member of the College's Finance and General Purposes Committee, Monsignor Anthony Wilcox, the present writer, and, since May 2023, Ellen Charlesworth who is now advising on digital matters. The committee meets, virtually, once a month.

Thanks are due to committee members, as well as to the College staff and the student body, the Finance and General Purposes Committee, members of the VEC Trust, the Roman Association, the Friends of the VEC, the North American Friends of the VEC, and many other friends and visitors who generously support our heritage work in so many different ways.



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

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> M.E. Williams, 'San Savino Abbey, Piacenza: A Forgotten Chapter of College History', *The Venerabile* 30 (1991), 9–15.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Venerabile*, 2022, p. 60.
- <sup>3</sup> For details of the cataloguing project of 1927–32, see *The Venerabile*, 5 (1931), p. 318, and 6 (1932), pp. 104–106.
- <sup>4</sup> *The Venerabile*, 37 (2022), 55.
- <sup>5</sup> This volume by Elisa Bianchi, professor of book history at the Università degli Studi di Bologna, Dipartimento di Beni Culturali, Campus di Ravenna, draws on research that she undertook in 2021 on Liber 1413, a Greek manuscript of the Renaissance period in the College Archives.
- <sup>6</sup> This edition is one of only 100 copies ever produced at the expense of Sir Robert Leicester Harmsworth, Bt (1870–1937). Its provenance since publication, via the Cooper family, is carefully recorded in accompanying documents kept within the slipcase of the volume. Given that St Robert Southwell (1561–1595) was Prefect of Studies at the Venerable English College in 1585, this donation is of especial importance and significance.
- <sup>7</sup> In 2000, Daniel Huws, then Keeper of Manuscripts and Records at The National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, generously advised the Venerable English College on various options for the preservation and future promotion of its archives. His monumental three-volume work, recently published, is set to revolutionise Welsh literary and historical scholarship, and to guide the study of Welsh manuscripts and texts, for generations to come. We are deeply grateful for Dr Huws's generous donation of his *magnum opus* of which there are but few, if any, other copies south of the Alps. Among many other things, the new work throws fresh light on the warden of the English Hospice, and first rector of the VEC, Dr Maurice Clenock [Morys Clynnog] (c. 1525–1580?).



# Intellectual Formation Report

## Kindling Fires in Today's World: Living in Dialogue and Building Bridges

MR JULIAN PAPARELLA

I am delighted to serve the mission of the College as a lay member of our formation team, which brings together a variety of states of life, pastoral experiences, and perspectives. I am pleased to build upon the strong foundation set by Fr. James McAuley, who returned to ministry in the Diocese of Portsmouth in 2022. As Coordinator of Intellectual Formation, my role has three main facets: a) accompany our seminarians and priests in their studies and intellectual journey as future and current pastors of God's people; b) liaise with the Pontifical Universities where our seminarians and priests study; and c) coordinate intellectual aspects of formation that the College offers in-house, such as weekly Italian lessons. In the past, this role has often been known as "Academic Tutor."

In recent times, we have become increasingly aware that academics are only part of a wider intellectual formation that each seminarian needs to receive on the path to becoming a pastor in today's world. More and more, we are realising as a community of formation that our efforts need to be ever more deeply *in touch* with the world, with where people are at today, with the realities of priestly life, and with the needs of Church communities today. This calls for intellectual formation that finds an essential echo in the classroom but cannot end there. It requires building bridges with the other dimensions of formation — pastoral, spiritual, and human — in order to equip the men that we accompany to minister fruitfully amidst the challenges, joys, and complexities of our time. Indeed, the life and formation offered in Seminary cannot stand still in a world that is constantly on the move. Seminary is not an enclave amidst a world under siege, but fertile ground for sowing seeds to bear fruit in the real world. Throughout its storied history, the College has formed future priests to live out the mission of Christ himself: "I came to bring a fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Lk. 12:49) This deep desire of Jesus, which also serves as the College's motto, is a call to kindle fires "whether the time is favourable or unfavourable" (2 Tm. 4:2), just as countless alumni have done for centuries. At this key juncture in the history of humanity, which is increasingly characterized not merely as an "era of change" but ultimately as a "change of era," when the Christian faith seems to be met with indifference, disinterest, or even hostility in many parts of the world, *what kind of fires are we to enkindle, and how?*

Two key words can light our path in this regard: *dialogue* and *bridge-building*. In the light of the Second Vatican Council, we are forming men to *live in dialogue*: with Christ, with today's culture, with new ways of thinking, with men and women, the young and the elderly, with other Christian denominations, with believers of all religions, and in particular with those who live on the spiritual and material peripheries, both near

and far. A Church that lives in dialogue with the world is capable of *building bridges*: between the living Word of God and people’s real lives; between the needs of today and the missionary conversion of the Church; between the kind of formation we offer and the realities of ministry today. In this context, as we implement the new *Ratio* promulgated by the Holy See in 2016, as an ongoing reception of the Second Vatican Council and inspired by the prophetic witness of Pope Francis, we are seeking a more integrated approach to formation. This means trying to weave together the diverse threads of formation that our seminarians receive in their studies, prayer, and pastoral training. There is an acute need to orient our intellectual formation towards the pastoral mission that will be entrusted to our future priests. A great help in this regard will be the launch of the Pastoral Theology Year, a new opportunity to learn, think, reflect, and dialogue with one another and others so as to enrich and nourish their pastoral experiences in the present and future.

As our hearts are kindled walking with Christ alongside the people of our time as on the road to Emmaus, our journey of formation can be inspired by these words of Pope Saint Paul VI:

“If we want to be men’s pastors, fathers and teachers, we must also behave as their brothers. Dialogue thrives on friendship, and most especially on service. All this we must remember and strive to put into practice on the example and precept of Christ.”<sup>1</sup>



**MR JULIAN PAPARELLA** is the Intellectual Formation Coordinator at the Venerable English College. He is currently undertaking a PhD at the Lateran University in Rome.

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#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, 87.

# Schola Report 2022–23

REV. MR JAMES FINNEGAN

Last year, I was certain that an irregular mole would kill me; later, and after many recurring dreams about caravan trips with Yasser Arafat and Mgr. Whitmore, and playing golf with President de Gaulle, I became equally certain that I would be sectioned under the 1983 Mental Health Act; finally, and having survived a botched kidnapping attempt by the Bangladeshi Mafia, I realised that I might actually live/not be confined to an asylum/abducted to Chittagong. I was pretty certain throughout it all, though, that I wouldn't be writing another Schola Report, and yet...*eccomi*.

The Schola Cantorum has had a different, but very exciting year. The men have managed to execute some truly beautiful choral music, not *in spite* of being a non-auditioning, amateur choir, but *because* of it. As real amateurs — that is to say: those who do something out of love — they have sung prayerfully and joyfully, and in a way that has spiritually inspired and attracted the admiration of many of our guests and visitors.

As a full schola we provided the usual music for the Advent Meditation, this year with the addition of Sig. Matteo Gentile — a trumpet player whom I met on a traffic island in Prati — providing, along with the men, an extravaganza of descants; many thanks to him and Mr Ryan Hawkes (our organist) who played through a particularly challenging head cold. Auguri, too, to Mr Barnabas Mercer who made his solo debut singing about camels and breasts full of milk (which might have soothed him, having had a mouthful of chilli peppers before the entrance procession). In March we sang a beautiful new arrangement of *Attende Domine* by Mr Hawkes at the Station Mass in San Lorenzo in Damaso, which was very well received by those present.

As usual, we went to St Peter's Square on Easter Sunday morning to dazzle the faithful with our strains. Along with last year's *Alleluia, sing to Jesus* (in English and Welsh) *Resurrexit Christus*, a delightful round for four composed (again) by Mr Hawkes, was our centrepiece this time. Not just those in the square got to hear it, but all those asleep in their beds along the Via di Monserrato were woken by its melody. We even performed for a German news channel as we waited to get in the queue, and our very own Mr Martin Fyles gave a piece to camera. Unfortunately, this was a cause of great embarrassment to us all as dawn's golden-hour threw a light on him that made him appear on television as though wearing a full face of makeup.

Makeup was once a worry of Winston Churchill, who suspected that George VI had taken to wearing rouge in his infirmity. The latter's grandson, however, could not have been accused of the same, as attested by the virile ruddiness of his visage on Coronation Day. He was prayed for fervently, and his predecessor, Edward the Confessor, honoured, at

Solemn Vespers on the eve of the Coronation. The Schola outdid themselves preparing for the event, and in their prayerful performance. Trumpet and choral descants were written — again by Mr Hawkes, who I'm now sure is running a music publishing house on the Monserrá corridor — for *Love Divine (Blaenwern)*, *The day thou gavest*, and *The National Anthem*, and the *Magnificat du Ton Royal* was sung in gorgeous harmony. One baritone shared a look with me when the trumpet entered during *Love Divine* which I recognised instantly as meaning: 'This is bloody brilliant'. Indeed it was. The magnificence of the music and the quality of the singing made the evening my favourite occasion so far (musical or otherwise) of my time at the College.

As promised in my last report, *Clamaverunt Iusti: Voices from the Venerable English College* has been released as an EP online.<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to all involved in making this project a possibility, especially Mr Luke Theobald who produced the recording. Another recording was made by Messrs Hawkes and Henry, as well as yours truly, for BBC Radio Wales, who were producing a programme on St David; *Clamaverunt Iusti* and *Gaudeamus Omnes* were both sung.<sup>2</sup> The same gentlemen were also involved in singing Byrd's Passion and Victoria's Reproaches on Good Friday, along with Mr Ryan Browne, the Rector and Fr David King; a heartfelt thanks to them all for making the Commemoration of the Lord's Passion so beautiful, and for enduring sessions with me.

As the music at college liturgies moves into a greater sense of noble simplicity — and necessarily so, as our numbers are currently small — the Schola Cantorum has provided us with a tonic in the form of simple nobility. I'm pretty sure that this will be my last Schola Report; that mole has come back and in last night's dream I was drinking Singapore Slings with Cherie Blair in the Maldives. So, with a very grateful heart, I thank all of the members — past and present — of the Schola, and I wish my successor all of the happiness and joy that being its conductor has brought me.

'Good. Very good. Well done, gentlemen'.



**REV. MR JAMES FINNEGAN** is a transitional deacon for the Archdiocese of Liverpool. He is currently undertaking a license at the Pontifical Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies (PISAI) in Rome.

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#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Accessible at: <https://on.soundcloud.com/497wT>

<sup>2</sup> Accessible at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001km8j>

# Sports Report 2022–23

REV. MR ANTONIO BAJLOVIC

This academic year couldn't have started better regarding sport. In December 2022, the golden generation of Croatia gained their third World Cup victory (second in a row), as a Croatian, this was a great victory for me. Many would say this was the best final (even though others would wrongly claim that France against Argentina was the best final ever played). The impact of Croatia's victory varied among the community's members, some would even say, that many didn't even care. For others this was one of the high points during their whole formation.

When it came to actual physical activities by members of the College, there have been enormous improvements this last year, in some areas. The high point must have been the pool tournament, played during May. After one round of play-offs, eight strong players made it to the quarter-finals. In the end, the final was played between Fr David and Brian. After four intense games, Brian stood as the well-deserved champion. Overall, the new pool table has been used very frequently this year.



*Fr David King (Pastoral Director) humbly accepts second place, as victory is proclaimed for one of our Irish brethren*

Table tennis games and tournaments, both singles and doubles, have also frequently taken place thanks to the arrival of our two competitive Irish players. The gym, I have been told, has been regularly used by many of the seminarians. Kettlebell training is also something that has slowly started to take root in the house. When it comes to our football team, the future does not look too bright. Even though, one could say, we have been undefeated this last year, we didn't have any wins either, nor any draws... But if we finally manage to get at least five players ready, the other colleges will be in big trouble. As for future improvements, a badminton-set has been suggested and we are currently looking into where in the house that could be arranged.

A more long-term goal for the future is to put together an 11-a-side football team that could have the potential to reach the play-offs for the 2025 Champions League. For that to happen we would probably need to find a coach and some matching t-shirts to start with. We entrust this into the hands of the future!



**REV. MR ANTONIO BAJLOVIC** is a transitional deacon for the Diocese of Stockholm, Sweden. He is currently undertaking a diaconal placement in his diocese.

# Wiseman Society Report

REV. MR DAVID BENCH

Another year of Wiseman talks. However, this year was only 50% successful. Not in terms of reception, but execution. For, the final two talks of the year were both cancelled for different reasons. One on account of scheduling and another due to a missed flight. Nevertheless, the two talks that were put on were both valuable indeed.

During the first semester, Fr Jim Corkery, SJ spoke to us about *Grace and Anthropology*, filling in the gaps in our rudimentary knowledge on the topic, especially as it pertains to the social ramifications of God's grace. Fr Jim is passionate about this topic and relayed how he would like to spend more time, professionally, working out the implications of the fact that grace is never private. That being so, do Catholics unwittingly cave-in, we asked, to the (Protestant?) temptation to overly focus on what God is doing in one's own life? The truth is, He will be working on a myriad of relationships each one of us are engaged in. Fr Jim's enthusiasm was infectious and he kindly produced a number of articles to leave with us for further reading.

Early in the second semester, Fr Thomas Davenport, OP visited us to speak about *Creation and the Strange World of Quantum Mechanics*. A Stanford PhD, Fr Thomas was excited to share his pet project on the wider meaning the quantum level of existence has for a theology of Creation. Walking us through key experiments that produced truly mind-blowing results, Fr Thomas also addressed the Catholic response to the philosophical red herrings that are often bandied about off the back of such findings. Forty-five minutes of input really wasn't enough for this one!

Next year I shall try to re-invite those guest speakers that couldn't make it this time around. As ever, the goal is to keep the topics as varied and as stimulating as possible from a mixed pool of expertise.



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**REV. MR DAVID BENCH** is a transitional deacon for the Archdiocese of Birmingham, currently undertaking a License in Dogma at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

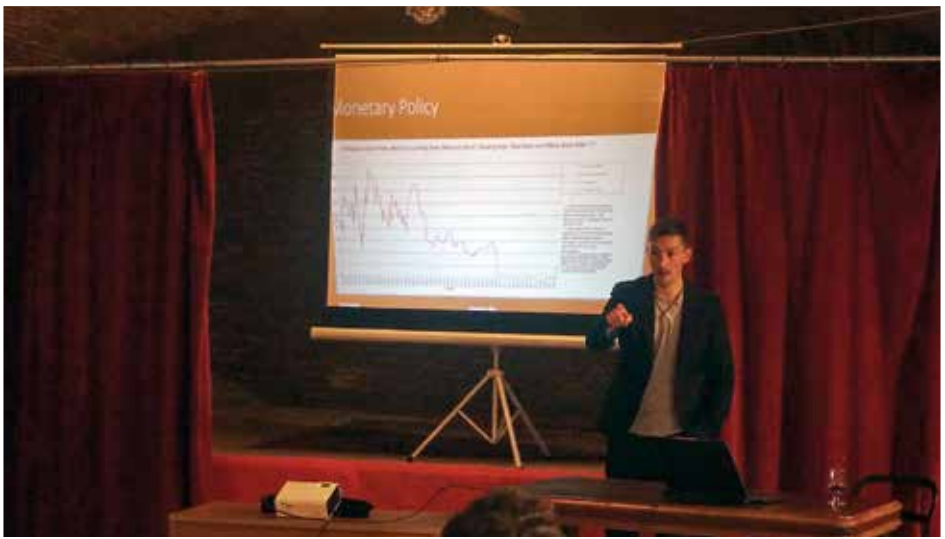
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# The Year in Pictures

MR BARNABAS MERCER



*Will Meehan kicks off the House's 'Year of Fun' with a wine tasting evening in the crypt. No spittoons were harmed, or indeed used in the process.*



*In another equally fun, albeit slightly less raucous event, Mr Theobald gives an economics talk to the house, particularly focused on the state of the economy in the UK.*



*Some members of the community make an appearance on the big screen in the Paul VI Audience Hall in a video about the VEC, which was played to seminarians and priests in Rome before an address from the Holy Father.*



*The relatively new statue of St Joseph is blessed by Fr Stephen, ably assisted by Mr Jack Ryan of Portsmouth.*





*Our Vice Rector Fr Christopher Warren presides with the community on Remembrance Sunday in San Silvestro in Capite*



*Archbishop Malcom McMahon of Liverpool and this year's jubilarians after celebrating the memoria of St Andrew Dũng-Lạc and companions.*



*The reliquary below the church altar open for Martyr's day, displaying the relics of St Ralph Sherwin, St Thomas of Canterbury, St Edmund and St Philip Howard.*



*The Schola full of festive joy and merriment after singing at the annual Advent Meditation*



*A rather eclectic mix of ecclesiastical and pop-cultural buffoonery at this year's advent show, put on in our crypt straight after the Advent Meditation.*



*Cardinal Arthur Roche, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship, and Fr Stephen having what appears to be a rather cordial tug of war over a commemoration from Pope Francis to Fr Stephen for his silver jubilee of priesthood.*



*Cardinal Anders Arborelius, Archbishop of Stockholm, and Fr Christopher administer ashes to the faithful on Ash Wednesday.*



*Bishop Daniele Libanori SJ, Auxiliary bishop of Rome, gives an inspiring spiritual conference to the community.*



*Fr Stephen with Mgr Michael Nazir Ali of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham, following mass on the Feast of St David.*



*Luke Theobald (centre) desperately trying to remember where he last put his bow and arrow during the Pontifical Scots College's visit to the VEC.*



*The Palm Sunday procession at Palazzola, during the Holy Week retreat, lead by Mgr John Armitage.*



*The Blessed Sacrament being reposed in the Martyrs' Chapel on Holy Thursday by the Pastoral Director, Fr David King.*



*Fr Konrad Grech SJ, resident spiritual director, taking a liturgically-inspired power nap while presiding on Good Friday.*



*Fr Christopher desperately trying to prevent the 50 charcoals that had been stuffed in the thurible by a slightly overzealous first year from setting the altar cloths on fire at the Easter Vigil.*

*Ludvig Hareide (left), Luke Theobald (middle) and Stuart McGovern (right) with Secretary for Relations with States Archbishop Paul Gallagher after being instituted as lectors.*





*From left to right: Ben Sinclair, Stuart McGovern, Ryan Hawkes, Jonathan Henry and Jack Ryan with Adjunct Secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Archbishop Augustine Di Noia OP, having been instituted as Acolytes.*



*From left to right: Deacon Matthias Eduard Werfeli SJ, Viktor Torres Airava, Ryan Browne, Fr Stephen Wang, Bishop Paul Tighe, Mathias Ledum and Deacon Sean. Taken after the Mass with institution of Candidacy for Viktor, Ryan and Mathias.*





*Ryan, Viktor and Mathias keeping the venerable tradition of post-candidacy tie-cutting alive!*



*In a change of tradition, there is a formal signing of the Liber Ruber by new seminarians on the Feast of the English Martyrs. Our Archivist Maurice Whitehead is seen here giving the community an exposition of the history of the college before the signing.*



*The college is subjected to a viking raid yet again for this year's Nordic Night. This year, instead of the usual chaos and pillage, our invaders took a more civilised approach, opting for a dinner with classic nordic food, music and a speech reminiscing about the historic... connection between Britain and our Viking visitors given by a beard-stricken Mathias Ledum.*



*Fr Christopher imparting his blessing on the first years, before they embark on their intensive two-week language course in Tuscany.*



*Some of the men enjoying a carafe in the sun at Pallazola during the Villeggiatura at the end of the academic year.*



*Palazzola croquet game takes a turn for the worst as James Finnegan is almost thrown into Lake Albano in a post-match frenzy between Northerners and Southerners.*



*From left to right: James Finnegan, Joseph O'Brien, Will Meehan, Martin Fyles and Dave Bench with Bishop Douglas Crosby of the Diocese of Hamilton having been ordained as deacons.*



*Ciao everyone, until next year!*



**BARNABAS MERCER** is a second-year seminarian for the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, currently studying Philosophy at the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas.

Ditta Annibale  
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# The College Diary 2022–23

**10<sup>th</sup> September:** The ‘new men’ are fresh off the plane and begin their two weeks of induction. This year we are blessed to have six seminarians starting at the VEC, Stephen (Southwark) Brian (Down and Connor), Stuart (Waterford and Lismore), Barnabas (Arundel and Brighton), Nico (Oslo) and Lukas (Copenhagen)

The College welcomes Fr. David King, a priest of Arundel and Brighton, who takes up responsibility as Director of Pastoral Formation, with Sr. Valentina Stilo, of the missionary fraternity of Verbum Dei assisting him, and Mr Julian Paparella, the new coordinator of intellectual formation.

The College welcomes *back* poacher turned gamekeeper Fr. Christopher Warren, last year a student-priest in the college studying for a license in liturgy, this year he takes up the role of Vice-Rector.

**23<sup>rd</sup> September:** Suitcases rolling through the corridors and students fumbling to find their keys can only mean one thing. The VEC year 2022–2023 has officially begun.

One seminarian, having left his keys in his room last year, a room which has now been locked by the *personale*, is forced to sleep in the common room.

**25<sup>th</sup> September:** The Rector calls a welcome back meeting and introduces to us a new timetable.

Ordinarily morning prayer will be at 6.45, followed by Mass at 7am, breakfast will then be taken from 7.30. Lunch will return to 1pm.

This new timetable is in response to a ‘review of seminary life’ undertaken during the Villeggiatura last year. Many seminarians from higher up the house begin to feel a sense of *déjà vu*...

The *Ben Tornati* party is held in the evening, a chance for seminarians and formation team old and new to get to know each other. More than one new man is heard asking who this ‘Benjamin Tornati’ was. The Diarist was shocked further when some further up the house were equally perplexed. Clearly the Italian lessons are paying off...

**26<sup>th</sup> September:** The annual five-day retreat starts, this year led by Fr. Luiz Ruscillo, a priest of the Diocese of Lancaster. His talks focussed on the joy of *Lectio Divina*, opening the scriptures for us, interspersed with amusing anecdotes. A spiritually enriching time was had by all.

**28<sup>th</sup> September:** An announcement breaks the silence. The retreat house, this year at the Capuchin friary in Frascati, is unexpectedly running out of water. Seminarians are requested not to shower this evening.

**30<sup>th</sup> September:** The silence is lifted, and in a subsequent post-retreat conversation, one seminarian mentions his bathroom cistern has been constantly flowing throughout the last few days. He didn’t inform the retreat house because ‘it was a silent retreat’.

**1<sup>st</sup> October:** News reaches the college of the marriage of a former student, many congratulations to Mr and Mrs Joachim Teigen!

**2<sup>nd</sup> October:** The Rector calls a meeting and announces significant changes to the formation programme at the VEC.

- After a seminarians' first year of theology, they will pause their academic formation for a year and undertake a 'theological pastoral year', six months of which will be spent in the seminarians' home diocese.
- The order of ministries and candidacy will change. Rather than lectorate, acolytate then candidacy seminarians will petition for candidacy, lectorate and then acolytate.
- No transitional deacons will remain in the seminary, rather they will return to their home diocese for a time of pastoral synthesis.
- These changes will impact those in first theology and below.

**6<sup>th</sup> October:** Mr Torres-Airava sings the concluding doxology, alongside the priests, at the top of his voice from the back of the church.

**8<sup>th</sup> October:** Fr Toby preaches for over the 'heavily suggested' three minutes. On a completely unrelated note, his room is attacked by a swarm of hornets that morning.

**9<sup>th</sup> October:** Stephen Srikantha, who somehow caught covid during the silent retreat, emerges from his isolation.

**10<sup>th</sup> October:** It is announced that Stephen, having left isolation, has decided to leave seminary formation. We wish him farewell, as Stephen leaves on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Our prayers for his future discernment go with him.

**14<sup>th</sup> October:** The Year of Fun is 'solemnly' proclaimed by the herald of the entertainments committee, Mr Torres-Airava, during the first seminarian-run entertainment event of the year, wine tasting led by Mr Meehan.

**15<sup>th</sup> October:** News reaches the college of the wedding of Charles Cowper, our Anglican exchange student from last year, many congratulations and prayers go to him and his wife Rebecca.

**20<sup>th</sup> October:** As part of the aforementioned Year of Fun, Mr Theobald gives a talk on economics. Despite questions around whether the presentation fits the basic criteria to be counted as an entertainment event, the talk is well attended, interesting and yes, even fun!

**24<sup>th</sup> October:** The College joins the rest of the seminaries and religious houses of formation in Rome, for an audience with the Holy Father. Despite the Pope's mobility issues, he gives an animated and amusing address to the seminarians, exhorting us to be pastors and not clerical, career climbers.

As part of the day, select seminaries were invited to provide a presentation on life inside

their walls. The VEC shows part of a recent video made by Salt and Light, highlighting the tradition of the martyrs and how their example impacts seminarians today.

An impressive rosary is led by the secretary to the Dicastery for Clergy, Archbishop Andrés Gabriel Ferrada Moreira, who cycles effortlessly between Latin, Italian, English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.

The build up to the Holy Father's address proves too much for some...as Mr Hareide falls asleep.

**24<sup>th</sup> October:** BIBOS begins to provide a week-to-week menu, so we all know what we are supposed to be eating.

**31<sup>st</sup> October:** The College heads to the Villa for a human development course, those lower down the house have Dr. Rosanna Giacometto for a course on dealing with stress, whilst those higher up have a course on celibacy with Fr. Gerard Fieldhouse-Byrne.

**1<sup>st</sup> November:** Having given up the front seat on the way back from the human development course at Palazzola, one seminarian exclaims 'this is the first time this semester I've been kind to someone, and I deeply regret it'.

**4<sup>th</sup> November:** 'The New Men's Dinner and House Entertainment' is the event this evening. A great opportunity for the new men, plus anyone who feels so called, to preform for the community. Elvis makes an appearance this year — with a wig that appears to have a mind of its own, as well as a German bishop and Greta Thunberg. Truly a diverse community! All the new men were present, except infirmarian Mr McGovern, who was ill. Physician, heal thyself!

**13<sup>th</sup> November:** The VEC, along with the Scots, Beda and Irish Colleges venture out to San Silvestro for the annual Remembrance Sunday Mass, this year the VEC animates the liturgy with singers, readers and servers.

**16<sup>th</sup> November:** The new statue of St Joseph, until now unblest, is blessed by the Rector in a small liturgy following the public Wednesday evening Mass.

**20<sup>th</sup> November:** A group, led by the Rector, heads to Campo Verano to pray at the VEC's plot for all from the College who have died. The cemetery was very quiet this Sunday afternoon, leading Mr Wilson to dryly quip that the place was 'dead'.

**24<sup>th</sup> November:** The Jubilarians travel down to the English College from Palazzola. Mass is presided over by Archbishop Malcom McMahon, himself celebrating forty years as a priest, who preaches on the example of the Vietnamese Martyrs. Congratulations to all!

**25<sup>th</sup> November:** The College begins a period of recollection as we enter Advent. This year led by Prof. Bernadeta Jojko, a lecturer at the Greg. Due to heavy traffic heading up to Palazzola, some seminarians spend plenty of time in 'recollection' along the Via Appia Antica.



**26<sup>th</sup> November:** Seminarians sufficiently recollected; a *liturgical New Year's Eve* party is held once everyone is back in College. Thanks to Mr Henry for the idea, who leads the celebrations in the close proximity of Bar Peru.

**1<sup>st</sup> December:** *Martyrs of the Venerable English College, pray for us!*

Martyr's Day celebrations this year are presided over by Cardinal Roche, giving the College community the first formal opportunity to congratulate him on his elevation to the Cardinalate.

Fr. Konrad manages to get his hands on the old college *wings* from the archives, which he decides accompany his Jesuit cassock very appropriately on this solemn day.

**4<sup>th</sup> December:** Cardinal Roche takes possession of San Saba, his titular Church. The VEC provides many of the vestments, whilst the Scots provide the servers.

**8<sup>th</sup> December:** *Most* of the Seminarians who go to the Villa for Hollycam are up and ready to start picking Holly at 10am.

**9<sup>th</sup> December:** Holly picked and transported to the common room; the college decorating party begins. The higher one climbs on the main staircase, the more Avant Garde the decorations seem to get.

**10<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> December:** The College's advent recollections and subsequent entertainment, open to the public for the first time since Covid, is a great success. Particular thanks go to Mr Finnegan the scholar master, and Mr Hawkes, who oversaw the production of the entertainment.

**19<sup>th</sup> December:** Mr Bench is seen 'assisting' a film crew at the Angelicum. Greg students speculate that the Angelicum has resorted to hiring film extras in an effort to boost attendance.

**21<sup>st</sup> December:** Suitcases appear all over the main corridor, the seminarians are free to leave, with most returning to their homes.

**23<sup>rd</sup> December:** News reaches the college of the death of former Greek professor at the Greg, Fr. Randy Soto. May he rest in peace.

**31<sup>st</sup> December:** Pope Benedict XVI, Supreme Pontiff from 19<sup>th</sup> April 2005 until his resignation on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2013, dies. Whilst the seminarians are away on their Christmas holidays, many cut this short to return to Rome for the requiem Mass. May he rest in peace.

**3<sup>rd</sup> January:** The Rector celebrates his silver jubilee of priesthood. Many congratulations and prayers! A college celebration is planned once all the community returns to Rome.

**5<sup>th</sup> January:** The College is full of visitors and seminarians who arrive to participate in the funeral of the late Pope Benedict XVI.

**10<sup>th</sup> January:** Only a few days after the death of Pope Benedict, Cardinal Pell dies in Rome. Many fondly remember his visit to the College for St. George's day a few years ago. A group of seminarians go to pray before his coffin, lying at San Stefano degli Abissini in the Vatican. The news of Cardinal Pell's death impacts the College in a particular way, as the Rector announces he was due to lead our Holy Week retreat.

**14<sup>th</sup> January:** Some seminarians and priests attend Cardinal Pell's Roman requiem Mass, held in St. Peter's. The Cardinal is then taken to be buried in Australia.

**15<sup>th</sup> January:** The College celebration of the Rector's anniversary is held. Mass is followed by a buffet. A wonderful occasion that sees the college full of guests from Rome and from England. Cardinal Roche presents the Rector with a Papal blessing to mark this important milestone.

**17<sup>th</sup> January:** A moveable confession screen arrives in the College, allowing residents and pilgrims alike to celebrate the sacrament anonymously.

**19<sup>th</sup> January:** Fr Lawrence Cross gives the house conference this week. A memorable event that sparked interesting and impassioned discussion around East/West relations and Papal Infallibility.

**20<sup>th</sup> January:** A large VEC turnout at the Scot's College for Burns Night. Many are acutely aware that this is likely the last time the supper will be held on the Via Cassia, as the Scots prepare to move.

**23<sup>rd</sup> January:** A tense day, not only because the day marks the beginning of the Winter exam season, but also because the Vice Rector announces a new system for getting into the cortile. 'Individual access codes' will be distributed, sparking some to fear that the formation team will now check when seminarians are entering the College. The Vice Rector assures the community that this will not be the case, and that anyway, the College has had CCTV on the doors for years!

**28<sup>th</sup> January:** Old Roman Marc Pitson is ordained to the Priesthood for the Diocese of Leeds by Bishop Marcus Stock. The Rector gives permission for seminarians to attend. Many congratulations and prayers Fr Marc!  
Another Old Roman, Mark O' Farrell, is ordained to the Diaconate for the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore, by Bishop Alphonsus Cullinan.

**4<sup>th</sup> February:** The College thief strikes again, to date nobody has been able to catch the rogue individual in the act. Chocolate, prosecco and liturgical items are all up for grabs for this unscrupulous individual.

**11<sup>th</sup> February:** On a more serious note, an attempted break in occurs during the early hours of the morning. Speculation that this was just a seminarian who forgot his ‘individual access code’ is sadly dismissed.

**17<sup>th</sup> February:** The College decamps to the Villa for a day of recollection.

**18<sup>th</sup> February:** Torbjørn Holt is ordained to the diaconate for the Diocese of Oslo. *Ad multos annos!*

**25<sup>th</sup> February:** Mr Finnegan finds himself stuck on the smokers’ terrace after a fault, which renders the door unable to open.

**28<sup>th</sup> February:** The VEC first aid course takes place today. Seminarians are taught, amongst other things, not to attempt CPR on someone who has been decapitated, shredded, or burnt beyond recognition. You learn something new every day...

**1<sup>st</sup> March:** The Vice Rector is not pleased with somebody’s midnight laundry run, especially when the washing machines are above his room. One seminarian comments that he is just pleased that people are doing their laundry at all.

**3<sup>rd</sup> March:** The College heads to Palazzola for a human development course. Mr Sinclair, the Car Man, manages to collide with a parked car whilst manoeuvring out of the College cortile.

**6<sup>th</sup> March:** A group of seminarians head to St. Peters for Vespers as the Rector declares it is a free Sunday in light of the human development course. An attempt to skip the queue through security results in the guards asking for a Vatican *Tessera* and were most definitely not impressed when one seminarian tried to pass through with a Greg card.

**9<sup>th</sup> March:** After years of enviously watching NAC seminarians sporting their own branded apparel, Mr Meehan unveils the VEC’s response: a smart black fleece with the College crest on the left. We have a few weeks to place orders.

**11<sup>th</sup> March:** Mr O’Brien leads the traditional Seven Churches Walk.

**13<sup>th</sup> March:** The College joins the Universal Church in praying for the Holy Father, on this the tenth anniversary of his election.

**15<sup>th</sup> March:** The Scot’s College comes to the VEC for Mass and Supper. Archbishop Timothy Costelloe, of Perth, who is staying with us for a few days whilst doing work for the upcoming synod, presides at Mass. The Scots coming *en masse* to the VEC is a move that is hoped will be reciprocated in the years to come. We only hope that the Scots will have somewhere to invite us to!

**21<sup>st</sup> March:** The College heads to San Lorenzo for the annual Station Mass.

**22<sup>nd</sup> March:** The VEC trustees are here for the annual visitation. The bougainvillea that has hung on the garden wall for many years decides today is the day to give up and falls off the wall. Rumours of foul play persist for days.

**25<sup>th</sup> March:** Edward Hauschild, ordained a deacon at Palazzola in the summer, is today ordained a priest for the Diocese of Portsmouth. A group of seminarians, and the Rector, travel to Portsmouth to be with him for the day. Many congratulations and prayers!

**26<sup>th</sup> March:** Those not in Portsmouth travel to the Beda for the Lenten Oasis.

**29<sup>th</sup> March:** A ‘meal suggestion/comment’ book appears in the Refectory, enabling seminarians and formators to add their musings on the food. A request that a similar book be placed in the sacristy is rejected immediately.

**30<sup>th</sup> March:** Bishop Philip Egan, of Portsmouth, gives the spiritual conference today, with plenty of anecdotes from when he was a curate.

**1<sup>st</sup> April:** The College heads to Palazzola for the annual Holy Week retreat, this year led by Mgr. John Armitage of Brentwood.

**4<sup>th</sup> April:** Seminarians return to the College and preparations begin for the Triduum, this year, for the first time since Covid seminarian’s family and friends are able to stay in college for the Triduum and Easter Week.

In a move that surprises no one, Mr Finnegan is late to his own birthday party.

**6<sup>th</sup> April:** The Triduum begins. Once again, the seminarians demonstrate their immense skill in offering a prayerful experience for guests to celebrate the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

**9<sup>th</sup> April:** Easter Sunday sees the schola head to St. Peters, followed by drinks and lunch in the College with family and friends. Faced with an array of unfamiliar and brightly coloured Italian *aperitivi*, some conclude that the only way to be sure of which drink is their favourite is to sample one of each.

Following lunch, the Easter break officially begins.

**14<sup>th</sup> April:** It is announced that the staff of St. Peters Basilica will create two queues, one for tourists and one for pilgrims and those entering for the sacraments or for liturgical celebrations. Great news for those who like to go to Mass, vespers or confession in the Basilica!

**16<sup>th</sup> April:** Trym Hellevig is ordained a Priest for the Diocese of Oslo. Many seminarians are able to travel to Norway and be with him. *Ad multos annos!*

**23<sup>rd</sup> April:** Many congratulations to Mr Theobald, Mr Hareide and Mr McGovern who are instituted as lectors by Archbishop Paul Gallagher.

**24<sup>th</sup> April:** St George's day is celebrated in the evening. This year Mr Hawkes takes up the task of giving the speech, focussing on what it really means to be English.

**29<sup>th</sup> April:** The College *gita* leaves this morning, this year finishing up with lunch in Nettuno. Our sincere thanks go to the Vice Rector and Senior Student (in many ways) Martin for organising!

**3<sup>rd</sup> May:** Concerns that an enthusiastic Fr. David has jumped into the Tank whilst it is still full of cleaning chemicals turn out to be happily unfounded. Fr Richard Oduor of the Diocese of Torit, South Sudan, joins the College. He is studying for a doctorate in liturgy at San Anselmo. Welcome Fr. Richard!

**4<sup>th</sup> May:** In what is hoped will become a new tradition, the signing of the Liber Ruber is done in the College Church this evening. Whilst most seminarians are able to produce a signature fairly quickly, Mr Hareide needs a bit more time, as he signs off in perfect Latin.

The ground floor is full of display cabinets and material from the archives, showing how the College and Rome responded to the coronations of previous monarchs. Banners too now fly from the third library windows, whilst the flags of the Nations of the Commonwealth fly from windows facing the Via di Monserrato. BIBOS *personale* can be seen polishing glasses and moving tables. All this is of course in preparation for the coronation of Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

**5<sup>th</sup> May:** The day has arrived, the long-awaited Coronation Gala sees the College full of guests for this unique event. Vespers of St. Edward the Confessor, followed by a buffet and a live band. Many thanks to the Coronation committee, Mr Finnegan, Mr Hawkes and Mr Theobald. A good time was certainly had by all.

**6<sup>th</sup> May:** The majority of the College gathers in the garden room to watch the coronation itself, followed by a barbecue.

**7<sup>th</sup> May:** Topping off a busy weekend, Archbishop Augustine Di Noia institutes Mr Hawkes, Mr Henry, Mr McGovern, Mr Ryan, and Mr Sinclair as Acolytes. Many congratulations!

**8<sup>th</sup> May:** The College resumes Communion under both kinds, up to now suspended due to the COVID Pandemic. Uptake is notably quite high, and another chalice is introduced to meet demand.

**10<sup>th</sup> May:** In what has become a College tradition, we mark the 'Nordic Night' with a votive Mass of St. Ansgar. This year, an available Scandinavian priest can't be found, so

the task of presiding falls to the Vice Rector, as the most northern priest in the College. The refectory is suitably decorated with candles, icons of Scandinavian saints and the odd Viking helmet. The post-cena address is given by Mr Ledum of Oslo this year.

**11<sup>th</sup> May:** Nordic festivities clearly continued into the night, as the refectory is left untouched from dinner the night before. Confused *Salone* guests are therefore greeted with an array of Nordic paraphernalia when they come down to breakfast.

**13<sup>th</sup> May:** For those who have remained in the College over the free weekend, Mr Henry leads a Eurovision watch party in the crypt, complete with scorecards.

**21<sup>st</sup> May:** Bishop Paul Tighe confers Candidacy to Mr Browne, Mr Ledum and Mr Torres-Airava. Many congratulations!

The latter uses this as an opportunity to announce that next year he will return to Finland for a Pastoral Year.

The evening sees the deacons-to-be making their Oath of Fidelity during vespers. The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, is among the guests for the occasion.

**25<sup>th</sup> May:** Following the Rector's spiritual conference, Mr Sinclair announces that he has decided to leave formation. There will be plenty of time to say goodbye as he will remain in the College until the end of the Villeggiatura.

**26<sup>th</sup> May:** Many seminarians travel to Liverpool, to be with Hugh Donleavy as he is ordained to the diaconate this evening. Many congratulations and prayers!

The rest of the College heads to Chiesa Nuova for the feast of St. Philip Neri. As is tradition, the VEC provides the servers for Mass, although this year alternative arrangements are sought for music.

**28<sup>th</sup> May:** Following discussions with his auxiliary bishop, Mr Meehan announces that next year he will move to the Canadian College here in Rome. Our prayers and good wishes go with him.

**31<sup>st</sup> May:** Rev. Prof. Massimo Grilli, known to many first year Greg theologians, concludes his final lecture on the synoptic gospels and announces that he is finally retiring after many years as professor emeritus. He receives a sustained standing ovation, followed by a presentation of an icon by the class representative.

**1<sup>st</sup> June:** Local artist Gilbert Halaby opens his exhibition *A Roman Comedy*, featuring one seminarian posing as a character from G.K. Chesterton's Father Brown series. A reception following the exhibition's opening is held in the College crypt and attended by some seminarians.

**8<sup>th</sup> June:** The cortile *cancellò* is rendered unusable, rats having eaten the cabling... then again, perhaps they just forgot their access code.

**11<sup>th</sup> June:** The first years set off for San Giovanni Valdarno for their two-week immersive Italian experience. Horror stories from those who have gone before them does little to deter them. For most seminarians however, the exams roll on.

**14<sup>th</sup> June:** News reaches the College that the Holy Father has appointed Bishop Stephen Wright, an Old Roman, as the new bishop of Hexham and Newcastle. *Ad multos annos!*

**23<sup>rd</sup> June:** As it did last year, the College holds a garden party for *personale* and friends of the VEC, seminarians are allowed to attend, but many have left to enjoy their final opportunity for sightseeing around Italy before the year closes.

**24<sup>th</sup> June:** Mr Torres-Airava begins moving his worldly possessions into the Bell Tower in preparation for his leaving next year, nobody is really sure when the task is completed, but the sound of boxes being wheeled along the Monserrà corridor continues well into the night.

**26<sup>th</sup> June:** News reaches the College that the Rev. Prof. Etienne Vetö, whom seminarians would encounter in their third year of theology at the Greg, has been appointed by the Holy Father as auxiliary bishop for the archdiocese of Reims, France. *Ad multos annos!* This evening the Villeggiatura begins, ably led by Mr Bajlovic as Villa Man. The announcement that the bar will be staffed by Villa *personale* as opposed to the ‘honesty bar’ of previous years leaves some members of the community facing a significantly larger bar tab than expected.

**27<sup>th</sup> June:** As last year, the first morning of the Villeggiatura is spent reviewing the year and looking to the next one. Following the review, the SS is elected. Congratulations to Mr Browne and Mr Ledum, who are elected as Senior Student and Deputy Senior Student respectively.

A brief moment of panic as the college collectively realises that no one remembers the route to Tusculum. Luckily, Fr Piotr, who is returning to attend the ordination, agrees to lead.

To make the thought of a whole morning of reviewing seminary life more palatable, Mr Meehan and Mr Theobald hold a wine tasting event in the evening. Having learnt from last year’s mistake, the wine tasting is held *after* vespers.

**28<sup>th</sup> June:** Pastoral Classes begin, years 1–4 are with Fiona O’Reilly, who returns to give courses on time management, dealing with burnout, and conflict management. After one day of diaconate practice with the Vice Rector, the deacons-to-be also join the courses. Victory for the North in the North vs. South Croquet game. Mr Mercer (South) spends most of the game trying to get through the first gate, but at least he was able to provide some entertainment for the assembled company.

**30<sup>th</sup> June:** The College heads to the shrine of Divino Amore on pilgrimage. Some choose to walk to the shrine from Ciampino, whilst others make the journey in an air-

conditioned car. The Chapel to which we are assigned for Mass had clearly experienced some kind of electrical fire, leaving the whole place with the smell of smoked fish. Nevertheless, a beautiful time was had by everyone. Following the Mass, we consecrate ourselves to the Virgin Mary, and offer thanks and praise for another year at seminary.

**1<sup>st</sup> July:** A group leaves the Villa for a morning of bowling. After bowling a group of seminarians, led by Mr Bench, can be seen heading to the nearest KFC.

In the evening, Fr Toby presides over the leavers Mass and gives the speech at the leaver's dinner, held indoors this year due to inclement weather. Following dinner, Mr Hawkes and Mr Finnegan lead the traditional photo review.

**4<sup>th</sup> July:** The walk to Tusculum takes place in the morning.

On the other hand, one seminarian gets more than he bargained for on an airport run to collect some guests. Observing him run a stop sign, the *Carabinieri* pull him over, but said seminarian manages to get off with a mere warning.

**5<sup>th</sup> July:** Ordination Day, this year at the hands of the Most Rev. Douglas Crosby OMI, bishop of Hamilton, Canada. A splendid Mass, ably guided by Mr Ledum as the Acting Master of Ceremonies. Many congratulations and prayers to our new deacons: Dave, James, Joe, Martin, and Will.

With the post-ordination lunch having been concluded, I too finish my task amid the sounds of washing machines, hoovers and rolling suitcases. The VEC year 2022–2023 has come to a close.

*With thanks to all who have taken up the pen before me.*



**JACK RYAN** is a fourth year seminarian for the Diocese of Portsmouth, currently studying Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University.

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# Leavers' Profiles

## Rev. Mr Antonio Bajlovic

Our Croatian from Sweden, training in Italy at the English College, certainly has kept things interesting. Antonio is a bright, quick-witted and unassuming person. So bright that he has been happy to debate the pastoral director at length on and off for months, often during mealtimes or games of pool; so witty that his remarks have been a constant source of life-giving humour in the community; and so unassuming that for a long time it was unclear which year group he was actually part of. Was he a candidate? His unchanging combination of T-shirt and jeans led many to suppose not. Was he nearing ordination? But his banners have not appeared with the rest of the top year. In actual fact, Antonio has been on a winding journey between the mixture of philosophical and theological courses begun in Sweden and then picked up again later at the Angelicum, as well as the jumping around of year groups due to a sustained period of illness, which he did not let defeat him. I suspect he secretly enjoyed causing such perplexity.



Speaking of eschewing defeat, Antonio could turn even the most mundane aspects of seminary life into a competition. When he “retired” as a capo of the house, taking on the role of sports man was an obvious choice for him. It did not take long for a pool tournament to be immediately created as part of the year-of-fun initiative in-house. He would proudly inform us all that it was quite formidable to challenge a Croatian man of his stature, even if others did seem to be on a lucky streak... The courage he exuded by powering through a football related hamstring injury was nothing short of Croatian heroism (walking slowly to the Ange with him reminding me of this soon became adjunct pastoral work in itself). Never tiring of the thrill of the game, however, Antonio would be found at break times in his new sedentary state taking on the American chess players in our midst. Somehow, they too were only exceptionally lucky in victory it seems.

Although Antonio will not be carrying on with postgraduate studies — something he is more than capable of (we are, after all, talking about someone who reads the *Summa* as a leisurely activity here) — he has been anticipating returning to Sweden and putting his hand to the plough, as it were. He is ready to tackle the progressive, unreasoned assumptions of his culture with the timeless truth of the Gospel and help the many lost sheep who will no doubt register his approachable, gentle spirit. The kindness and level-headed presence Antonio has brought to the College has been uplifting and inspiring. His friendship has been one of those late on surprises in my seminary experience and I shall recall with fondness many of our amusing jaunts.

To all that Antonio goes onto as a deacon after his ordination this coming October, we wish him well. May God bless him and keep him and work many wondrous things through his future ministry.

*Rev. Mr David Bench*

## Fr Toby Duckworth

One cannot have passed through the halls of the Venerabile over the last seven years and not be (sometimes ear-splittingly) aware of the presence of newly ordained Fr Toby Duckworth. His exuberance, joy and passionate spirit has continued a solid line of Birmingham brethren at the College. The last person standing from his initial cohort, Toby has for the last few years solely represented the longest running institutional memory throughout the recent changes of Rector and formation pathway. Sometimes it serves well to look back before moving forward, and the current formation team have openly expressed their appreciation at having Toby around as a sounding board for just such a purpose.



When I look back at starting in Rome and joining the then crowd of 5 strong Brummie brothers, Toby was a cheerful addition to the mix who stood out for earnestly attempting to live the Christian message in our sometimes difficult seminary environment. The infamous breakfast table alliance that so pleased the Archbishop to see us all together for at least one portion of our day, possibly disturbed many a quiet morning type of seminarian. Having conquered a hesitancy with Italian, Toby made the most of the slow morning starts that attending the Greg allows for. Occasionally, he was overcome with the strange zeal that causes one to rise at the crack of dawn and hit the gym. Thankfully, he recovered from such lunacy. In fact, yo-yoing from one extreme to the other did become the primary trait we all liked to tease Toby about. One minute he was opting into extra philosophy courses before being talked down by the Academic Tutor; then he might be leading extra praise and worship before preparing to sing the Exsultet; or choosing a sackcloth alb for his ordination before escaping off to the Dolomites or other such beautiful locations on offer in Italy. Really, it's a testament to the energy of the man and how much he's seized the amazing privilege that it is to train abroad for the English mission. No-one else in his time has given as much of themselves so consistently as he has. He's modelled for me what it means to be a generous, giving person with a truly fatherly heart (and for that we forgive the champagne-Franciscan edge to him).

The last two years of his Licentiate studies have particularly stretched Toby. It hasn't been easy balancing the strong desire to minister with the time necessitated to produce top quality theological reflection. Both, however, nicely came through in his homilies. I dare say that the health struggles of the last 10 months have also bolstered his preaching. For, Toby endeavours to speak from a place of deep truth, and even when run down with pain he found a way of persevering and turning it to some good. He underestimates how this has in itself preached a life lesson to those who might be tempted to play the victim all too quickly in our culture. I tip my hat to him for this.

As a diocesan brother, I couldn't have asked for a better friend to share the journey with. We will all miss the huge amount Toby brought to college life, but he goes on to share these gifts further afield as God always intended. We wish him every blessing and the utmost joy in his ministry. Peace, brother.

*Rev. Mr David Bench*

## Rev. Mr William Meehan

In characteristic fashion, Mr William C. Meehan arrived in Rome ahead of the game. Not only was he already familiar to the community from his first year of formation in Valladolid, he had also managed to teach himself Italian from scratch before setting foot in the country, and immediately began Theology at the Gregorian with ease.

Will is a man of unwavering integrity, something captured at the start of Bishop Lobsinger's homily at a Wednesday Mass in November 2021: "After Mass, tell me what you make of him — everyone back home seems to think he's perfect!" His dedication to the many demands of seminary life has been exceptional, from his rigorous academic work to his commitment to preparing outstanding tailored resources each week for catechesis at Marymount school. His experience in the world of business and accountancy has brought a legendary level of organisation to our student representation unheard of since the days of Fr James McAuley, which has been greatly appreciated by the seminarians. Most significantly, Will's faithfulness in friendships, even through great trials, has been exemplary.

This integrity is not without lightness of heart. Free weekends and day trips to Pescara, Palestrina and Bracciano, to name just a few destinations, have left lasting joyful memories of pistachio pesto, assessment of the artistic merits of church architecture, and the occasional aperitivo. His tour of England and Wales over Christmas, moving from house to house of seminarians and priests like an ecclesiastical Santa Claus, goes to show how quickly he has established lasting friendships within the community. In the world of "digital arts," Will's forays into the high culture of funny dog videos and cartoon iPad strategy games suitable for ages 3+ have expressed something of his whimsical side, topped only by his ability to pull off the "Roman-collar-with-owl-socks" look, or perhaps his growing collection of toy dinosaurs. But, more sincerely, I can think of no better way to spend an evening than enjoying Will's flawless hospitality, sharing a glorious homemade meal and/or delightful bottle of wine, and talking about anything from the discovery of spicy guacamole (an absolute gamechanger) to his nuanced and intricate definition of the word "authentic."

After Diaconate ordination, Rev. Mr Meehan continues his priestly formation with new provision through his home Diocese of Hamilton, Canada. His departure is marked with sadness, but this will be far from our last encounter: the date is already in the diary for his next trip to England, and I imagine it won't be long until the opportunity for coffee in the bars of Rome comes around again.



*Jonathan Henry*

## Fr John O'Laverty

As is the case with many of us who have passed through the halls of the Venerable English College, John O'Laverty's life is a mess — a beautiful, wonderful mess — but a mess all the same. If you've met him once, then expect to meet an entirely different character each subsequent time you make his acquaintance. You may meet him in a Roman Chasuble, with his canonical digits firmly joined; you may meet him in an apartment in Bulgaria celebrating Mass in a polo shirt on a coffee table, or attending Martyr's Day Mass in flip flops and excusing himself during the Gloria. You may find him in the throes of social angst, or spending a fortnight hosting more dinners than the late Mary of Teck. At his own ordination banquet in a republican stronghold in Northern Ireland, John wanted to read a letter from Elizabeth II as well as the Pope, so that 'both the spiritual and temporal heads could be represented'.<sup>1</sup> One really never quite knows what one is going to get with Fr O'Laverty.



There are, however, some constants.

John is a man of unrivalled generosity. Not just with all that he possesses, but with his time for others. More than any member of the House, he has wined and dined the best portion of us, usually in a yuppie restaurant in Prati, where the bill is a radically non-dialogical situation. Despite the frequency of his dining out, it does sometimes seem that each trip to a restaurant for him is something of a first, and, combining foreign food with foreign language can confound him at times. I'm reminded of an occasion in Le Carré Français when he confused the words *rana* and *ragno* and had to be instructed that the waiter was offering him frogs, not spiders. At a good Gascon restaurant in Lourdes, too, he went ahead with the set menu asking only after the waitress had left what 'foie gras' actually is; summoning her back he opted instead for a 'wee plate of ham'.

John is a humble man, who has self-deprecation down to an art form. He is a gentleman, who — I would argue — has *never* been spotted by any of us in a foul or angry mood. He is a man of prayer, and of unwavering devotion to and love for God and his Church. For all of this, the English College will be infinitely poorer for his departure as we lose such a fine example of Christian love and living. We know, however, that the Diocese of Down and Connor will gain a great and holy priest, to whom the King will be writing in no time.

John, thank you for everything that you are and have been to each of us. We will miss you dearly and will hold you in loving prayer as you begin this great new chapter.

*Rev. Mr James Finnegan*

<sup>1</sup> It is rumoured that a tip-off from Military Intelligence 5 put a stop to this.

## Mr Benjamin Sinclair

The menacing sound of the approaching click-clack of wooden-heeled shoes is enough to instil dread into the hearts of many. Memories of a dour headmaster or an undertaker, perhaps. Yet for us VEC seminarians, the sound signifies only one, joyous thing: the approach of Ben Sinclair.

But what can I say about the enigma that is Ben? Here is a man with the looks of a 14-year-old, the dress sense of an English diplomat on secondment in British India and an encyclopaedic knowledge of the lyrics of every Taylor Swift song. To communicate even one facet of his persona would require more words than this profile would allow... yet nonetheless I shall try.



For three years it has been my pleasure to live shoulder to shoulder with my fellow northerner. I have little to say of Ben except for praise. For three years the dress shoes of this ever-cheerful lad have graced the halls of the VEC and brought an unrivalled *joie-de-vivre* to our community. With an energy and youthful demeanour that puts us younger seminarians to shame, Ben's commitment to all that he does — his prayers, study, friendships and entire life at the VEC — is an example to all.

A mention of his house jobs CV would probably be fitting here. Ben has put his great commitment into his stints as archivist and car man (despite his propensity for raising the insurance premiums — “*those scooters on the Monserrato!*”). But Ben's greatest contribution is what he does in the background, unseen by most. Putting his everything into the VEC, always up for the next activity, always there to lend a helping hand and to encourage his friends, Ben has given so much to this community.

A long way from one of industrial Teesside's finest factory-towns, Ben has certainly had no issue in making Rome his home. Arriving at the VEC with half a degree in Italian and a love for *la dolce vita*, few seminarians could be said to have made the most of their time at the VEC as Ben. It has been my pleasure to share many a *gita* with Ben and to help him pursue his goal of visiting every region of Italy — a goal which I look forward to helping him complete in the future.

With such a love for ‘*romanità*’ and being such a model of prayer, it has been a shock to all that Billingham's finest export has decided to leave our band of brothers. His decision was something none of us expected; yet knowing him as such a man of prayer, it is clear that his decision is a true response to the Lord's call. Where the Lord will take you, Ben, no one may know, but one thing is true: you will excel wherever you go. Watch this space!

While it's true that Ben Sin-clair (emphasis on the Sin) may not (yet) be a household name, anyone who has tuned in to a Vatican News broadcast has most likely heard — knowingly or otherwise — the dulcet tones of Benson resounding across Christendom. *Laudetur Jesus Christus* — praised be Jesus Christ. Praised be Christ indeed for the gift Ben has been to our community. For his mirth, his fraternity, his love and friendship. *Alleluia?*

*Rev. Mr Joseph O'Brien*

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**Nottingham:** Fr Mark Brentnall, The  
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**Plymouth:** Mgr Adrian Toffolo, Via XX  
Settembre 20, 33092 Fanna (PN), Italy

**Portsmouth:** Fr Phillip Harris, English  
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**Salford:** Fr Paul Daly, St Joseph's  
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OL10 1EG

**Shrewsbury:** Fr Paul Shaw, St Werburgh's  
Presbytery, Grosvenor Park Road, Chester  
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werburgh465@btinternet.com

**Southwark:** Fr Francis Murphy,  
Cathedral Clergy House, Westminster  
Bridge Road, London SE1 7HY

**Westminster:** Fr Philip Miller, Newman  
House, 111 Gower St, London WC1E  
6AR  
philipmiller@recdow.org.uk

**Wrexham:** Fr Antony Jones, Flat 3, Seren  
y Mor, 8 Caroline Road, Llandudno,  
Conwy LL30 2YA  
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# The 153<sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting Palazzola 2022 Minutes

Twenty-two members of the Roman Association attended the AGM: John Allen, Michael Burke, Stephen Coonan, Pamela Coote, Tom Finnegan, Paul Gallagher, Timothy Galligan, Joseph Gee, Philip Gillespie, Mark Harold, Sean Healy, Michael Lang, Damien McGrath, Fergus Mulligan, Seamus O’Boyle, Anthony Pateman, Peter Purdue, Aaron Spinelli, Adrian Toffolo, Mervyn Tower, Stephen Wang, Anthony Wilcox

**1) Prayer to the Holy Spirit** – The meeting began at 10:30am in the St Edward’s Conference Room with Mgr John Allen in the chair and Association Secretary Fr Aaron Spinelli taking minutes. Proceedings began with a prayer to the Holy Spirit and welcomes to the Rector and to members.

**2) Apologies and best wishes** – Received from Thomas Athill, Chris Beirne, Tony Churchill, Tom Cooper, Brian Dazeley, John Deehan, Frank Fallon, John Fegan, Peter Fleetwood, John Guest, George Hay, Edward Koroway, Pat Kelly, Chris Lough, John Metcalfe, Gerard Murray, Guy Nicolls, Jim Overton, Nicolas Paxton, Terry Phipps, Richard Pring, Michael Quinlan, Gerard Skinner, Simon Thomson, Micheal Tuck, William Young

**3) Minutes of 152<sup>nd</sup> AGM** – these were approved by members.

**4) Matters Arising** – no matters arising.

**5) The *De Profundis* for deceased members** – Dominic Byrne, Christopher Lightbound, Mary Jo Morello.

**6) Prayer for sick members** – Anthony Towey, Bishop Christopher Budd, Bishop John Hine, Anthony Jones, John Kelly, George Hay, Patrick Kelly, Billy Steele

**7) Chairman’s Remarks** – the chair remarked on how good it was to be at Palazzola and to meet in person, whilst recognizing the recent difficult years.

**8) Treasurer’s Report** – The members thanked Damien for his great work on the finances.

Accounts for Year Ended 31/12/21 are in draft and have been circulated. The treasurer asked for any questions and approval was sought to file with the Charity Commission.

- 1) First accounts filed under the New CIO
- 2) Gift Aid to be claimed once re-submitted to the HMRC for the new charity — this is in hand with HBO
- 3) Income — donations include further income from the Bryan Chestle estate of approx £16k. Further income due in 2022 from coin sales of around £18k.

- 4) Grants awarded to the college total 30k Euros being 2 x 2<sup>nd</sup> year grant plus 1 x 1<sup>st</sup> year grant, therefore we reduce our student grant to 10k Euros in 2022. These grants are being paid from the Restricted Fund (Millennium Fund) as they are directly related to scholastic support.
- 5) Net gains on investments = £141k but to date of the AGM there is a net loss of £179k against a 31/12 value of £1,544k mainly due to global events and the war in Ukraine.
- 6) Income from investments is £24.6k — potentially will reduce in 2022
- 7) Governance cost reduced from 2020 to 2021 £10k to £7k and is expected to reduce further now CIO is established
- 8) 2022 Commitments = £5k for Venerabile Magazine; £5k for special edition of the Venerabile Magazine; 10k Euros for the final second year bursary; approx. 70k Euros (£65k) for the pool refurbishment.
- 9) Pool Refurbishment to be staged payments as they fall due to reduce the impact on the sale of assets by Rathbones.
- 10) Commitments in 2022 approx. £80k against income in 2022 of approx £20k therefore there will be the need to sell investments to address the difference.
- 11) Note the change of bank accounts to Metro Bank, therefore a reminder to all who have not done so to change their Standing Order as the account switcher will only support the old bank accounts for 1-2 years.
- 12) Investment breakdown is shown on the recent valuation report. The funds are already aligned to the Church's principles e.g. no investments in weapons manufacture or north control companies.

**9) Rector's Report** – The Rector shared with us his report which was very well received. Members had an opportunity to put questions and queries to the rector after his report, topics were wide ranging on college life and its academic programs, members greatly welcomed this opportunity and thanked the Rector for his openness and candour.

**10) Election of new members** – Members decided to propose Professor Maurice Whitehead as a new member of the Association, his election was unanimously agreed. The college leavers of 2022 were elected members of the association namely: Ansel D'Mello, Hugh Dunleavy, Edward Hauschild, Trym Hellevig, Mark O'Farrell, Marc Pitson, Theodore Sharrock, Don White

- a) Election of the Chair and President of the Roman Association — John Allen agreed to carry on for a year, given the unusual circumstances of the pandemic.
- b) Appointment of Secretary — Aaron Spinelli agreed to continue for one more term (until 2025)
- c) Election of Councillors of the Roman Association — members decided to carry over the existing membership a year. Patrick Mileham, Mervyn Tower, Mark Woods (until 2023), Seamus O'Boyle and Liam Bradley (until 2024), Philip Gillespie, James Neal, Fergus Mulligan (until 2025)

**11) 153<sup>rd</sup> AGM** – would take place on May 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> 2023

**12) Martyrs' Day Gatherings** – these gatherings were to recommence in their usual locations with the exception of the South West.

**13) Any Other Business** – none

# News from Old Romans

## Arundel and Brighton

There are not too many changes in our part of the vineyard to report this year.

- Bishop Emeritus Kieran Conry is in Hampshire,
- Canon Tony Churchill is enjoying his retirement in Cobham,
- Monsignor Michael Jackson continues his retirement in Hove.
- Fr Tony Bridson continues as parish priest of Redhill, Reigate and Merstham.
- Fr Raglan Hay Will remains 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 continues as parish priest in Epsom.
- Canon Rob Esdaile is parish priest of Woking with Knaphill.
- Fr Jonathan How is parish priest of Godalming.
- Fr Tony Milner continues as parish priest of Southwick and West Blatchington.
- Fr Kevin Dring continues as parish priest in Eastbourne.
- Fr Stephen Dingley is parish priest of Effingham.
- Fr Stephen Hardaker is parish priest of Oxted and Warlingham.
- Fr Terry Martin is parish priest of Worthing.

- Fr Chris Bergin continues as parish priest of Bognor Regis and Slindon.
- Fr Simon Hall continues as parish priest of Dorking.
- Canon David Parmiter continues as Dean of Arundel Cathedral.
- Fr Andrew Pinsent remains at the Ian Ramsey Centre at Oxford University.
- Fr Bruno Witchalls continues in Eastbourne as assistant priest.
- Fr Andrew Moss works abroad.
- Fr Tristan Cranfield continues as priest in Guildford.
- Fr Stephen O'Brien is assistant priest in Epsom.
- Rev. Mark Woods continues as parish deacon at Worthing.

And we're thrilled to add Fr David King to the litany, as Director of Pastoral Formation and Formation Tutor at the College!

*Fr Tristan Cranfield*

## Birmingham

This is my first report as the Diocesan Rep and I want to begin by thanking Canon Gerard Murray for the way he has undertaken this role for many years. By way of introduction, I consider myself a relatively new Old Roman, having studied on the Monserrato from 2013–2020. Due to the pandemic, I completed the licentiate studies in Catholic Social Teaching and Public Ethics while in exile in Aldridge. Sadly, the biggest change to report is the

death of **Bishop David McGough** (1970), who died at home in Tean aged 78. News of his death was received on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and while we are saddened, we have much for which we give thanks. Bishop David studied in the College both for Theology and, later, for a licence in Sacred Scripture at the Biblicum.

He was ordained Bishop by Archbishop Vincent Nichols in St Chad's Cathedral on 8 December 2005 and his pastoral areas as Auxiliary were the Northern Deaneries: Dudley, Lichfield, North Staffordshire, Stafford, Walsall, Wolverhampton.

David was a keen supporter of the College and enjoyed bringing his family to the College on many return visits. Whenever he visited to confer ministries, he would be a great presence at the socials and always had time for a Diocesan meal.

There are relatively few changes to report this year. **Anthony Wilcox** (1964) has moved to 6 Chapel Lane, Lichfield. **Joseph McLoughlin** (2002) is now at Our Lady & St Anne, Caversham. **Robert Murphy** (2001) is serving as Counsellor as part of the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations.

Martyrs' Day 2022 was celebrated at St George's Worcester, with Bishop Stephen Wright (2000) as the principal celebrant, and 25 people gathered for the festal meal.

*Fr Ryan Service*

## Brentwood

Given it has been a number of years since a report was submitted from this little portion of the People of God, I thought I would give a general update on developments since the last one in 2019.

Your humble scribe graduated from the Catholic University of Leuven with a licentiate in Canon Law. **Paul Keane**

has gone on to follow in the footsteps of another Brentwood man, **Mgr Gilbey**, in becoming the Catholic chaplain to the University of Cambridge. **Neil Brett**, who celebrated his 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination in 2020, has been nominated by the Bishop as the delegate for the Traditional Latin Mass. **Andrew Headon** has been appointed by the Bishop to the Cathedral Chapter of Canons. **Francis Coveney** remains in Chingford and celebrated his 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination in 2022. **Christopher Brooks**, Parish Priest of Colchester and Episcopal Vicar for Finance, celebrates his Ruby Jubilee this year and **Michael Butler**, continuing in his retirement, celebrates his Diamond Jubilee. In terms of new parish appointments, **Jean-Laurent Marie** has been appointed to Holy Family, Dagenham.

*Fr Gary Dench*

## Cardiff

Since the last update, our most-recently ordained, **Elliot Hanson** is a member of the Pastoral Team serving the Pastoral Area of All Saints in Newport.

**Liam Hennessy** is parish priest of Abertillery and Brynmawr.

Finally, **Bob Reardon** is retired and living in Gabalfa, Cardiff

*Mgr. Robert Reardon*

## Clifton

Canon **Tony Harding**, our Archivist since 1986, died at St Joseph's Home, Bristol on 29<sup>th</sup> Jan 2023. (See elsewhere in this issue of The Venerable.) **Michael Healy**, no longer PP of Worthywood (Bristol) and Chew Magna, is still active in the family of parishes that includes them. **Michael**

**Robertson** continues at Fairford and Cricklade on the upper reaches of the Thames and, **Philip Beisly**, across the Cotswolds, at Dursley and Nymphsfield. **Colin Mason**, at Westbury-on-Trym with Henbury, Bristol, has been appointed one of our two Vicars General. **Michael Patey** of Northampton Diocese, is Chaplain of Downside School. Bishop (Emeritus of Portsmouth) **Crispian (Sam) Hollis**, is active in his local parish of Frome and its Chapel of Ease, St Dominic's at Mells. **Alex**, who became **Anselm Alexander, Redman** is no longer active in the Diocese. Parishes in the south of the Diocese are supplied occasionally from Mendip by your correspondent.

*Thomas Atthill*

## Gibraltar

**Father Victor Ghio** was consecrated as a Hermit by Bishop Carmel Zammit and solemnly clothed in the Franciscan habit, on Palm Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2023, taking the name: Victor, of Mary, of the Cross and of the Holy Face.

He remains Cathedral Administrator, Chancellor of the Diocese and Moderator of our Tribunal of First instance, which is currently under the competence of the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

*Monsignor John Pardo*

## Hallam

Peter Kirkham is in retirement at Worksop; John Ryan is at St. Bede's, Rotherham; Mark McManus at St. Joseph's, Handsworth, whence he came to Valladolid to give the Lenten retreat — what with John Flynn as rector Spain becomes more Italian by the day. Adrian Tomlinson is at Chesterfield, and Henry Woodhouse at Saint Peter's,

Doncaster; Dominic Jenkinson is unwell and on leave; and Craig Fitzpatrick is on the Gipton in Leeds. Tom Clarke continues to blossom in retirement and Kevan Grady is now involved with adult education as well as teaching at All Saints, Sheffield.

Your correspondent is settling into the rôle of spiritual director at the other place at Valladolid, trying to sort out the complexities of *ser* and *estar*, and *para* and *por*. Paziienza!

*Fr John Metcalfe*

## Leeds

*Changes from 2022 are indicated in bold type.*

This year we report with sadness the deaths of two long-standing and faithful members of the Roman Association, Mgr William Steele (3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2022) and Fr Gerald Creasey (19<sup>th</sup> January, 2023). May they rest in peace.

The Right reverend Marcus Stock,  
Bishop of Leeds  
Bishop's House, 13 North Grange Road,  
Leeds LS6 2BR.

His Eminence Arthur Cardinal Roche  
Prefect of the Dicastery  
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.

Rev John A Kelly  
4 Hinsley Court, Leeds LS6 2HB.

Rev Peter Nealson  
St Malachy's Presbytery, Nursery Lane,  
Ovenden, Halifax HX3 5NS.

**Canon Kevin Firth**  
**Retired from holding office, Summer 2023.**

**Ashlea house, Hinsley Hall, 62  
Headingley Lane, Leeds LS6 2BX.**

**Rev Christopher Willis (Parish Priest  
of Our Lady Immaculate Parish,  
Pateley Bridge, and St Joseph's Parish,  
Bishop Thornton)**

Our Lady Immaculate Presbytery,  
Panorama Way, Ripon Road, Pateley  
Bridge HG3 5NJ' in addition to his  
responsibilities as Chaplain to Wetherby  
Carmel and Harrogate Hospital; residing  
in Harrogate.

Mgr Andrew Summersgill (Parish Priest)  
St Joseph's Presbytery, 20 Westgate,  
Wetherby LS22 6LL; Vicar General  
and Moderator of the Curia; Associate  
Judicial Vicar.

Rev Russell Wright  
St Patrick's Parish, 7900 Bee Ridge Road,  
Sarasota, FL 34241, USA.

Rev Malachy Larkin (Parish Priest)  
Sacred Heart & St Patrick's Presbytery,  
Bolton Brow, Sowerby Bridge HX6 2BA.

**Rev Mark Jarmuz**  
**Ss John Fisher and Thomas More,  
Bradford Road, Burley-in-Wharfedale  
LS29 7PX; assisting in the parishes  
of Ilkley and Burley-Wharfedale and  
continuing work in Catechesis and**

**Adult Formation in the Vicariate  
for Education.**

**Rev David Bulmer**  
**Retired from holding office,  
Summer 2023.**  
**Ashlea house, Hinsley Hall, 62  
Headingley Lane, Leeds LS6 2BX.**

**Rev Timothy Swinglehurst (Parish  
Priest of Sacred Heart, Ilkley;  
English Martyrs, Addingham;  
Ss John Fisher and Thomas More,  
Burley-in-Wharfedale)  
Sacred Heart Presbytery, Stockeld  
Road, Ilkley LS29 9HD.**

Mgr Paul Grogan (Parish Priest of the  
Parish of Mary, Mother of God)  
St Winefride's Presbytery, 54 St Paul's  
Avenue, Wibsey, Bradford BD6 1ST;  
in addition, the Episcopal Vicar  
for Education.

Rev Stephen Brown CO  
St Wilfrid's Presbytery, Petergate House,  
11 High Petergate, York YO1 7EN.

Rev Gregory Knowles (Parish Priest)  
First Martyrs' Presbytery, 65 Heights  
Lane, Heaton, Bradford BD9 6HZ.

Rev Stephen Billington (Parish Priest)  
St Peter and St Paul Presbytery, St  
George's Walk, Standbridge Lane,  
Wakefield WF2 7NR.

Very Reverend Canon Matthew Habron  
(Cathedral Dean and Parish Priest of the  
Parish of Mother of Unfailing Help)  
Cathedral House, Great George Street,  
Leeds LS2 8BE.

Very Reverend Canon Dennis Cassidy

(Parish Priest of the Parish of St John Mary Vianney)

Immaculate Heart of Mary Presbytery,  
294 Harrogate Road, Leeds LS17 6LE.

Rev Michael Doody (Parish Priest of the Parish of Our Lady of Kirkstall)  
Holy Name Presbytery, 52 Otley Road,  
Leeds LS16 6HW.

Rev John Carlisle (Parish Priest of the Parish of the Immaculate Heart of Mary)  
English Martyrs Presbytery, Teddington  
Avenue, Huddersfield HD5 9HS.

Rev Marc Homsey  
Chaplain to the Universities of Leeds and  
Director of Youth Service  
Cathedral House, Great George Street,  
Leeds LS2 8BE.

Rev Martin Kelly (Parish Priest of the Parish of Holy Redeemer)  
St Patrick's Presbytery, 34 New North  
Road, Huddersfield HD1 5JY; providing  
chaplains care to Huddersfield  
University; and continue with his  
responsibilities as Vice Chancellor of  
the Chancery, as Co-ordinator of Lay  
School Chaplains for the Vicariate for  
Education, and with providing oversight  
of the diocesan 'Parish to Mission'  
process.

Rev Anthony Rosso (Parish Priest)  
St Joseph's Presbytery, Queen's Road,  
Ingrow, Keighley BS21 1AT. Priest  
Chaplain to Holy Family School,  
Keighley.

**Rev Sean Crawley (Parish Priest  
of St Austin and English Martyrs,  
Wakefield, and St Ignatius, Ossett;  
Chaplain to HMP Wakefield)**

**St Austin's Presbytery, 6 Wentworth  
Terrace, Wakefield, WF1 3QN.**

**Rev Elliot Wright (Bishop's Secretary)  
Bishop's House, 13 North Grange  
Road, Leeds LS6 2BR.**

Rev Benjamin Hilton (Assistant Priest of  
the Parish of Mother of Unfailing Help  
and Chaplain to Armley Prison)  
Cathedral House, Great George Street,  
Leeds LS2 8BE.

Rev Sean Elliot (Assistant Priest of the  
Parish of Holy Redeemer)  
St Patrick's Presbytery, 34 New North  
Road, Huddersfield HD1 5JY; providing  
chaplains care to Huddersfield Royal  
Infirmary; assisting with the spiritual  
care of All Saints College; and assisting  
with the provision of chaplaincy to  
Huddersfield University.

**Rev Marc Pitson (Assistant Priest of  
the Parish of Our Lady of Kirkstall)  
Holy Name Presbytery, 52 Otley Road,  
Leeds LS16 6HW.**

**Rev Paul Moores (Assistant Priest of  
the Parish of St Robert, Harrogate,  
and Priest Chaplain to St John Fisher  
School, Harrogate)  
St Robert's Presbytery, Robert Street,  
Harrogate, HG1 1HP.**

*Canon Matthew Habron*

## Liverpool

Here are the current locations of "Old Romans" in the Archdiocese of Liverpool: Archbishop Patrick Kelly is in residence at Hesketh Park Lodge in Southport; Archbishop Paul Gallagher is the Secretary for Relations with States in the Holy

See; Aidan Prescott is the Archdiocesan Chancellor and Vicar General, and parish priest in Saint Clare's and Saint Hugh's, Liverpool; Andrew Robinson is teaching Scripture in Saint Mary's College, Oscott; Anthony Murphy is retired in Woolton; Anthony Slingo has just moved to Saint Theresa's in Norris Green; Brian Murphy is in charge of the Tribunal and living in the White House in Crosby; Brian Newns is retired, in Christopher Grange; David Potter is now well settled in Garston; Francis Marsden is in Chorley; Gerald Anders is looking after Eccleston and Mawdesley parishes; Hugh Donleavy was ordained deacon on the feast of Saint Philip Neri; John Furnival is at Saints Peter & Paul, Crosby; John McLoughlin is in Orford (Warrington); John Poland is Archbishop McMahon's personal secretary; Kevan O'Brien is in the Centre of St. Helens; Mark Drew has moved to Woolston; Michael O'Connor is in Canada; Paul Crowe is retired, living in Prescott; Paul Robbins is retired, but still doing Canon Law consultancy work for a few dioceses; Paul Rowan is deputy head at Beaulieu Convent School in Saint Helier in Jersey, helping out in the local deanery; Peter Fleetwood is on the staff at the Beda College; Peter McGrail is teaching at Liverpool Hope University; Philip Gillespie is Rector at the Beda College.

*Peter Fleetwood*

## Northampton

Having passed on the writing of this report to a most unworthy successor, Mgr Seán Healy remains in post as parish priest in Beaconsfield and Bourne End. He also continues as Provost of the Cathedral Chapter. Canon John Koenig continues to enjoy retirement. Mgr Kevin McGinnell

remains as parish priest at Holy Ghost, Luton, and has also taken up the role of coordinating on-going clergy formation. After ten happy years as Spiritual Director at Oscott College, Canon John Udris has now moved to the sunlit uplands of Marlow, where he serves as parish priest. He is also the *Amicus Clero* for the diocese. Fr David Barrett remains at Our Lady Help of Christians, Olney — a town famous for its annual pancake race, as well as being the place where the well-loved hymn, *Amazing Grace*, was written. Fr Michael Patey is Priest Chaplain at Downside School, where he is supporting the school's spiritual life, following the departure of the monks from the abbey. He also gives expert guidance to the students in another field: mathematics! Fr Andrew Coy continues as Bishop's Private Secretary, whilst also working within the Northampton Cathedral 'Hub' of parishes, and generally trying to look as though he knows what he is doing.

Finally, please pray for the repose of the soul of Fr Paul Hardy, who sadly passed away in May of this year. May he rest in peace.

*Fr Andrew Coy*

## Plymouth

At the time of writing, there is no change this year with Plymouth Old Romans. George Hay and Adrian Toffolo continue happily as "resigned from ecclesiastical office" but exercising priestly ministry. Robert Draper remains PP of Sherborne. Michael Wheaton and Albert Lawes are both in Exeter, the former dealing with illness, the latter with a heavy workload. Similarly James Barber is well occupied in Poole.

Others with Roman connections are Guy de Gaynesford who is in Lynton, Mark



Skelton in Teignmouth, and Robert Plant who is now an Orthodox priest in Exeter.

*Mgr. Adrian Toffolo*

## Portsmouth

In September 2022, Bishop Philip **Egan** (1984) marked the tenth anniversary of his episcopal ordination and installation as eighth Bishop of Portsmouth. His predecessor, Bishop Crispian **Hollis** (1965) continues to enjoy retirement in his native Somerset.

On 25<sup>th</sup> March 2023, Edward **Hauschild** was ordained priest in St John's Cathedral, Portsmouth by Bishop Egan. Edward has been appointed Assistant Priest in Jersey, where he had been serving as deacon since September 2022 on his return to the diocese from Rome.

Fr Bruce **Barnes** (1997) continues as assistant priest in St Swithun Wells parish with responsibility for Our Lady Queen of Apostles, Bishop's Waltham, and has recently been appointed Episcopal Vicar for Religious. Fr Marcus **Brisley** (1994) continues as parish priest of Holy Ghost in Crowthorne and The Immaculate Conception in Sandhurst. Fr Ansel **D'Mello** (2017), who resided for a year in the College from 2021 to 2022, is parish priest of Immaculate Conception and St Joseph, Christchurch, and Holy Redeemer, Highcliffe. Canon Gerard **Flynn** (1999) continues as Vocations' Director and parish priest at St Michael and All Angels, Leigh Park. Fr David **Forrester** (1972) is retired in Cumbria. Fr Anthony **Fyk** (2021) is Bishop's Secretary, Diocesan Master of Ceremonies and Director of Liturgical Formation. Mgr Canon Jeremy **Garratt** (1975) remains parish priest of Corpus Christi and St Peter the Apostle, Waterlooville.

Canon Alan **Griffiths** (1974) has retired. Fr Paul **Haffner** (1981) continues to teach in Rome. Fr Phillip Pennington **Harris** (2010) is priest in charge at Sacred Heart, Hook. Fr Peter **Hart** (1980) is parish priest of Our Lady, Fleet, and The Holy Trinity, Church Crookham. Mgr James **Joyce** (1971) is retired. Fr Matthew **King** (2020) is priest in charge at St Mary, Gosport. Fr James **McAuley** (2010) is dean and parish priest of St John's Cathedral, Portsmouth, Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia. Mgr John **Nelson** (1984), having completed his term as military chaplain in Cyprus, is parish priest of Corpus Christi, Boscombe, Bournemouth, which until 2022 was a Jesuit parish. Fr Benjamin **Theobald** (2013) continues as parish priest in Holy Family, Southampton, and Episcopal Vicar for Vocation. Fr Simon **Thomson** (1994) continues as Judicial Vicar and parish priest of Corpus Christi, Wokingham.

*Fr James McAuley*

## Shrewsbury

Just one Clergy Move to report this year, **Nick Kern** going from the Wythenshawe Team Ministry to St Mary's Crewe. With no retirements to date — April 2023, as I write — and one Ordination, nice to be able to report our Old Romans numbers going up in the world where so many church statistics seem to be going in the opposite direction.

Our Ordination is **David Irwin**, and it is wonderful to be able to welcome David to the Shrewsbury Presbyterate. He was ordained on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> March at St Vincent's Altrincham by Bishop Mark, under the watchful eye of the present Parish Priest, Jonathan Brandon and his predecessor, John Rafferty. Definitely Venerabile territory, Altrincham. Welcome,

David. His first appointment is at the Cathedral.

Your scribe's Parish, St Werburgh's, is blessed with a wonderful number of weddings — "Beautiful church, shame about the Priest" is the usual verdict — and good recently to meet James and Lucianna to start the ball rolling. 'Could my Uncle David assist?' asks James. Of course. Pleasure. Do I know him? 'I think so — **Fr David Charters**'. Know him? I should say I do. Would be great to have him alongside, even for him to do the bizz if he wants to. 'Only one snag', says James: 'we don't know where he'll be when the wedding comes round'. Well, yes, that is one drawback of working for the Papal Diplomatic Service, I suppose. But I'm sure there must be some compensations. Summer 2022 David was moved to Colombia to be Secretary to the Apostolic Nunciature there. Then last month — March — his boss was appointed Nuncio to Ireland, so David very much minding the shop in Bogota as I write. He'll be very welcome here for the wedding, but if he can't make it, I shall be Plan B. Story of my life.

Great to have a catch-up with our Senior Old Roman, **Jim Robinson**, at a recent Clergy Gathering. Ordained in 1960, notionally in retirement but helping out in all the parishes in the extensive Northwich area. He was on sparkling form, an Old Roman from the Jock-Nobby era of the 1950's. How much has changed since then, how much recognisably the same. Last month was our twice-yearly meeting of the North-West Group of University Chaplains, from Bangor in the west over to Chester, all the many Liverpool and Manchester Unis, up to Lancaster, Preston and Cumbria. Good to meet up with the Jesuits running the huge Manchester Chaplaincy based at

Holy Name (Manchester Uni, Manchester Met and the Royal Northern College of Music) and Fr Brendan Callaghan SJ, a good friend of the VEC and now, post-Heythrop, one of the team there.

Two events this summer to look forward: the annual magisterial visit from one of my closest friends from VEC days, John O'Leary, now Rector at Allen Hall, can you believe? (What's the Latin for "poacher turned gamekeeper"?) And then the Friends of the English College have chosen Chester for their summer trip and will be here in June for three days. They'll get a warm welcome in Chester, and down to Shrewsbury too. *Benvenuti a tutti!*

*Fr Paul Shaw*

## Westminster

*Nt. from the Editor: It is with regret that the Westminster report was accidentally omitted from the 2022 edition. We thank Fr Philip for his updated report this year.*

The recent pastoral changes are in **bold** print:

+ Vincent Nichols

Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

+ John Arnold

Bishop of Salford

+ Nicholas Hudson

Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster

Guido Amari

Deacon

Mark Anwyll

PP, *Our Lady of Muswell*, Muswell Hill

Alexander Balzanella

Assistant priest, *Holy Rood*, Watford

Keith Bartlop

PP, *St Mary of the Angels*, Bayswater

David Barnes

PP, *SS Anselm & Cecilia*, Lincoln's Inn Fields

**Andrew Bowden**

**Assistant Priest at SS Alban  
& Stephen, St Albans**

Michael Brockie

Retired — resident in Chelsea

**Dominic Byrne**

**R.I.P. 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

John Conneely

Judicial Vicar, Diocesan Tribunal

**Antony Convery**

**Retired — resident in Cricklewood**

John Cunningham

PP, *Immaculate Conception & St Joseph*,  
Waltham Cross

John Deehan

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

Assistant priest, Welwyn Garden City  
parishes

Stewart Keeley

PP, *St Sebastian & St Pancras*,  
Kingsbury Green

Roger Kirinich

Retired — living in Clifton diocese

Robert LeTellier

Further Studies, Cambridge

Hugh MacKenzie

Assistant priest, *Westminster Cathedral*  
and chaplain to Hospital of SS John  
and Elizabeth

**Paul McDermott**

**PP, *St Edward the Confessor*,  
Golders Green**

**Seamus McGeoghan**

**R.I.P. 10<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

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  
& Blessed Sacrament, Copenhagen  
Street*; and Episcopal Vicar for  
Safeguarding**

John O'Leary

Rector of Allen Hall seminary

Brian O'Mahoney

Sub-administrator, Westminster  
Cathedral

**Jim Overton**

**Retired — resident in Stoke  
Newington**

Terence Phipps

PP, *Immaculate Conception & St Joseph*,  
Hertford

Antonio Pineda

Assistant Priest, *St Joseph & English  
Martyrs*, Bishops Stortford

**Dermot Power**

**Retired — resident in Stoke  
Newington**

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 W. Area

Nicholas Schofield

PP, *Our Lady of Lourdes & St Michael*,  
Uxbridge; and 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 Evangelization

Frank Wahle

Retired — resident at Baker Street

Stephen Wang

Rector of the *Venerabile*

**Philip Whitmore**

**Parish Priest, *St James*, Spanish Place**

Ben Woodley

Assistant Priest at *Our Lady*, St John's  
Wood

*Fr Philip Miller*



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# Roman Association AGM 2023, Rector's Report

FR STEPHEN WANG

## The new men

In September 2022 we welcomed six new seminarians from Southwark, Arundel and Brighton, Down and Connor, Waterford and Lismore (coming from Maynooth into our third year for theology), Oslo and Copenhagen. They are really impressive men with many gifts, a great commitment to formation, and full of faith. One discerned very quickly that he was meant to be back home as a layman. The other five have integrated into the house well, symbolised by a very successful "New Men's Evening" at the beginning of November which informally marks the end of their status as newcomers.

Our house numbers during this year have been: 20 seminarians, 2 priests in further studies (both of them were seminarians here and are now finishing studies), and 4 resident priests on the formation team. There was, sadly, no Anglican exchange ordinand this year because they did not have enough candidates applying for the scheme.

## The new formation team

It was such a blow for the College to lose three members of staff at the end of the last formation year: Fr John Flynn was appointed as the new Rector at the Royal English College in Valladolid. Fr James McAuley is now working back in the Diocese of Portsmouth as Vicar General and Dean of the Cathedral. Fr Michael Doody was appointed as a parish priest in the Diocese of

Leeds. We are very grateful to them and to their bishops for all they have given us.

Despite the loss, I am delighted with the new team that we have had in place since September 2022, and I could not wish for a better group of men and women to be working together at the seminary. The new team consists of:

- Fr Stephen Wang (Westminster), Rector. Appointed Sept 2021.
- Fr Konrad Grech SJ (Maltese Jesuit), Spiritual Director. Appointed Sept 2020.
- Fr Christopher Warren (Hexham and Newcastle), Vice Rector and Formation Tutor.
- Fr David King (Arundel and Brighton), Director of Pastoral Formation and Formation Tutor.
- Sr Valentina Stilo (Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity), Pastoral Formation Coordinator, part-time.
- Mr Julian Paparella, Intellectual Formation Coordinator, part-time.
- Dr Rosanna Giacometto, Human Formation Tutor, part-time.

We are also supported by Professor Maurice Whitehead, our Director of Heritage Collections, whose work informs the formation programme and the life of the College.

I'm very grateful to Fr Warren and Fr King for saying yes, and to their bishops for releasing them. I am particularly pleased to welcome a religious sister onto our pastoral team, and a married layman to take the

lead in our intellectual formation. I hope that the diversity of the team (male and female, diocesan and religious, ordained and lay) will enrich the community and the formation programme.

## Safeguarding

In July 2021 we signed an agreement with the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA) for England and Wales for them to provide all of our safeguarding services (advice on internal policies and procedures, training/formation for seminarians, receiving reports about safeguarding concerns and instructing us about how to respond, etc.). This agreement was renewed in July 2022.

The CSSA, in collaboration with the other four English seminaries, has been revising its Safeguarding Learning Programme for Seminaries. The programme now consists of three core modules that will be delivered to all seminarians over a six-year period, together with an Induction Module for all new men who arrive in the house in Sept, whatever their background.

In accordance with the renewed contract between the VEC and CSSA, CSSA will deliver and accredit all the modules that are needed over the period of a seminarian's time of formation, so that when each seminarian leaves the VEC they will have gone through the nationally agreed Safeguarding Learning Programme. This year the programme has been delivered through in-person training by the CSSA.

## The formation programme

We had a full morning to review the year together during the Villeggiatura at the end of June 2022, and some of the recommendations from this review were incorporated into our new programme this

autumn. These recommendations included: a new timetable (with morning Mass so there is more space in the lunchtime period); more opportunities for public speaking and preaching; a greater and more systematic variety of weekly pastoral placements; better communication and transparency in the house (with more regular house meetings and better reporting from "4-Way" meetings between Rector, Vice-Rector, Senior Student and Deputy Senior Student). This kind of review will become a regular part of the timetable.

Fr Enda Murphy finished as our external confessor in December, and we are very grateful to Fr Paul Moss for agreeing to take over this role. He hears confessions once a week on Wednesdays, and Fr Konrad on another day, so there is plenty of opportunity for the sacrament. We are very grateful to Fr Enda for his support for the College over many years. We had a much-appreciated penance service before Christmas, and a newly instituted day of recollection in February to help us spiritually prepare for the upcoming ministries. This Lent we followed our traditional practices of *compline* and *magnum silentium* on Thursday evenings, a soup lunch for charity on Wednesdays, and the Stations on Fridays.

Dr Rosanna Giacometto, who has been our human formation tutor for a number of years, has now been brought into the wider formation team. Her work is still confidential (within the agreed boundaries), but she now comes to team meetings every two months, to contribute to wider discussions about formation, and her name is on our public-facing team lists, which helps others to value the work she does here.

We are very pleased to have Julian Paparella supporting us for 8 hours per week in place of Fr James McAuley. Julian is our Intellectual Formation Coordinator and not

simply our “Academic Tutor” — because, as the *Ratio* underlines, intellectual formation is much wider than just our academic studies. Julian does help coordinate the academic programme and liaise with the universities, but he also talks to the men about their wider intellectual formation and how their studies relate to their personal faith and to their future ministry. He oversees the library and organises the Italian language programme.

There have been some important improvements at the Angelicum with some excellent new teachers and a better timetable. I am very impressed by the work that the new Rector has been doing there. It’s also helped that the student numbers have picked up after Covid so there is a good buzz and a good sense of community, including a new tranche of lay students in the new Thomistic Institute scheme from the States which adds to the mix and helps our men have a richer social and intellectual experience. The new rector at the Gregorian also seems to be taking his role very seriously and has initiated a strategic review of the whole university programme. Things are looking very positive for our intellectual formation and for relationships with the two universities.

This year we have a completely new pastoral team in Fr David and Sr Valentina. Fr David takes the lead on in-house formation (pastoral courses, pastoral classes) and summer placements. Sr Valentina takes the lead on the weekly pastoral placements in Rome. I’m delighted that their work is paying off in the area of new pastoral placements in Rome. Over the last year we have built relationships and started placements with L’Arche, the University of Dallas Rome Campus, a local bible study group for young adults, a local soup kitchen for the homeless, Rebibbia prison, and Santa Silvia Parish on the outskirts of Rome. The new men have been

visiting pastoral projects every two weeks as an introduction to pastoral reality in Rome, including Regina Coeli prison in Trastevere and a centre for disabled children run by the MCs. It was good to have Bishop Libanori SJ speak to the house about his experience of being bishop for the central area of Rome and the pastoral challenges people face.

A big request from the seminary body has been more hands-on experience of preaching and public speaking. We have now built into the programme: Year 5 preaching each Monday during the rosary; Year 4 giving a reflection for the Stations of the Cross; and each year group giving practice homilies or reflections in each of their pastoral classes more regularly than before. This seems to be much appreciated.

### Special events

Last summer (2022) Rev Edward Hauschild and Rev Trym Hellevig were ordained deacons at the end of the Villeggiatura. Priestly ordinations over the summer included Fr Elliott Hanson in Cardiff, Fr Marc Pitson in Leeds, Fr Toby Duckworth in Birmingham, Fr John O’Lavery in Down & Connor and Fr Daniel Ebert in Copenhagen. Through the year, there have been two diaconal ordinations, Rev Mark O’Farrell in Waterford and Lismore, and Rev Torbjorn Holt in Oslo, and Rev Hauschild and Rev Hellevig had their priestly ordinations this spring. Many seminarians and team members were able to join the celebrations.

[Since this report was presented, we have had the diaconal ordination of Rev Hugh Donleavy back home in the Archdiocese of Liverpool, the July diaconal ordinations at Palazzola of Revv James Finnegan (Liverpool), Joseph O’Brien (Hexham & Newcastle), William Meehan (Hamilton), Martin Fyles (Liverpool)

and Dave Bench (Birmingham), and the priestly ordinations in their home dioceses of Fr O'Farrell and Fr Holt.]

The most important development in the house this year is that we have a new full-sized pool table! And for the first time in 650 years we now have a set of breakfast tea pots that pour without spilling their contents over the table.

As part of our general desire to open the College up to the world around us more and more, we now use the front door of the church that opens onto the street for Mass, so people can see and visit the church more easily and we can connect with life around us. We are also flying the flags each day instead of just on special occasions!

In September we celebrated a solemn Requiem Mass for Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, which provided a focus for mourning for English-speakers in Rome the days following Her Majesty's death. In the autumn we met with about 3,000 other seminarians and student priests for an audience with Pope Francis, which was a great privilege. We were very proud to be one of three seminaries asked to share a short video documentary about our life which was shown to the assembly before Pope Francis arrived. Many people were very touched to learn about the witness of the College martyrs. We said farewell to Fr Tony Curren who returned to Rome this October after nine years working in the Vatican. He has been a great friend to the College over these years.

We had our traditional Advent Meditation and Review, with the Schola in full force after the disappointment of Omicron ruining everything last year; Christmas lunch with Santa appearing over drinks; my Silver Jubilee of priesthood, celebrated here in January with lots of guests and a fantastic festal lunch; the book

launch of Fr Lawrence Cross's *An Illusion of Division*; and the Knighthood conferred on Dr Johan Ickx, our part-time archival assistant, by King Philippe of Belgium for his work for the Vatican.

The death of Pope Emeritus Benedict was a significant moment for the church, and especially in Rome. Many of us were able to return early at the end of the Christmas holidays to be at his Requiem Mass at St Peter's. We celebrated a special Requiem Mass in the College the following week. It was good, as well, to pray with thanksgiving for Pope Francis more recently, as we celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his election. Two of our seminarians were interviewed for the Sunday Programme on Radio 4 for this anniversary, and they gave a great witness to the College and to their own faith.

We are delighted that the two new portraits of St Ralph Sherwin and St David Lewis are now being painted in Spain by our artist Raul Berzosa. They will hang in the refectory to represent all of our martyrs, as we do not quite have the space or the funding to commission 44 original portraits.

Special guests and visiting groups have included: the theatre group Quartieri Dell'Arte (who performed a modernised version of John Milton's "Comus" to a group of specially invited critics, journalists, directors, actors and artists), three former rectors (Bishop Nicholas Hudson, Mgr Philip Whitmore and Mgr Adrian Toffolo), the Mission Team from the Archdiocese of Melbourne, the Mission Fraternity of diocesan priests from the UK including many alumni, the Oxford University Catholic Chaplaincy, journalists from the Church Up Close project run by Santa Croce University, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Holy See, the Catholic Association of Preachers, St Mary's School in Fulda (Germany) who were on pilgrimage to Rome



in the footsteps of Mary Ward, seminarians from St John Vianney and Mount St Mary's seminaries in the States, the Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma, Mgr Michael Nazir-Ali, former Anglican Bishop of Rochester. And the biggest stir was caused when the actor Ralph Fiennes came to lunch: he had been filming here in Rome and was very keen to come to the College to find out about our history and our seminary programme. Let's just say that some of our seminarians and team members with an almost obsessive interest in the Harry Potter films were caught taking surreptitious selfies in the refectory...

### The new formation programme

I'm happy to present the new formation programme that has been in development since the *Ratio Fundamentalis* was published in 2016. This programme will become the norm for the VEC and is gradually being phased in.

The pattern of priestly formation at the VEC is based on over 400 years of tradition and experience, on the teaching and wisdom of the Church, on the vision of the Second Vatican Council, and especially on St John Paul II's document *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. In 2016 the Congregation/Dicastery for Clergy issued the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* and in 2021 they wrote to the CBCEW to underline the practical recommendations of the *Ratio*:

- i) **a mandatory propaedeutic year** before the Stage of Discipleship begins;
- ii) **at least six years of formation between the end of the propaedeutic year and diaconal ordination** (the Stage of Discipleship/Philosophy to last 'a minimum of two years' and Configuration/Theology 'a minimum of four years');
- iii) **admission to Candidacy at the end of**

**the Stage of Discipleship/Philosophy** or in the first year of the Stage of Configuration/Theology;

- iv) **the new deacon to exercise his ministry in a full-time vocational synthesis in his home diocese**, instead of remaining in the seminary to pursue further studies

We fully support these recommendations. The many benefits of coming to the VEC remain the same: the history of the College and the tradition of our martyrs, the spirit of community and prayer, the beauty of the liturgy, the tradition of hospitality, the city of Rome itself, the experience of the universal Church, the pontifical universities, and much else besides. But with the new programme we can better integrate the four dimensions of formation, put a new focus on the pastoral and missionary aspects of formation, and help our seminarians to be more rooted in the cultures and the local Churches where they will serve.

### Key elements of the new programme at the vec

#### 1. Candidacy will take place before Lectorate & Acolytate

Candidacy marks the moment when someone is ready to move from the Stage of Discipleship to the Stage of Configuration, and to start their theological studies. It is an important step, but it is not a definitive step that needs holding back until the last minute. Candidacy now comes neither right at the end nor right at the beginning of seminary formation, but after 3 years of formation (including the propaedeutic year).

#### 2. An extra year of Pastoral Theology is inserted in Year 4

This will include **three months of**

**theology, pastoral skills, formation and an 8-day directed retreat**, based at the VEC, from September to November.

Then, from December to May, there will be a **six-month full-time pastoral/theological placement** in a parish in the home diocese, with supervision, ongoing pastoral-theological formation, assignments, peer group work (remote), and reflective practice.

Then the seminarian will return to the VEC for **two weeks of reflection and review in the second half of June**, finishing with ten days with the whole community at our villa (Palazzola) in July.

This pastoral theology year will be an invaluable addition to our formation programme. In the first three-month period it will allow us to do some concentrated work in pastoral formation and theology that is not possible in the normal run of the year. It will then allow a solid six-month parish placement where the seminarian can integrate the different aspects of his formation, put his learning into practice, test his vocation, get to know his home diocese, learn from the clergy and the People of God, re-connect with the culture of his home country, and better understand the pastoral and missionary challenges of today. When he comes back into Year 5 his continuing theological studies will be enriched by the pastoral experience.

### ***3. Diaconal ordination at the end of the Stage of Configuration, after 6 years at the VEC***

This shift from Year 5 to Year 6 for diaconal ordination is an opportunity to prepare better for diaconate and for the life-long commitments that come with it. Especially with the addition of the pastoral year, it means that deacons-to-be (and their bishops) will have much more clarity

about their vocation, and a greater freedom and confidence to make the promises of ordination — including the promises of life-long obedience and consecrated celibacy. It is also worth noting that diaconate ordination was traditionally at the end of Year 6 at the VEC and only moved ‘forward’ to the end of Year 5 in recent years, so we are returning to a pattern that was normal at the VEC for many decades.

### ***4. Newly-ordained deacons will return to full-time pastoral ministry in their dioceses***

With the new system, deacons will have a pastoral diaconate, immersing themselves in the pastoral reality of their diocese, getting used to the broad ministry of the diaconate. At the same time, they will be supported by the diocese and by the seminary to discern and prepare for priesthood.

The loss of immediate licentiate studies will be felt keenly by some bishops and seminarians, who may have seen the licentiate as part of the core programme of priestly formation at the VEC. The new programme, however, will give a much richer and holistic formation for pastoral priesthood, whilst preserving the many benefits of coming to the VEC. And the licentiate will continue to be an important part of the life of the VEC when a bishop chooses to send someone here after they have had a solid experience of diaconate and priesthood at home.

### **Thank you**

A very big thank you to the Roman Association and all its members for your continued support to the College in so many ways. We are very grateful indeed for your friendship, support and prayers.

# Obituaries

## **Rt. Rev. Hugh Christopher Budd**

*1937–2023, Bishop Emeritus of Plymouth*

My contact with Chris Budd goes back to 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1962, my first day at the VEC, and I sat next to him, newly ordained and our senior student, at “Circles” that night. He told me he came from Essex, had been at both Cotton College and Grove Park prior to coming to Rome in 1956. In fact, because Chris remained in Rome to pursue his doctorate, and then was appointed our Theology Tutor, he was to be in the College throughout my seven years. He was to be a friend and an inspiration.

These were the years of the Vatican Council, and we were kept up to date with daily readings in the refectory of its deliberations, and the visit and talks from various bishops and theologians. For Chris, this was manna from Heaven! The Council shaped his thinking about Theology in general and Ecclesiology in particular, about Liturgy and its celebration as an expression of the People of God on its pilgrim way towards the Kingdom. When Fr Christopher presided at College Masses, or led seminars, he radiated a vision and a hope that the Council Fathers sought to inspire in us all.

After his Roman years, a variety of appointments awaited the young Fr Budd. First, he went to teach theology at Newman College, a teacher training college in Birmingham. Next, he became national chaplain and Head of Training to the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council in London. Then to St John’s Seminary, Womersley as Rector. Finally, in 1987, for the first time since his ordination, he returned to work in his home diocese as Dean of Brentwood Cathedral. This lasted but three months, when we heard of his appointment as Bishop of Plymouth — a Diocese not unknown to him as he regularly visited a sister who lived and worked in Torbay.

Bishop Christopher received episcopal ordination at the hands of his predecessor, Bishop Cyril Restieaux on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1986 and would remain Bishop of Plymouth for nearly 27 years. In those years he established good and friendly relations with his clergy and with the laity of the Diocese. He had the ability to defuse difficult situations with humour, and he was able to relate to the wide range of characters that make up a diocesan presbyterate.

Bishop Christopher brought a fresh start to the diocese with his vision of a church in which everyone is “a first-born child”. It was not long before he was organizing a Diocesan Pastoral Assembly which brought clergy and laity together for some residential days at Exeter University, a time of real joy and hope. There was also to be a similar gathering of clergy at Lynton to discuss the joys and struggles of priestly life, and the setting up of various support groups. Bishop Christopher also set about a re-ordering of the Cathedral to express that Liturgy involves the “full, conscious and active participation” of the whole People of God. His plan was daring, especially considering

he was trying to create an ambient for Vatican II Liturgy in a Victorian Gothic church designed for a different liturgical experience. Inevitably he faced opposition, but this brought out a determined aspect of Bishop Christopher's character which was often hid under his more jovial exterior.

Vatican II had called the Church to reach out to those beyond the visible church, whether in ecumenical relations, or social concern. This was very much part of Bishop Christopher's vision. He developed genuine ecumenical relationships — and in a Diocese that covered three Anglican dioceses and various other districts — these were not few nor superficial. At a national level, he served as a member of the Department for Social Justice of the Bishops' Conference, Director of CASC (Catholic Agency for Social Concern) for ten years, and Chairman of the Joint Committee on Bio-Ethical Issues.

Back in the Diocese, Bishop Christopher oversaw the development of the department of Formation to support schools and parishes in their work of evangelisation and catechesis; a Safeguarding Office to face the challenge of a growing awareness of the reality and problem of abuse, especially of minors; a department for finance and administration to assist the diocese and parishes to comply with all legal requirements; a body of Trustees with various professional competencies required in the modern age. His presence was one of encouragement, supporting individuals to make their own contribution to the Common Good. This too was felt by ex-Anglican priests who from the mid-90's sought ordination as Catholic priests, and several of whom have made a significant contribution to the life of the Diocese.

In 2013 Bishop Christopher handed over the Diocese to his successor. True to his character, he spent the next nine years assisting in pastoral life, dividing his time between the Isles of Scilly and Lyme Regis in Dorset. He continued to nourish his intellectual appetite with much reading, but never lost contact with family and friends. He was much in demand and valued as a supply priest in many parishes.

His final years were marked by a long illness, borne with a humble acceptance and without ever losing his humour. In the end his death came suddenly on April 1<sup>st</sup> 2023 while he was still able to live alone. It was a fitting way to die for a man who was very content to live simply and independently. He will always be valued by many people touched by his friendship and his ministry.

*Mgr. Adrian Toffolo*

## **Fr Gerald 'Gerry' Creasey**

*This obituary has been adapted from a version published online by the Diocese of Leeds.*

Fr Gerry Creasey was born in Leeds on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1934. In 1955 he entered the Venerable English College in Rome to begin his studies for the Priesthood. He studied Philosophy and Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University, and he was ordained in Rome at the Church of the Sacred Heart in the Piazza Navona on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1961. After ordination, Fr Gerry obtained a teaching qualification as a student of Christ's College. Cambridge. In 1962 he joined the staff of St Thomas Aquinas

Grammar School for boys, Leeds. He remained there until 1979, by which time it had merged with the neighbouring St John Bosco School to form the present-day Cardinal Heenan High School.

Fr Gerry held numerous pastoral offices. During his years at ‘Aquinas’, Fr Gerry served as assistant-priest at St Paul’s, Alwoodley (1963–68), St Mary’s, Horsforth (1968) and St Edward’s, Clifford (1969–79). In 1979 Bishop Wheeler appointed Fr Gerry as Parish Priest of St Paul’s, Cleckheaton. In 1988 he moved to St Francis of Assisi, Morley and two years later he became Parish Priest of St Joseph the Worker at Sherburn-in-Elmet. In 1992 he went to live at St Patrick’s, Leeds, assisting in the parish while serving as Chaplain to St James’s University Hospital. In 2000 he moved to St Michael’s, Knottingley as Parish Priest and in 2002 he became the Chaplain to the Little Sisters of the Poor and the residents of Mount St Joseph’s Home in Headingley. Fr Gerry retired in 2009, upon reaching the age of seventy-five. Since 2015 he had lived at Hinsley Court, adjacent to the Diocesan Pastoral Centre at Hinsley Hall in Headingley. His ministry in retirement remained active. He gave generously of his time in covering for parish clergy who were ill or away on holiday, and he maintained his long association with the Carmelite Sisters at Wood Hall.

Fr Gerry’s passing marks a significant moment for the history of the Venerable English College, especially regarding the wealth he has left, in terms of his personal writing and what he has entrusted to the archives. In 2001 he published ‘Ruby Thoughts — Reflections of a Year’, in which he brought together a series of articles written for the occasion by the men of the VEC (himself included) who had been ordained in 1961.

Almost twenty years later in 2020, and in the midst of the Covid ‘lockdown’, he wrote a very personal account of the priestly life in ‘From Venerable to Vulnerable’. In addition, since 2016 the archives of the VEC have been in possession of the Creasey Papers, which comprise some 350 letters that Fr Gerry wrote on a weekly basis to his parents during his six years at the College (when, as was the custom at the time, he only returned home once while a seminarian, in the summer of 1958). They represent the largest single archival deposit by an alumnus of the College and in conveying not just personal news but accounts of events at the College and in the Eternal City they represent a precious record of a significant period in the history of the College and the Church.

Fr Gerry’s health deteriorated in the months after his eighty-eighth birthday in May 2022 and after a period in hospital he moved into Mount St Joseph’s Home to be cared for by the Little Sisters of the Poor. It was here that he died peacefully on the afternoon of Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2023. For many his passing will feel like the end of an era. In 2020 he wrote that “for the Christian death is central to our faith. This is not simply accepting that we all must die, it is much more than an acceptance of the inevitable; it is in a wonderful way a gateway to eternal joy”. May eternal joy be his rich reward for a lifetime of faith and nearly seven decades of commitment and service to the Bishops and people of the Diocese of Leeds.

May he rest in peace.

## Canon J. A. 'Tony' Harding

*A version of this obituary featured in The Downside Review. It has been adapted here by Gill Hogarth; Assistant Archivist Emerita, Clifton Diocese.*

John Anthony 'Tony' Harding died on January 29<sup>th</sup> 2023 at St Joseph's Home, Bristol. Born in Bristol on May 15<sup>th</sup> 1931, he was educated at Clifton Pro-Cathedral Parish School and St Brendan's, the Boys Catholic Grammar School, before studying for the priesthood at the Venerable English College, Rome. On Advent Sunday 1955 he was ordained priest in Rome by Archbishop (later Cardinal) Luigi Traglia in the Basilica of the Twelve Apostles (*Dodici Apostoli*), just off the Piazza Venezia. During his ministry in Clifton Diocese he served as Curate at St Nicholas of Tolentine, Bristol; St Osmund's, Salisbury; Holy Rood, Swindon; St John the Evangelist, Bath. In more recent times, he served as Parish Priest of both St George's, Warminster, and St Bernadette's, Whitchurch.

His writings include *1300 Years: A History of the Catholic Church in Warminster* (1980), *The Re-Birth of the Roman Catholic Community in Frome (1850–1927)* for an MLitt. at Bristol University in 1985, and his thesis for a D. Phil. at London University in 1991, *Dr William Clifford 3<sup>rd</sup> Bishop of Clifton (1857–1893): His influence at the 1<sup>st</sup> Vatican Council and on the English Catholic Church*. In the same year he contributed "Fathers in Faith, The Western District 1688–1988" to Dom Aidan Bellenger (ed) *Tercentenary Essays*, Downside Abbey (1991). He also contributed to the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

The first of his two most memorable projects was *The Diocese of Clifton 1850–2000. A celebratory history of events and personalities*, Clifton Catholic Diocesan Trustees (1999) which he oversaw, contributed to, and edited. The second was the fuller version of his 1991 D. Phil. thesis as the study *Clifford of Clifton 1823–1893 England's Youngest Catholic Bishop*, Clifton Catholic Diocesan Trustees (2011).

He was appointed Diocesan Archivist in February 1986 by Bishop Mervyn Alexander, eighth Bishop of Clifton, and was responsible for the transfer of the Archives from the cellars of St Ambrose, the Bishop of Clifton's House near Clifton Suspension Bridge, to Alexander House, the new Diocesan Offices opened in 2002. He was made an Honorary Canon in 2006 by Bishop Declan Lang, the ninth Bishop. In the photograph below he stands to the left of Bishop Joseph Rudderham, the seventh Bishop, immediately after a Papal Audience at Castel Gandolfo when the newly-consecrated Bishop Rudderham had been received by Pope Pius XII.



*Fr David King (Pastoral Director) humbly accepts second place, as victory is proclaimed for one of our Irish brethren*

The year was 1949 and the later Canon Harding was a “homesick and somewhat overawed”, seminarian, just three weeks into his seven years at the English College.

## Michael Hodgetts KSG

Michael Hodgetts, who died on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022, at the age of 86, was a graduate of Worcester College, Oxford which he entered in 1955. In that same year, he began to volunteer as a tour guide at Harvington Hall, Worcestershire, one of the most remarkable Recusant Catholic houses in England. It has the largest surviving set of Elizabethan priest hides anywhere in the country, and these caught Michael’s imagination and shaped his future life.

Following Oxford, Michael entered the Venerable English College, but he found the intellectual climate of the Gregorian University stifling. Michael left Rome in 1961 with a Licence in Philosophy, and embarked on a teaching career in schools in the Midlands. He married Barbara, also a teacher, in 1969, and they had four children.

Michael’s interest in Harvington, and in the unique Recusant phenomenon of the priest hides became his life’s passion. His research into hides enabled him to identify the genuine ones, and to be able to gently tell owners of country houses that their ‘hide’ was probably simply a cupboard. Michael became uniquely associated with this specialist area of research, but he was not only a renowned scholar. As an undergraduate in Oxford, he became involved in the work of the Catholic Record Society, and attended its first conferences in Oxford, paying his way by running the bar for the conference members.

From 1968 onwards, for some forty years, he was involved in editorial work for the Society, working on both the *Records* series and *Recusant History* (now British Catholic History), and gained a reputation as a meticulous and gifted editor. He also published numerous articles on the Elizabethan priest hides, and the houses in which they were built, becoming the acknowledged expert on them. His book on the subject, *Secret Hiding Places*, was published in 1989.

Michael was also a gifted musician, and Oxford had equipped him as a first-rate Latin scholar. He oversaw, as chairman, the merger of the Church Music Association and the Society of St Gregory, of which he was chairman for many years. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, he worked with ICEL on the translation work needed to develop the post-Conciliar vernacular liturgy.

In 1989, Michael’s health forced him to take early retirement from teaching, and to devote much of his time to his beloved Harvington Hall, encouraged by the interest shown by Archbishop Maurice Couve de Murville. Michael oversaw many elements of the restoration of the Hall, improving its presentation for visitors, in the thirty-five years he spent on its management committee. He also continued to be a stalwart of the Catholic Record Society, and a committed member of the staff of the Maryvale Institute.

Eventually, the weakness of Michael’s heart, which had prompted his early retirement, became more problematic. His final few years were dogged with frequent bouts of poor health, but not before Michael and Barbara celebrated their forty-ninth wedding anniversary in 2019, with a holiday at Palazzola. May he rest in peace.

*Dr Judith Champ*

# Report of the Friends of the *Venerabile*

MICHAEL LANG

The lifting of COVID restrictions here in the UK enabled us to proceed with our 2022 Annual Meeting to take place in the Amigo Hall, adjacent to St. George's Cathedral, Southwark. This was the first time since 2019 that we had been able to meet 'in person' so to speak. The venue and arrangements were excellent and we enjoyed a successful meeting, ending with Mass in the Cathedral Lady Chapel, celebrated by our Chaplain Fr. Francis Murphy, assisted by the Rector Fr Stephen Wang.

During the AGM thanks were expressed to Mr. Adrian Rogers who was standing down as Treasurer after 7 years in the post. Mr. Michael L'Estrange was confirmed as our new Treasurer, and Dr. Sandra Brinkley and Mrs. Michele Jones were welcomed as new committee members.

The committee is again now at full strength as required by our Constitution and continues to meet quarterly, by Zoom thus saving valuable time and expense.

As many of you will know Amazon have closed their Smile.Amazon scheme and suggested that charities might like to join the Give as you Live scheme which would seem to be a more viable scheme whereby companies give a discount on your shopping. In the short time since we registered with Give as you Live the FOV has received over £20.00 as a result of Teresa's on-line grocery shopping.

The changes in Seminary routine means that the start of the Senior Students role will coincide with the Friends Annual Meeting and so we look forward to meeting the 2023/2324 SS when we will gather in

Cardiff (I think this is the first time we will have met in Wales).

As will have been reported elsewhere in this journal we were saddened to hear of the death of Bishop, Emeritus, Christopher Budd the former Bishop of Plymouth, a past member of staff at the VEC and a great friend of the Friends. I was able to represent the Friends at his Requiem Mass which was held in Exeter and also his internment in "priest's row" at the Buckfast Abbey Cemetery surrounded by his many colleagues here in the Diocese of Plymouth.

During the last ten years I had got to talk to Bishop Christopher on many occasions and he was always grateful for the support which we give to the College. The homily preached by Mgr. John Allen paid tribute to his many attributes and the number of comments made by other Friends backs this up.

A small group (17 members) of our members enjoyed a short visit to Chester in June, and plans are in place for this year's Annual Meeting/AGM to be held in Cardiff on Saturday September 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Earlier this year we heard of the death of our past Chairman's sister, Molly. May she rest in peace along with all other deceased members.

Jo, I am sure that all of our thoughts and prayers are with you in your loss.



**MICHAEL LANG**  
is Chairman of  
the Friends of the  
*Venerabile*.



# Friends of the Venerabile

(The Venerabile English College, Rome)



## Join us to help the College Students by Prayer, Support and Funding

### Benefits of membership

You will:

- Receive a copy of *The Venerabile*, the annual College journal.
- Receive the *Venerabile View Newsletter* with news and items of interest about the College and Palazzola.
- Be able to take part in our highly enjoyable outings, pilgrimages and annual gatherings held in different locations round the UK.
- 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 the resurfacing of the tennis courts at Palazzola and for the installation of a loop system in the church and the conference room.

### For further information

Please visit our website: [www.friendsoftheenglishcollegerome.org.uk](http://www.friendsoftheenglishcollegerome.org.uk)

### Contacts

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# 2022–23 House List

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle

ODUOR Fr Richard (Torit)

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle (Year III)

O'LAVERTY Fr John (Down and Connor)

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle (Year II)

DUCKWORTH Fr Toby (Birmingham)

## 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle Theology (Year III)

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

## 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle Theology (Year II)

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

## 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle Theology (Year I)

HAWKES Ryan (Portsmouth)  
HENRY Jonathan (Birmingham)  
MCGOVERN Stuart (Waterford and Lismore)  
RYAN Jack (Portsmouth)  
SINCLAIR Ben (Hexham and Newcastle)

## 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle Philosophy (Year II)

HAREIDE Ludvig (Oslo)  
THEOBALD Luke (Birmingham)

## 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle Philosophy (Year I)

LORENZ PANLICAN Nico (Oslo)  
MACKO Lukas (Copenhagen)  
MERCER Barnabas (Arundel and Brighton)  
WILSON Brian (Down and Connor)

## Extended Pastoral Experience

SHARROCK Theodore (Salford)

## Formation Team

WANG Fr Stephen (Westminster), Rector  
WARREN Fr Christopher (Hexham and Newcastle), Vice Rector  
KING Fr David (Arundel and Brighton),  
Director of Pastoral Formation  
GRECH Fr Konrad SJ, Spiritual Director  
STILO Sr Valentina FMVD, Pastoral  
Formation Coordinator  
PAPARELLA Julian, Intellectual  
Formation Coordinator  
GIACOMETTO Dr Rosanna, Human  
Formation Tutor



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