

# THE VENERABILE 2024





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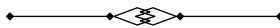
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# The Venerabile **2024**

VOL. XXXVIII



NO. 2

GANGEMI EDITORE<sup>®</sup>  
INTERNATIONAL

## **The Venerabile 2024**

**Editor:** Jonathan Henry (Birmingham)

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

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

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**Front cover:** The Sea of Galilee

**Back cover:** Villa Palazzola

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Printed in Italy — ISBN 978-88-492-5232-3

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# Editorial

JONATHAN HENRY

What does priestly formation really look like? It would be convenient if there were a simple answer, but the truth is that seminary life is far from static. Our communities adapt to the Church's evolving vision of ministry, the individual circumstances of the seminarians, and to the *joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties* of this fast-paced world.

At the Venerable English College, this question has become a focus this year as we prepare to implement aspects of the Dicastery for Clergy's latest instructions for seminaries. The 2016 Ratio Fundamentalis, entitled *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, brings a renewed emphasis upon the pastoral and human dimensions of formation. It has also given rise to a great deal of discussion and brought a number of changes to the *Venerabile* experience. While the Pastoral Theology Year, running for the first time in the academic year 2024–2025, is the most noticeable addition to the structured provision at the College, there is much more going on behind the scenes to adapt the treasures of the VEC for the needs of this age.

These reflections on formation, however, are not solely because of the Ratio. Our year began at the root of Christian formation, like the first disciples, listening to Jesus' teachings where they had originally been proclaimed on our long-delayed pilgrimage to the Holy Land. We returned to see Rome swarming with Catholics from all over the world gathered to participate in the Synod, sharing their diverse experiences of Christian life and seeking clarity on the future of ministry and formation for clergy and laity alike. And while Synodality has been a focus for the Church, the world around us has been telling a different story. Just a week after returning from our pilgrimage, the conflict in the Holy Land re-emerged. The war in Ukraine has persisted. Much of the West is seeing increased political polarisation and violence. All this, too, shapes how we go about our mission of preparing people for ministry.

This year's edition of *The Venerabile* tries to capture just some of the conversation amid these developments. It is a special privilege to share the insights of Professor Sheila the Baroness Hollins into the value of human formation in the lives of priests and seminarians, drawing on her wealth of experience as a psychiatrist and as a founding member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. I

am also indebted to Fr Bernard Poggi, the Rector of the Seminary of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem in Beit Jala, who kindly agreed to be interviewed by Ryan Hawkes about the circumstances in the Holy Land at this very difficult time. A great deal of work has gone into putting *The Venerabile* together, and so to all contributors and all those who have helped in any way, my heartfelt thanks.

*Our Lady, Queen of Peace, pray for us!*  
*Saint Ralph Sherwin and his companions, pray for us!*



**JONATHAN HENRY** is a fifth-year seminarian for the Archdiocese of Birmingham, currently studying Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University.

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# *Bella Premunt Hostilia: Seminary Formation in the Holy Land*

FR BERNARD POGGI

in conversation with RYAN HAWKES

Friday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2024

On behalf of the VEC, I just want to say that we really can't imagine how difficult these past few months must have been for you, for the seminary, for the Patriarchate, and for everybody in the area. If it isn't too broad a question, is everybody at the Latin seminary safe and well?

Thank you for this opportunity. It means a lot to me to be able to speak with you today, and I want everyone to know that they're very welcome to come and visit us in the seminary when things are better.

Everyone is OK, thank God. We've faced several difficulties. The first was after 7<sup>th</sup> October, when there was a complete closure of Bethlehem: no-one was able to go in or out. It basically became a large prison after the war in Gaza broke out. It caused a lot of tribulation for the families of the seminarians, because they were worried that they would not be able to come and visit them at the next break, or unsure if we are truly safe at the seminary.

We also had a number of rockets flying overhead. This year we had our olive harvest under rockets and F-16s. It was very unnerving because working in olives is an opportunity for us to be joyful: for Palestinians, the harvest is a time of great joy, but this year it was not. We would think about the destruction that would happen every time we saw a fighter jet going over our heads. Each day almost a thousand people were being killed, and the Christian community in Gaza came close to destruction. We have lost almost forty people since the beginning of the war. Of those who survived, about a third of them left Gaza with visas or passports for other countries, but about two thirds are still there. They've been living in our church for the last eight months. They eat, sleep, drink, study, have all their recreation there. The church is actively working to provide them with all the support they can.

So we're safe! I think we're a lot better off in Beit Jala than our counterparts in Gaza, and we pray for them every day.

**Has there been any change to the daily life of the seminary since the conflict started?**

We haven't changed, thankfully. Because our studies are in the same place as where we live, it has been possible for us to have a normal life, but there have been some exceptions. For example, when we've had bomb sirens going off at night, we've all had to go down to the shelter. The next day everybody would be tired, but we made it work. It really has

been a challenge for us to keep life going, but it has to be this way, because the worst thing would be for us to allow the war to break down who we are and what we're doing.

**Beit Jala is in Palestinian territory, with the Patriarchate covering Palestinian territories, Jordan, Cyprus... How would you describe the demographics of the seminary? Do any practical difficulties arise?**

We have seminarians from all parts of the diocese except for Cyprus. The majority are from Jordan, but we have Palestinian seminarians, Arabs and Israelis. Each group has their own difficulties regarding travel restrictions or obtaining visas. For example, last year we had twenty-one young men who wanted to enter the seminary, but we were unable to obtain visas for many of them, so we ended up having only five enter.

For Jordanians, once a visa is obtained, it's easy to maintain it, but if a visa is lost for an extended period, it's very difficult to get it again. For the Palestinian seminarians, it's more complicated. Even though they're in the West Bank, to get to Jerusalem, for example, they need special permission, and all those permissions were revoked at the beginning of the war, so we couldn't take those seminarians out of the West Bank. On the Feast of Our Lady of Palestine at the end of October, for the first time in the history of the seminary, we were unable to participate in the celebrations as we were completely blocked out of Jerusalem. The Palestinian seminarians also have specific checkpoints that they have to go through, which means that when we go through ordinary checkpoints by car, they're not allowed to come with us. We have to drop them off at their checkpoint for them to walk across while we go through another checkpoint and meet them on the other side to pick them up. It sometimes takes as long as an hour.

There are more difficulties when we want to travel together. This year I wanted to take a group of seminarians to serve for the ordination of Bishop Bruno Varriano, the new Auxiliary Patriarchal Vicar in Cyprus. I couldn't get permission for the Palestinians to travel from Ben Gurion Airport, so I had to send them to Jordan to get a flight from there. Imagine how difficult the logistics are when you have ten people trying to attend an ordination and three or four of them can't travel from the same airport! Those are the major difficulties that we face. But once they're in the seminary, we live a life of harmony together. There are no internal problems: they have a very good, brotherly rapport, and we are there to serve them.

**What aspect of priestly formation is the most important focus for the Latin Seminary?**

You will know that the Ratio Fundamentalis gives us four dimensions we have to focus on in the life of seminarians: human, intellectual, pastoral and spiritual formation. The Church gives us direction on what to do and how to help the seminarians get from one stage to another.

But in our context, there are three important focusses: the first is hopeful resilience. Hopeful resilience means that, in the midst of war, we have to keep things going. Hopeful resilience means that, when people lose their loved ones, as so many have in Gaza, you have to help to console them, you have to be close to them. 73% of the Christian community in

Bethlehem is now unemployed, either because they are no longer given permits to work in Jerusalem, or because there are no pilgrims coming to the Holy Land. The Church does a lot to support the Christian community, primarily because we want to keep their hope alive.

The second focus is empathy, feeling with others. The Holy Father has spoken about this a lot in the life of priests, because sometimes we can live on a different level, where we are the best looked after in the community! And if that is a privilege that we receive without using it to help to serve others, then it is no longer something that helps our ministry. Having empathy for those who are in need means that you use privilege for the service of others. Otherwise we become the elite of the society, and that's not what we want. The Holy Father always speaks about having the smell of the sheep, being close to the people that we serve, and so we want to live that out in reality. We want the seminarians to use whatever they have at the service of others. We have some villages, for example, where only the Parish Priest has a car. If people need to go to the hospital, he puts his car at the service of his people. Our connections with the Universal Church mean that people try to help and alleviate the suffering of Christians in the Holy Land. Anything that we get to support Christians is used for the Christians, not for any personal gain.

In our context, the third focus of formation is studying languages. People come to us from all over the world, and we need to be able to communicate with them to share the message of the Christians of the Holy Land. It was in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost that the disciples began speaking all the languages of the world, and from there they went to every nation and spread the Gospel through Christ. People still come to the roots, to the foundations of Christianity, to experience the essence of the Christian message, so our formation focusses a lot on languages for us to communicate with all nations.

**Father Gabriel Romanelli, the Parish Priest of Gaza, has recently visited the UK and this helped to raise awareness in the Church about the struggle of Christians in the Holy Land during the ongoing conflict. What has been your experience of the response from Christian communities to the horrors that have unfolded since October 7<sup>th</sup>?**

The Christian community has been very responsive to the appeal that Cardinal Pizzaballa put out at the beginning of the war. These donations have been essential to maintaining the Christian presence, to helping them obtain the food, medicine and water that they need to survive. This has only been possible because of the people all around the world who are responding.

It's also essential for the people who are in the West Bank, who are very vulnerable. More than forty of our Christian families left Bethlehem looking for work, often in the tourism industry. After Covid they were out of business for a long time. Then things started to improve, until the outbreak of war again. And there it is: seemingly no end to the conflict. If the Church can't support the Christians there during this difficult time, then they have to emigrate, to go elsewhere to try and find a better life. Forty families represent a very large percentage for us, as Christians make up just 1% of the local population. But people around the world have been very, very responsive to the call.

The work of witnessing to the situation in Gaza is support in itself for those who live

in the midst of the conflict. Father Gabriel himself, after his visit to the UK, returned to Gaza and went back to his work as if nothing had happened. The witness he gives, and his willingness to be present and serve in the most difficult circumstances, have been truly eye-opening. And the people who are still under siege are themselves a great witness and testimony to the faith. That's also the case for the Patriarch himself. He is the only official who has been able to enter into the Gaza Strip: no other president, no other leader. On the eve of Pentecost this year, he spent four days with the Christian community in Gaza. He visited them all. He saw the reality. He listened to their difficulties. He was there. Never once did he hear anyone complain. They are afraid, but they're not angry. They realise that they have a message, that they have a role, as a very small community of six hundred and fifty people in the ocean of two million. They realise the importance of their presence there, and they still hope for a future there. That's the really amazing part. When the world says that their circumstances are beyond repair, those who are present still have hope for the future.

**Do you think the Latin Patriarch would accept *fidei donum* priests from England and Wales? And if so, what skills or qualities would they need to have?**

Yes! In fact, we have *fidei donum* priests who are serving the mission in other parts of the world: we have sent five priests to serve the Arab Catholics in North America, for example, and we have three priests now serving in the Arab Emirates.

I think that His Beatitude is very open to the idea of receiving *fidei donum* priests, but that this must happen in the right context, that is, where the priest is truly able to serve the people that he is coming to help. He needs to have a specific mission, one that he can really fulfil. It is a hindrance when priests do not know the language, for example, and Arabic is difficult to learn.

However, we do have large numbers of migrants, with people from the Philippines, Africa and India, who are served in English, Hebrew and Arabic. So a *fidei donum* priest from the English-speaking world would be able to serve those communities. Right now, the Patriarchal Vicar for Migrants and Asylum Seekers is an Indian priest, Fr Matthew Coutinho, and he serves them in English. He does a really good job with that community. Serving in the West Bank, you really need to learn Arabic to be able to help, but we have always been open to this idea of receiving priests from around the world.

**What can our readers — laypeople, priests and bishops mainly in the UK — do now to support what you're doing?**

At the re-establishment of the Patriarchate in 1847, the Holy Father wrote about the importance of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre as an institution which supports the work and the presence of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre remain the strongest supporters of the work of the Latin Patriarchate. And I think that we have a very good group of Knights and Dames in England and Wales, but I also think it's a group that needs the involvement of younger people for its vitality. Their money is what allows us to operate. We don't charge our seminarians anything, and

the Church here has 45 schools, costing well over six million dollars a year to run. It's not possible unless there are people like the Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre who support the work of the Patriarchate.

Secondly, even though people do not feel comfortable travelling to the Holy Land, I would like to say that the Christian community will do whatever we can to keep you safe here. The Foreign Ministry, as you know, says that people shouldn't travel at this time. But as soon as it is possible, the Churches need the sign of solidarity in their visit. So I would ask them, sooner rather than later, to consider coming to visit the Holy Land.

People think that the problem here is too big for them to do anything about. Although the individual responses to the appeals have not been large amounts, in total they have made a very major response to our situation. There is no amount too small. Everything that is sent is used completely for the mission. This isn't a non-for-profit organisation that takes a cut off the top. This is the work of the Church: everything that is given goes on to serve the Christian community in the Holy Land.

And prayers. Even when the problems we face are very significant, there is always someone greater that we need to depend on. To the readers of *The Venerabile*, please remember to say a prayer — hopefully more than one! — for the Christians in the Holy Land.



**FR BERNARD POGGI** is the Rector of the Seminary of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem in Beit Jala.



**RYAN HAWKES** is a fifth-year seminarian of the Diocese of Portsmouth, currently on placement in his Diocese.

# From the College to Normandy 1944: Fr Gerard Nesbitt and Fr Peter Firth

FERGUS MULLIGAN

This year is the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D Day landings in Normandy, 6 June 1944 that began the liberation of Europe from Nazi tyranny. Two of the participants in that Day of Days, Fr Gerard Nesbitt and Fr Peter Firth, studied in Rome at the Venerable English College. They became army chaplains and were killed in Normandy in 1944, aged 33 and 32 respectively. This is their story.



*The entrance to  
Hermanville War  
Cemetery in Normandy,  
the last resting place  
of Fr Peter Firth.  
Photo: Fergus Mulligan*

## Fr Gerard Nesbitt, 1911–44

### From Ushaw to Rome

Gerard Nesbitt was born in Felling-on Tyne, Co. Durham on 22 January 1911, the son of Stephen and Jane Nesbitt. He attended St Cuthbert's Catholic Grammar School in Newcastle and at 16 moved to Ushaw College on 17 September 1927. He did well there, excelling in Latin, Greek, French and English.<sup>1</sup> The regime at Ushaw was very harsh but Gerard seems to have enjoyed his years there,<sup>2</sup> taking part in a number of plays including *Puss in Boots* and *Robin Hood*. Gerard arrived at the Venerable English College, Rome on 19 October 1929 as a Hexham and Newcastle student. Peter Firth, just 5 months younger, was then in his final year at Stonyhurst.

Two years after arriving at the *Venerabile*, Gerard was Secretary of the Grant Debating Society and captained the football team. He was Secretary of *The Venerabile* magazine for five years, then published twice a year and once in the College Diary he referred to “the little angel... blowing a whistle all day long in the cortile”.<sup>3</sup> In 1932 after three years Gerard received his doctorate in philosophy from the Gregorian University. Cardinal Marchetti bestowed tonsure on him at the Lateran Seminary on 17 December 1932, first minors in the College church on 1 November 1933 and second minors on 31 March 1934. Gerard became Head Sacristan in May that year and received the Subdiaconate from the same cardinal in the Lateran Seminary on 15 June 1935.



*St Cuthbert's Catholic Grammar School,  
Benwell Hill, Newcastle, where Gerard  
Nesbitt was a pupil and after ordination,  
a teacher. Image: St Cuthbert's website*



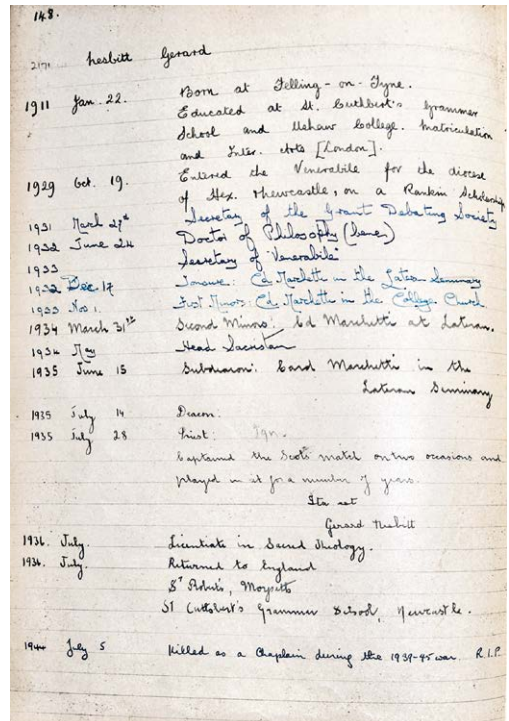
He was ordained deacon on 14 July 1935 and ordained priest in Sant' Ignazio, the Gregorian University church, on 28 July.<sup>4</sup>

### The pity of war

On completing his Theology Licence at the Gregorian Fr Nesbitt left the College in July 1936, as Peter Firth was completing his first year in Rome. He served as a curate at St Robert's, Morpeth, from September 1936 to September 1939 and then returned to teach at his old school, St Cuthbert's Grammar School, until 30 December 1940 when he received his commission as Chaplain to the Forces (CF) no. 163330.<sup>5</sup> Fr Nesbitt was assigned to the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Durham Light Infantry and followed his men as they fought through Cyprus, Palestine, Iraq and El Alamein. He found himself on Italian soil again during the hard fought allied invasion of Sicily in July 1943 though he did not see the liberation of Rome two days before D Day on 4 June 1944.<sup>6</sup> Fr Nesbitt's experience of three and a half years of war had a marked effect on him. Like many others he rarely talked about what he saw and heard: the horror was unspeakable.<sup>7</sup>

*The Catholic Herald* described the effects of war on Gerard:

Fr Nesbitt was brought face to face continually with the tragedies of battle, in the burial grounds, among the minefields, at the casualty clearing stations and at the base hospitals. The experience made him older, more serious, and it was only with difficulty that one could get him to talk about Egypt, Africa or Sicily. He was endowed with great personal courage...



Gerard Nesbitt's entry in the Liber Ruber of the College. Photo: Courtesy of Maurice Whitehead



Formal portrait of Fr Nesbitt from The Venerable, November 1944



Once, when things were quiet in North Africa, Fr Nesbitt took the opportunity of going to a base hospital to have an injury to his knee attended to. He was there only a day or two when he heard that his regiment was to take part in an invasion of Sicily. He got up from bed and went straight back to his beloved Durham Light Infantry. He had many narrow escapes from German shells and small arms fire in the Middle East and Sicily.<sup>8</sup>

VEC Vice-Rector Fr Godfrey Malone described Gerard Nesbitt warmly:

There was so much in his personality that was loveable and praiseworthy. Most outstanding, perhaps, was the zeal and enthusiasm he always showed in whatever he was doing. [...] His naturally placid and generous disposition gave him a certain charm of manner which made companionship easy. [...] Whatever he did, he put his whole heart and soul into it. [...] He would travel any distance to attend a meeting of Romans — and how he enjoyed those meetings! When Gerry enjoyed a thing he showed it in no uncertain manner; his eyes would light up and his whole expression be transformed, so that none could mistake his delight.<sup>9</sup>

### A much loved chaplain

Before embarking for Normandy Fr Nesbitt visited a friend in hospital, Reggie McCurdy, telling him he did not expect to return home alive. When the allies landed in Normandy on D Day three battalions of the Durham Light Infantry (DLI), the 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> took the vanguard coming ashore at Gold Beach, the British sector centred on the pretty coastal town of Arromanches-les-Bains.<sup>10</sup> They succeeded in establishing a bridgehead but further inland the fighting was vicious and prolonged. At Tilly-sur-Seulles, a small town south of Bayeux and west of Caen the 30<sup>th</sup> British Army Corps, including the DLI, confronted three Panzer divisions, the 21<sup>st</sup>, the fanatical 12<sup>th</sup> SS (Hitler Jugend) and the Panzer Lehr, determined to block the Allied advance towards Caen. One writer conveys the ferocity of the battle that the DLI and Fr Nesbitt endured:

The lyrical name of Tilly-sur-Seulles became a synonym for fear and endless death. The little fields of cowslips and buttercups, innocent squares of rural peace, became loathsome for the mortal dangers that each ditch and hedgerow concealed. The guidebook prettiness of the woods and valleys, so like those of Dorset and Devon, mocked their straining nerves and ears, cocked for the first round of mortar fire or the sniper's bullet.<sup>11</sup>

Over 11 days the battle swung forwards and back and Gerard was very much in the thick of it. The Panzers lost 124 tanks and 5,500 men and the town was taken and retaken



*A view of Sword Beach at Arromanches close to where Gerard Nesbitt landed on 6 June 1944. The remains of the mulberry harbour the Allies used to bring troops and supplies ashore are visible.  
Photo: Fergus Mulligan*

by either side 23 times in over a month. It was almost totally destroyed with heavy military and civilian casualties.

On 5 July 1944 Fr Nesbitt was conducting a series of funerals close to the front line when he was killed by artillery fire. Two of his DLI colleagues, Major Lewis and Major Ian English described the death of their highly regarded chaplain.

Padre Nesbitt was killed today by a stray shell while burying the dead behind the 9<sup>th</sup> DLI positions. [He] [...] was well loved by all ranks whether of Roman Catholic faith or not, his quiet manner yet very strong personality impressed all those who came into contact with him. Always cheerful and willing to help others in trouble, he was regarded as a personal friend by many. He was a great example of courage and fortitude and his death deeply affected all members of the Battalion. All the old officers of the 8<sup>th</sup> DLI headed by the CO went back to attend the funeral at 149 Field Ambulance.<sup>12</sup>

An Anglican friend, Rev. Cecil Hawksworth, was returning from Fr Nesbitt's funeral when he was killed in a traffic accident. The two lie alongside each other in the same graveyard, beautifully maintained by the CWGC.



*The former Chapelle Notre Dame du Val, a tiny 12<sup>th</sup> century church in the town, now houses the Musée de la Bataille de Tilly-sur-Seulles with lots of mementoes of the vicious fighting that went on in this area. I visited the Musée and gave the volunteer group who run it a copy of this article. They were glad to have the story of two of their liberators who gave their life for them.*

*Photo: [www.normandywarguide.com](http://www.normandywarguide.com)*



*Jerusalem War Cemetery north of Tilly-sur-Seulles contains just 48 graves and is carefully maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Fr Nesbitt's grave is the first on the left in the middle row. He may have ministered in the farm buildings in the background, used during the battle for the town as an advanced dressing station. A month earlier Fr Firth landed at Hermanville-sur-Mer on the Normandy coast. Photo: Fergus Mulligan<sup>13</sup>*



*Fr Nesbitt's grave in Jerusalem War Cemetery. I brought the rosary beads from Rome and on my last visit left them on his gravestone. Photo: Fergus Mulligan*

Major English, who knew Gerard Nesbitt well, survived the war and returned to Normandy aged 84, visiting Jerusalem War Cemetery. Journalist Chris Lloyd of the *Northern Echo* recalls the visit: “He stood on the neatly tended grass of Jerusalem, the sunlight catching the medals gleaming on his chest and the water welling in his red eyes. After an eternity back in 1944, he returned to the present in the cemetery and gasped as if he were drowning: ‘I knew just about half of them’.”<sup>14</sup> Visiting this lovely part of Normandy, as I have done several times, you would never guess the ferocity of the battles that devastated it in 1944.

## Fr Peter Francis Firth, 1911–44

Peter Firth was born five months after Gerard Nesbitt on 30 June 1911 in Scorton, Applegarth, Lancashire, the son of Ernest Cecil Firth and Agnes St John Abdy. His father, a distinguished cricketer, attended Marlborough College and became a barrister.<sup>15</sup> The family lived at The Priory in Scorton, part of which was once a Catholic chapel.

Peter had three siblings, Henry born in 1899, Mary Margaret in 1907 and John in 1910. In 1920 Peter went to Hodder preparatory school before moving to Stonyhurst College SJ where he won prizes for Latin and Classics and also a joint prize in Upper Rhetoric for an essay on “The influence of the Church on public life”.<sup>16</sup> He contributed to the Debating Society, theatricals, the Altar Staff, the Sodality and became Under Officer of the Officer Training Corps.<sup>17</sup> Although large in frame and not very sporty, in his final year he became Golf Club Secretary.

In the summer of 1930 Peter left Stonyhurst for Lincoln College Oxford,<sup>18</sup> meeting up regularly in his Wellington Square rooms with other former Stonyhurst pupils. He graduated with 3<sup>rd</sup> class honours in Modern History and was conferred with a BA on 18 November 1933, followed by an MA on 31 July 1937.<sup>19</sup> While at Oxford Peter pondered two careers: the British army like his older brother, Henry, who became a brigadier, or the Jesuits, the choice of another older brother, John. Peter finally opted for the Society



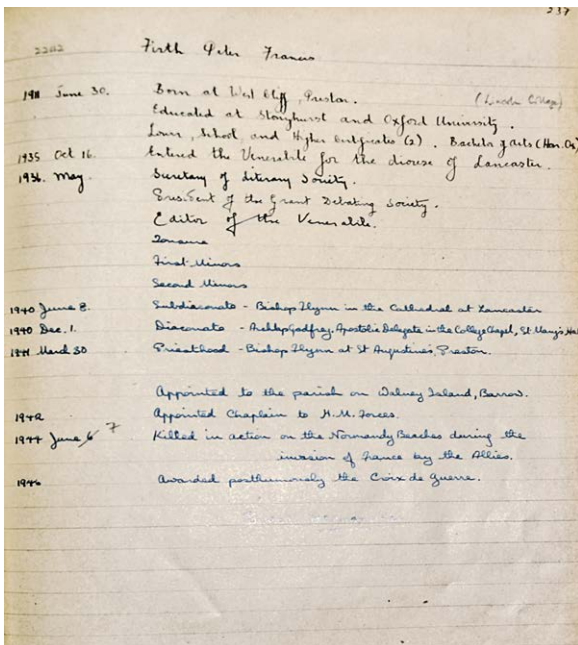
*Fr Peter Firth's photo in  
The Venerabile.  
Courtesy of  
Maurice Whitehead*



*The Priory, Scorton, Peter Firth's former family home, is now a café and B&B*



*Stonyhurst College SJ where Peter Firth received his secondary education*



Peter Firth's entry from the Liber Ruber of the College.  
Photo: Courtesy of Maurice Whitehead

and spent two years at the Manresa novitiate before deciding it was not for him. The Diocese of Lancaster accepted him as a student and aged 25 he arrived at the Venerable English College, Rome on 16 October 1935. He was the same year as Mgr Leo Alston, later Rector of the College.

### A rare bird in the ecclesiastical aviary

Peter settled in well and over the next four years became Secretary of the Literary Society and President of the Grant Debating Society. As Editor of *The Venerabile* magazine he was methodical and “unruffled and efficient without being fussy”. He also answered letters making him “a rare bird indeed in the ecclesiastical aviary”. He played golf on the Sforza at Palazzola wearing “an old Panama hat and sun specs”, a cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth. Although of “Falstaffian bulk” he was “a constant bather in the lake and in spite of his size and weight would go down more than once in the day — no mean feat even for the more athletic”.<sup>20</sup>

Although Peter found aspects of seminary life “trying”, Vice Rector Mgr Richard Smith described him as “supremely happy... his laugh would ring across Refectory or Common Room, as if he were still a boy. His was the gift of enthusiasm. He would throw himself into the activities of the House, not only through public spirit, but also because he thoroughly enjoyed doing so.”<sup>21</sup> As Peter’s brother notes: “From then on the Venerabile came second only to Stonyhurst in his loyalty, affection and generosity.”<sup>22</sup>

### A reactionary but never dull

Four years later, Italy joined the war on the side of the Axis and the English College had to leave Rome. On the morning of 16 May 1940, Peter and his fellow students headed for Stazione Termini dressed in lay clothes for the hurried journey through Italy and France

to the Channel. They were waved off by the Rector and two students from the German College, repaying the compliment from 1915 when the English waved off the Germans.<sup>23</sup> Events were moving fast and the students escaped on a boat out of Le Havre, just weeks before the Dunkirk evacuation; by 14 June 1940 the Germans had occupied Paris. The English College settled first at Croft Lodge, Ambleside where the students went rowing on the River Brathray. The Senior Student's diary contains an enigmatic entry about rowing boats: "Mr Firth hired another;"<sup>24</sup> thereby surely hangs a tale. He was also noted for rejecting "spud-peeling with scorn".

By a quirk of fate, Peter found himself back in his beloved Stonyhurst when the College moved to St Mary's Hall later that year. The staff made great efforts to replicate the Roman regime, even organising an occasional *gita* to Blackpool. Peter received the Subdiaconate from Bishop Flynn in Lancaster Cathedral on 8 June 1940 and the Diaconate from Archbishop Godfrey in St Mary's Hall on 1 December 1940. Bishop Flynn ordained Fr Firth on 30 March 1941 at St Augustine's church, Preston.

Later Mgr Smith wrote an insightful description of Peter as a student.

His age and experience told in many directions. After breakfast he could not be parted from his smoke and the latest available copy of *The Times*. In debates he never hid his conservative opinions, which came as a stimulating challenge to the views of the younger men, brought up on the social encyclicals without experience of actual conditions. If he was a reactionary — and it all depends what you mean by that word — it was from conviction, not from laziness or selfishness. He distrusted the new-fangled, and not least in the spiritual life [...] he had a deep veneration for the memory of our forefathers [...] and all who had preserved the Faith through generations of oppression. Their grit had been tried; these new enthusiasms were untried.

And if he was a reactionary, he was never a dull one. He could marshal his ideas and express them with a clarity that gave them force. Particularly English in a hundred ways, he was more at home with the concrete than with the abstract. [...] This made his sermons very practical: he never left the congregation in any doubt what he was talking about, and what he taught was always near the bone.<sup>25</sup>

### The rest could be left to God

Mgr Smith believed Peter could have become a successful barrister or an army officer, noting a number of students had left to join the armed forces: "the pressure was too strong for them". Surmising Peter was similarly tempted he concluded: "He was sure of his vocation to the priesthood — that was his first concern [...]. His business was to prepare for ordination, and the rest, including the fate of his country, might safely be left to God."<sup>26</sup>

Peter was assigned to St Patrick's parish, Barrow-in-Furness and St Margaret Mary's, Carlisle though he made it clear his ambition was to become a military chaplain. He considered joining the Parachute Regiment but as his brother John Firth SJ comments, somewhat bluntly, "his increasing weight — a fact which caused him no concern —





*Troops disembarking at Hermanville-sur-Mer, Gold Beach, where Peter Firth landed the day after D Day*



*Fr Firth's grave in Hermanville War Cemetery with another set of rosary beads placed there by the author. Photo: Fergus Mulligan*

forbade this".<sup>27</sup> He received his commission in February 1943 and was posted to the Royal Artillery and then to the Royal Army Medical Corps as Chaplain 4<sup>th</sup> class, no. 257744.

Before embarking for Normandy he gave a number of retreats for his men who nicknamed him "Friar Tuck". On 7 June 1944 his battalion landed at Hermanville-sur-Mer, Sword Beach, just west of Ouistreham. He was wading ashore, waving to one of his men when he was shot and fatally wounded. Mgr Smith relates: "they found his body floating by the water's edge, he had been badly hit and must have died instantly".<sup>28</sup> Fr Michael Elcock, another VEC contemporary, conducted the funeral and he was laid to rest in a large cemetery near the ancient parish church of St Pierre in Hermanville. The church has several stained glass windows commemorating the landings and the nearby well has 30 taps that, it is related, supplied 7 million litres of water to arriving British troops over 3 weeks. It is a short walk down a country lane from the church to Hermanville War Cemetery where Fr Firth's body was re-interred and now lies with 1,000 other casualties. It too is beautifully kept by the CWGC.<sup>29</sup>

### **We remember him from the little things**

The *Liber Ruber* of the English College has this poignant final entry for Fr Firth: "1944 June 6: Killed in action on the Normandy Beaches during the invasion of France by the Allies. 1946: Awarded posthumously the Croix de Guerre."<sup>30</sup> An anonymous writer in *The Venerable* adds: "And so we remember him — from the little things. We are sorry to lose him but proud and glad of the manner of his death."<sup>31</sup>

An unnamed Anglican padre wrote to Ernest and Agnes Firth offering condolences on the death of their youngest son.

Your son Peter was my friend, and he used to come frequently to say Mass for our RCs. He was a good and holy man, and a zealous padre, whose only wish was to serve the men under his charge. All chaplains in the division deeply regret his death. Last night I found myself in the cemetery where he is buried.

He is buried in No. 8 grave, I J Plot, in the English soldiers' cemetery at Hermanville-sur-Mer [...] in an orchard immediately behind the Parish Church of Hermanville. It is beautifully kept, and full of flowers laid there by the French who, with the Graves' Commission, are devotedly caring for the place.

**A dream born in a herdsman's shed**

In this photo taken in May 1944, two months before his death, Fr Gerard Nesbitt wears ordinary fatigues. He has the eyes of a man who's been drained by years of warfare; soldiers referred to it as the thousand-yard stare. We are used to venerating our College martyrs and there is a real sense in which Gerard Nesbitt and Peter Firth represent an equivalent, more contemporary form of martyrdom.



*Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the former DLI and Durham County Record Office: D/DLI2/8/162*

So here, while the mad guns curse overhead,  
 And tired men sigh, with mud for couch and floor,  
 Know that we fools, now with the foolish dead,  
 Died not for flag, nor King, nor Emperor,  
 But for a dream, born in a herdsman's shed,  
 And for the secret Scripture of the poor.

*Lt Thomas Kettle, Royal Dublin Fusiliers,  
 killed on the Somme, September 1916*

May Gerard Nesbitt and Peter Firth rest in peace.



**FERGUS MULLIGAN** is a publisher and author and was a student at the College from 1971–75. He is currently President of the Roman Association.



## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Information supplied by Matthew Watson, Ushaw College Librarian.
- <sup>2</sup> John Heenan, later Cardinal Heenan, arrived at Ushaw five years before and had less favourable impressions: “academically boring and wasteful.” He was even more critical of the food: “dangerously inadequate”, a diet free of vegetables and vitamins was “as unbalanced as culinary incompetence could contrive”. Two years later Heenan left for the English College, Rome and was in his fifth year when Gerard Nesbitt followed him from Ushaw. John C. Heenan, *Not the Whole Truth*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1971, pp. 34, 36–7, 39.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Venerable*, January 1933, Vol. VII, No. 1, pp. 53–74.
- <sup>4</sup> Extracts from the VEC *Liber Ruber* p. 148.
- <sup>5</sup> Information supplied by Tony Durkin, Hexham & Newcastle Diocesan Archivist.
- <sup>6</sup> The German commander tasked with repelling the allies in Sicily, Field Marshal Kesselring, later operated from Frascati and stationed an artillery detachment at Palazzola.
- <sup>7</sup> US army psychiatrists reported 10-20% of combat troops in Normandy suffered a psychiatric disorder, producing terror, panic, anger, grief and helplessness. Soldiers reached their peak at 90 days of combat after which efficiency declined steadily; within 5 months they were quite ineffective. Stephen Ambrose, *Band of Brothers*, London: Simon & Schuster, 2001, pp. 202–3.
- <sup>8</sup> *The Catholic Herald*, 28 July 1944, p. 5.
- <sup>9</sup> *The Venerable*, Vol. XII, No. 1, November 1944, pp. 188–9.
- <sup>10</sup> The DLI believed it had done more than its share of the fighting in Europe and North Africa. When Montgomery, a difficult man, told DLI troops they had the honour of being in the first wave of invasion troops they responded with a loud groan: “It’s always the bloody Durhams”, the soldiers complained and refused to line the road to cheer off Monty: Anthony Beevor, *D-Day: The Battle for Normandy*, London: Penguin, 2012, p. 6.
- <sup>11</sup> Max Hastings, *Overlord*, London: Pan Macmillan, 2015, p. 151.
- <sup>12</sup> War Diary of the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion, DLI, <http://durhamlightinfantry.webs.com/northwesteurope4445.htm>.
- <sup>13</sup> For more on the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission see [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org).
- <sup>14</sup> *Northern Echo*, 6 June 2019.
- <sup>15</sup> <http://cricketarchive.com/Archive/Players/256/256502/256502.html>.
- <sup>16</sup> Information on Peter Firth’s early life from David Knight, Stonyhurst Librarian.
- <sup>17</sup> Information on his school years is from an obituary written by his brother, Fr John Firth SJ, written for *The Stonyhurst Magazine*, No. 234, October 1944, p. 195.
- <sup>18</sup> Lincoln was founded in 1427 by Richard Fleming, Bishop of Lincoln as “the College of the Blessed Mary and All Saints, Lincoln, in the University of Oxford” to train priests to combat Lollard heretics or, as its charter put it, to defend “the mysteries of the sacred page against ignorant laics, who profane its most holy pearls with their swinish snouts”; quoted in Jan Morris, *Oxford*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 167. Firth’s home address was now 63 West Cliff, Preston and his name appears on Lincoln College war memorial; information from Andrew Mussell, Lincoln College Archivist.
- <sup>19</sup> Information from Oxford University Archives, courtesy of Emma Harrold.
- <sup>20</sup> Anonymous “Personal” section, *The Venerable*, Vol. XII, No. 1, November 1944, pp. 85–6.
- <sup>21</sup> *The Venerable*, op.cit., pp. 95–8, obituary by Mgr Richard Smith.
- <sup>22</sup> *The Stonyhurst Magazine* obituary, op.cit., p. 195.
- <sup>23</sup> For an engaging account of the VEC “exile” see Michael Williams, *The Venerable English College Rome: A History*, Leominster: Gracewing, 2008, pp. 222–34.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.
- <sup>25</sup> *The Venerable*, op. cit., p. 96.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>27</sup> *The Stonyhurst Magazine*, op. cit., p. 195.
- <sup>28</sup> *The Venerable*, op. cit., p. 97.
- <sup>29</sup> Being a military chaplain was no easy job. Fr Francis Sampson parachuted into Normandy with the US 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, the “Screaming Eagles”. Landing in marshes he came under persistent machine gun fire and while cutting away heavy equipment, lost his Mass kit. He dived under the murky water five times until he located it. He survived the war: Cornelius Ryan, *The Longest Day*, London: Four Square Books, 1963 ed., p. 119. Another chaplain, Fr John O’Brien with the Royal Ulster Rifles, would scrounge rum from the quartermaster and then play poker with his men. Much of his work was conducting hurried funeral rites spiced with occasional black humour. When a newly arrived junior officer stumbled and almost collapsed into an open grave Fr O’Brien quipped: “No need to be in a hurry, all in good time.” Quoted in Anthony Beevor, *D-Day: The Battle for Normandy*, London: Penguin, 2012, 203–4.
- <sup>30</sup> *Liber Ruber*, op.cit. The date was 7 June 1944. Information also from Linda Forster and Michael Dolan, the Talbot Library, Lancaster.
- <sup>31</sup> *The Venerable*, November 1944, op. cit., pp. 85–6.

# Learning to Listen

PROFESSOR SHEILA THE BARONESS HOLLINS

As some of you will know from your lives before entering seminary, many aspects of ordinary life are different for you. For example, all your bills are paid. You don't pay rent, you don't have to earn money to pay for food, and most of you don't pay tax. You don't have any real day to day practical responsibility for the material wellbeing and health of another human being. These are freedoms that have developed in the Church over many years to enable you to be a true friend and pastor to everyone you meet. But you have pastoral responsibilities for many, including providing emotional, social and spiritual support.

One theological college defines 'pastoral care' as 'an essential part of ministry for those to serve the local church and serve through Christ's love and justice,' which 'provides emotional, social and spiritual support for those in need or who are suffering a crisis alone,' and can also 'provide nurturing through prayer.'<sup>1</sup> To take on such pastoral responsibilities will require attention to your own personal and relational attributes.

## Encounter

One example of such genuine leadership was brought into focus earlier this year at the funeral of Fr Stephen Ortiger, OSB, who knew that he needed other people to help him in his vocation as well as his monastic brethren. His friends turned out in their thousands to celebrate his life. He had a gift with words and stories, and quoted A. A. Milne extensively in his encounters with others. For example, he would often talk about the difference between our 'whoness' and our 'whatness.'

I suggest that human formation is about our 'whoness,' and that understanding our 'whoness' needs us to learn to listen. St Benedict prioritised listening, the first word in the Rule of St Benedict being 'listen.' And in 2016 on World Communications Day, Pope Francis said, 'knowing how to listen is an immense grace, it is



a gift which we need to ask for and then make every effort to practice,' adding that 'listening allows us to get things right, and not simply to be passive onlookers, users, or consumers.'<sup>2</sup>

## Your own preparation

You belong to a global church, but when you are ordained as a priest you will be expected to act locally in your own area of pastoral responsibility. Your theoretical theological and philosophical knowledge and spiritual preparation will be good enough for you to explain and defend the Church's teaching spiritually and intellectually. But you won't just be a teacher. Will you be wise and compassionate? Will you know how to offer and, importantly, how to receive hospitality? Will you care about injustice? Will you know how to respond in an authentic way — in the way that Jesus did in His Ministry? Will you be a true friend to people, and will your presence be a healing presence? Will people be more important than the reputation of the Church? How will you deal with conflict? And will you be at peace in yourself?

Will you know who to call on to help you in your Ministry? Are you sure enough of yourself and confident enough of your ability to trust other members of our Church to share responsibility with you, to be co-responsible?

Have you had help to weather the storms in your own life? Have you been helped to address your own difficult childhood experiences, and dared to confront your own fears and unconscious drives? When sexuality makes itself present in your life, are you comfortable and at home with how you respond to these energies and desires?

Are you confident enough to allow your vulnerability to be seen, and to ask for help or for feedback? How has your formation helped you to develop your emotional intelligence and your resilience? Has it taught you how to look after your own mental and physical health and wellbeing? Will you know how and when to help your fellow priests? Have you learnt the skills of peer support? Will you know how and when to help your parishioners? Have you trained as a counsellor or, for example, become a Samaritan volunteer? Has your training in the Sacrament of Reconciliation helped you distinguish between a sin and a crime? Will you be able to comfort a bereaved person, accompany a survivor of abuse, and support a suicidal person or an addict to seek professional help? How are you



developing your leadership skills? Has your formation helped you to understand how the Second Vatican Council and the Synod are changing the Church and perhaps in particular the role of the laity and their relationships with the clergy?

Will you be confident that all members of our Church will feel welcome, and that no-one will be excluded from full participation in the life of the Church, including disabled people of all ages and abilities? The lack of familiarity within Church communities of people who are different may be one of the most modifiable environmental barriers that leads to exclusion of disabled people from our communities, and education for our priests, deacons and catechists about the importance of inclusion is paramount. This is something which requires face-to-face contact and true relationships with disabled people and their families, to foster not merely speculative theory, but sincere compassion and understanding, so that we can confidently journey with people of all backgrounds.

### Ongoing human formation

The crises of abuse, of clericalism, of pandemics, and of climate change all challenge our human formation, our preparedness. The challenges of all these crises include denial, group think, panic, defensiveness, and a reluctance to listen. Why not stop, reflect, and make your own list of the healthy and unhealthy responses of different kinds of leaders and institutions? Try to find examples of authentic leadership and consider what makes these leaders stand out.

While Human Formation has been a specific theme for reflection this year at the English College, this isn't the first time that the *Venerabile* has considered this aspect of seminary since it was discussed at the Second Vatican Council. Nor is the need for human formation limited to the priestly vocation. In my profession of psychiatry, we recognise that our own maturity will have a profound effect on our ability to sustain healing and compassionate relationships with our patients. For myself, I cannot imagine practising as a psychiatrist without having therapeutic supervision on a continuing basis. There is a saying that about 10,000 hours of practice are needed to help you master a skill. It certainly took hundreds of hours of supervised practice for me to feel confident as an independent therapist. I still have weekly 'supervision' to support me in my policy and charity work.

Most priests are not fully trained therapists of course, and if a parishioner needs therapy, there are specialist professionals to refer them to. But there are some similar personal challenges in the role of the priest, and so I ask the question: is there a place for ongoing accompaniment or consultancy? I am not talking here about spiritual direction, but about the type of support that people in a caring role need to function effectively in individual, family and group settings. You could develop the habit of reflective practice. You could seek accompaniment monthly, with more frequent sessions of individual psychotherapy if and when the need arises. And remember that the kind of accompaniment that suits your needs will be unique to you.

In 1992 St Pope John Paul II published *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, about the changes needed in seminary formation. He said that, if during the years of seminary formation

the human side of a seminarian's life is neglected or disregarded, then 'the whole work of priestly formation would be deprived of its necessary foundation,' adding that 'of special importance is the capacity to relate to others.'<sup>3</sup> The most recent guidance in the 2016 Ratio Fundamentalis paves the way for a new kind of pastor for the modern world, emphasising that the seminarian, the priest, and their formators must be responsible for their choices and their lifelong learning.

In my mind, there are some similarities between the vocations for medicine and for full-time Church ministry. For both, the responsibility for making the right choice belongs to the candidate, so that with help, he can become more self-aware, discern the deep-down reasons for this choice, and recognise and admit any change of heart.

The Ratio calls on formators and seminarians to pay equal attention to human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral studies; to progress through the course by formal examination alongside assessments of maturity; to become a mature and well-integrated person; and to value the skills and life experience of both men and women including lay people. But what is human maturity, and how can it be assessed?

Our capacity for mature relationships begins in the mother/infant relationship. A failure of this early bonding, which may be brought about in circumstances where the mother is depressed or unsupported, will make it harder for a person to separate and individuate in adulthood. An insecure attachment can lead to an immature personality. Learning to deal with conflict begins at home, something helped by being fathered well, especially as a teenager. Adverse childhood experiences, including child abuse, can also interrupt psychological development. The Ratio stresses the importance of ensuring that 'those who have had painful experiences in this area receive special and suitable accompaniment'.<sup>4</sup>



There is no questionnaire to assess maturity. It is a journey that continues throughout life and needs to be understood in the context of relationships: with peer groups and family; with teachers and those whom we serve. Group discussions and group supervision provide good settings within which to observe the development of maturity.

I suggest that Human Formation, as one of the four pillars of priestly formation, needs to be seen in the context of the whole curriculum designed to train tomorrow's priests. Here I point to parallels in training doctors. Medical curricula are overseen by the General Medical Council. The regularly reviewed document 'Outcomes for graduates' sets out the knowledge, skills and behaviours that all new UK medical graduates must be able to demonstrate.<sup>5</sup> But seminaries do not have the benefit of national regulation of the curriculum, nor even a national Formation Department, to set the curriculum. Nor are the outcomes for graduates overseen, neither for initial nor ongoing formation. This may be unnerving for this generation of seminarians because outside the structures of the institutional Church, young people are better

informed about what to expect from higher education, and educational establishments pay a lot of attention to their reputations, giving external regulation a key role.

According to the Ratio, the other three strands of formation are required to have a clear educational lead, (for Intellectual, Spiritual and Pastoral Formation), but on the topic of a lead for Human Formation it says, ‘where circumstances require it, one of the formators will be tasked with being the “coordinator of Human Formation,” who should ‘work in cooperation with other competent persons (in psychology, sports, medicine, etc.).’<sup>6</sup> And so I ask whether Human Formation does have equal status in the seminary, in the eyes of the seminarians and the formators.

For example, are 25% of the formators dedicated to the work of Human Formation? Are they appropriately qualified, and full members of the faculty? Do they include lay women and men, if they are better qualified for the role than a priest? Are some group discussions or reflections led by a psychologist or psychotherapist? Does the Human Formation syllabus include theoretical study of developmental psychology, including attachment, the unconscious mind and its processes, human sexuality, trauma, counselling, safeguarding, mental health/psychopathology, communication studies, relational science and more? How is Human Formation examined, given that examined subjects are taken more seriously?

I have had a chance to see details of the impressive Human Formation programme growing at Oscott, and I hope that similar attention is being paid to developing this part of the curriculum in other seminaries too.

## **Learning from each other**

Pope Francis said that ‘listening also means being able to share questions and doubts, to journey side by side, to banish all claims to absolute power and to put our abilities and gifts at the service of the common good.’<sup>7</sup>

We know that learning deep human skills needs a considerable amount of dedicated time. We know that a team will prosper if its members have a shared mission, shared values, attitudes, and aspirations. But a team also needs people with different skills and attributes.

In 2011 Cardinal Cormac invited me to accompany him as his assistant in the Vatican Visitation to the Church in Ireland, to examine responses to the disclosures of abuse. He said that he couldn’t do this without some professional expertise, and that he recognised the need for a woman’s perspective on the team. My contributions to his enquiries and his report to the Vatican led to me being invited to speak at the international 2012 ‘Towards Healing’ Conference for bishops in Rome, and then in 2014 being invited by Pope Francis to be a founder member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. During my 4 year membership, I was in a working group on Formation with Fr Hans Zollner. I later chaired the Scientific Advisory Board for the Centre for Child Protection (now the IADC) at the Pontifical Gregorian University for several years, where a focus on formation for safeguarding was central. My work since then has included setting up a professional helpline, the John Fisher Network, for senior clergy in England and Wales.



I have had the privilege of working with some remarkable priests and bishops. One of them, Fr Andrew Browne, is himself a survivor of abuse. Andrew had a breakdown after several years as a parish priest, and with expert professional help, he recovered in a remarkable way. With his bishop's agreement and support, he is now the full-time Director of a new charitable organisation called Survivor Training: Beyond Just Words, ([survivortraining.org.uk](http://survivortraining.org.uk)). I declare an interest as I am an Associate/advisor to the Board, and in addition their trainers use the word-free books and stories published by the visual literacy and mental health charity that I founded, Books Beyond Words, ([booksbeyondwords.co.uk](http://booksbeyondwords.co.uk)).

If my work with the Vatican has taught me one thing, it's that listening to victim survivors matters more than anything — and that also includes those members of the clergy who were themselves abused as children or during seminary formation.

Fr Andrew has given me permission to share part of his story of how he turned around his lack of personal human preparedness during his seminary formation. Andrew began his letter of introduction to one Diocese about the training the new charitable organisation can offer like this:

Thinking about how I feel with regards to the Church's approach to Safeguarding, I find myself hurting from within. Why? The simple fact seems to come across that victims/survivors are not seen as human beings, but a menace to be held at a distance because of what they are 'alleging,' and not to be trusted. It is the fact that the 'Church' comes across as harsh, scary, and unable to converse with us. I know this can be an injustice, as there are some very good and caring people in the Church — clergy and laity. It is this goodness that we need to tap into for a healthier and more compassionate people of God.

We, all of us, need to stop seeing 'Safeguarding' just as an activity of the head — procedures, policies, actions to be done, forms to be filled in, boxes to be ticked. Why? Because we are dealing with hurting, broken, lost human beings. We need to start to give them their humanity back, on their terms of understanding and care. We cannot have a 'one fits all' system. Each person, each human being, is a child of God — a hurting child of God — who cries out for care, support, love and patient understanding.

Fr Andrew is a man of extraordinary courage and too few people listen to him.

## Conclusion

Human Formation has a greater chance of succeeding if it is securely based in a well-designed and evaluated curriculum, that inspires confidence in future and current students: confidence that they will be equipped for the challenges ahead.

My enquiries whilst researching this article suggest that this is work still in progress. I seriously question why our seminarians aren't being prepared in the



world in which they are going to serve, for example, by case-based, parish-based learning.

My heart goes out to older priests who had as little personal formation and support as Fr Andrew did in his years in the seminary, and in his first years as a priest. Many will have found their own sources of support during their life in ministry. But some will be lonely and struggling, and some will have given up the struggle.

I think that the current generation of bishops have growing expectations of the potential of Human Formation. I hope that seminarians will ask for more, and take advantage of all that is offered. Human development must be a positive, full and ever-present aspect of formation: an ongoing and accompanied journey towards affective and relational maturity. Each person is accountable to themselves and to God for their own learning, but must also be prepared to be accountable to others, to show that they are fit for ministry and compliant with safeguarding requirements. Regular 360 Degree appraisals could help to establish a lifelong culture of learning.

No-one can be a priest on their own. 'And you must not call anyone here on earth "Father," because you have only the one Father in heaven' (Matthew 23:9). Perhaps I can end by suggesting that titles and deference can be unhelpful distancing devices. You call me Sheila and I will call you John.



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- 'Learning to Love: An introduction to Catholic Relationship and Sex Education, Department of Catholic Education and Formation Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, March 2017: <http://www.cbcew.org.uk/CBCEW-Home/Departments/Education-and-Formation>
- PCPM Guidelines template: [http://www.protectionofminors.va/content/tuteladeiminori/en/resources\\_section/new\\_guidelines\\_page/guidelines-template\\_page.html](http://www.protectionofminors.va/content/tuteladeiminori/en/resources_section/new_guidelines_page/guidelines-template_page.html)
- Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors: <http://www.protectionofminors.va/content/tuteladeiminori/en.html>
- The Adverse Childhood experiences questionnaire The ACE International Questionnaire (ACE-IQ) is intended to measure ACEs in all countries, and the association between them and risk behaviours in later life. [http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/activities/adverse\\_childhood\\_experiences/en](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/activities/adverse_childhood_experiences/en)
- The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales: Relationship and Sex Education Curriculum: <http://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/guidance-for-schools/relationship-sex-education>
- The General Medical Council in the UK (GMC) helps to protect patients and improve medical education and practice in the UK by setting standards for students and doctors. The GMC supports them in achieving and exceeding those standards and acts when they are not met. <http://www.gmc-uk.org/about/role.asp>
- The Gift of the Priestly Vocation, Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis, Congregation for the Clergy, L'Osservatore Romano, Vatican City, December 2016
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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Perkins School of Theology, 'What is Pastoral Care in Today's Church?' <https://theology.smu.edu/blog/what-is-pastoral-care-in-todays-church>
- <sup>2</sup> Francis, *Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 50<sup>th</sup> World Communications Day* (24<sup>th</sup> January 2016). All English translations of Papal Documents are taken from the English editions posted on the website of the Holy See.
- <sup>3</sup> John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* 43
- <sup>4</sup> Congregation for the Clergy, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis: The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*, §202 (GMC, 2018).
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# Extended Pastoral Experience

THEO SHARROCK

If you asked me when I entered the Venerable English College in the summer of 2017 where I thought I'd be come Easter 2024, I'd probably have said that I expected to be in the second year of my Licence and having a very busy Holy Week serving as a deacon through the glorious VEC liturgies. A year later, ordination was brought forward a year for all, and so I thought that 2024 would be my first Easter as a priest. As time would tell, I now find myself at the end of two years working in a place many priests fear to tread: secondary school!

Was it presumptuous of me initially to expect (assuming I stayed the course) that I would be ordained in a particular year? Maybe. But this was also just the way that we all thought, even until recently: if you entered seminary in *this* year you would more than likely be ordained in *that* year. Seminarians of the VEC over the last couple of years have become used to the fact that this is no longer the case, and that formation will look different for each young man, but still many other seminaries welcome their new cohort with a hashtag along the lines of #ClassOf2028. Such words, in my opinion, signal an attitude which can get in the way of true discernment of God's will, for they suggest that everyone who is in that group of fresh faced (or less) young Catholics is truly being called to be a priest and needs exactly the same time in formation. Both of these assumptions are demonstrably false and so it is good for us to move away from putting such pressure on seminarians to be 'ready' within a specific timeframe.

I am in no way the first seminarian to spend an extended period of my formation 'in the diocesan context,' and I have not been following the Pastoral Theology Year which is running for the first time in the academic year 2024–25, but I hope that these reflections from my time in St Matthew's RC High School might be of interest to some as we move towards a plan of formation more grounded in the real life of the diocese and its people.

There is no getting away from the fact that my journey towards the seminary was a privileged one, both educationally and religiously: a practicing family, a large and busy middle-class parish, private education from the ages of 11 to 18, a four-year undergraduate masters from St John's College, Cambridge, and the finest university chaplaincy and chaplain that I could possibly have imagined. A word must go here for the wonderful Mgr Mark Langham. I have so many wonderful memories of this kind and generous priest, but the conversation which is most pertinent to this reflection on my journey towards ordination is one I had with him part way through my fourth year. We were sat in the Great Chamber in Fisher House, and I was lamenting, 'why am I here doing this fourth year, why didn't I just graduate last year with the bachelors and go straight to seminary?' Fr Mark's reply was simple: 'Theo, something you do this year will be useful to you in your life as a priest; you might not know what it is now, but it will change you into being a better man and a better priest.' This was of course true of my masters year, but it has been even more true of these last two years spent in the company

of 1300 high school children in North Manchester. It was always my hope that Fr Mark would preach at my first Mass, but instead he will have to join us from the Heavenly Chorus where I have no doubt that he is enjoying the reward of his labours.

I came to seminary with a grand total of three hours of paid work in my life (tutoring for a family friend) and apparently when I first arrived at St Matthew's High School some members of the Senior Leadership Team had a playful bet about whether or not I would make it to Christmas. The plan was originally that I would move around different departments over the first academic year, starting as part of the SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) team working as a one-to-one teaching assistant in classrooms across the school. It certainly was a challenge, but I quickly got to know some of the staff and the students and was beginning to find my feet when the dreaded call came in: Ofsted were in the carpark and would be inside in 10 minutes. When the report came out it must have been one of the worst ever published: 'Pupils at this school do not achieve well and they are not safe... Bullying is rife... The curriculum is ineffective... The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective... Pupils and staff are not safe in this school.'<sup>1</sup> You get the picture. One of the side effects of this damning report was that the plan to move me around departments was shelved in favour of spending all the leaders' energy on improving the school. In many ways I am thankful for having spent a whole year sat in lessons among the pupils because it allowed me to really see what the school was like from their point of view: often they almost forgot there was an adult sat among them and spoke as if they were just speaking to friends. I experienced good teachers and the bad teachers, I visited every corner of the school, I heard things to get my safeguarding alarm bells sounding, but I also began to develop a relationship with the students around me where I was trusted because I was always there for them.

Fast forward to my second academic year at St Matthew's and things had definitely started to improve around the school, but one thing which was severely lacking was any form of 'Catholic Life,' and that was to be my next challenge, for I had been appointed to the role of 'Spiritual Wellbeing Lead' (for which one can read: Lay Chaplain). This new role has also been both challenging and rewarding as I, along with the leadership team, have tried to raise the profile of Catholicism in the school and to offer opportunities for the staff and pupils to grow in their faith. St Matthew's, like many Catholic schools at the moment, is currently experiencing a significant reduction in the number of baptised Roman Catholics on its registers (now under 50%) and practice rate is at an absolute minimum, but this hasn't stopped there from being an interest in knowing more about what we believe. It is true that some of the initiatives that I have tried to start seem to have failed for the moment, crucially including the setting up of a chaplaincy group, but others have succeeded, such as the setting up of a Bible Club and the giving of a set of rosary beads to every member of the school during October. It is my hope that the school will be able to take what I have started and run with it next year to continue to broaden the religious offer that we make to our children.<sup>2</sup>

My biggest take away from working on the chaplaincy team at St Matthew's is the need for a priestly presence in schools. Many priests are very good at visiting their parish primary schools, but many secondary schools are neglected and are left to try to fend for themselves, begging a priest to come in to say Mass a few times a year. The students love

asking me, 'sir, are you training to be a priest?' (or sometimes because they get confused: 'sir, are you training to be a pope?') and this is because they are genuinely interested in what that means and want to find out more. When I speak of the need for a priestly presence in high schools, I am not just taking about coming in for Mass here and there; I mean that priests need to be present and visible around the school as often as possible: popping into lessons, on the playground at break or lunchtime, with the students in the canteen. We know that many priests are very busy and do not feel that they can take on another ministry, but I would encourage every priest of the importance of presence in secondary schools. During my time at the VEC, whenever the Jubilarians came down from Palazzola to have Mass and Dinner in the College, Mgr Whitmore would say to the students about the Jubilarians and to the Jubilarians about the students: 'they are the future.' The same is the case in schools: the students present today in our schools are the future (and the present) of the Church. It might seem odd to call students who never come to Sunday Mass the 'present' of the Church, but it is true. Pope Francis regularly reminds Church leaders to meet people where they are. There are many young people who are open to the idea of faith and who want to know more, but for one reason or another are not at Sunday Mass and so we have to meet them where they are, and the most obvious place of encounter with such people is in their school, because that is 'where they are' day-in-day-out for years upon end.

This year our school community has been touched by tragedy on several occasions: the dad of a pair of Year 9 twins was killed in an industrial accident in November; a week later the dad of two more pupils died of cancer; a teacher was diagnosed with cancer over the Christmas break; and another teacher died of cancer aged just 39. As the school has dealt with each of these sad situations I have been honoured to play some small role in our response, and reflecting on these situations brings me back to two of the main points I have made in this article: God placed me in St Matthew's this year for some definite purpose, and the priestly presence in school is even more important when tragedy hits. Without an established relationship between school and priest, the priest may never even find out about these situations, and without his presence in school being a regular and normal thing, his presence at a time of crisis will be less impactful than it might be if he is already known by all.

The absolute highlight of this school year was something which I could never have done had I not been a student of the Venerable English College: organising and leading our school pilgrimage to Rome. As VEC students and *alumni* we have received the great gift of being able to get to know and love the city of Rome, and it was an honour to introduce 44 of our Year 9s and Year 10s to that great gift. The fact that there was one St Matthew's student for each of our College martyrs may have been a coincidence but I am sure that the 44 were watching over us throughout our trip. The highlight was being able to present to the Holy Father three of the aforementioned students who had tragically lost their fathers earlier in the year. One of the pupils was so moved by our group meeting the Pope and by the trip as a whole, that she asked me in the airport on the way back how she could go about making her First Holy Communion, and by the time you are reading this she will have been Confirmed and will have received Our Lord for the first time. As people involved in school chaplaincy, we can often think it

is not worth it, that they are all so far gone and know so little that nothing makes any difference, but let examples like this be a reminder to us all that when we make things available, God will bring people to encounter Him in ways that we do not expect. Some things are as easy as getting a secondary school to send a letter to every parent of students old enough for Confirmation and being open to meeting those pupils where they are. In St Matthew's we sent home just such a letter and were able to pass on over 40 names to local parishes: who knows what the Holy Spirit will do in the lives of those young people.

On this subject of local parishes, during my two years working at St Matthew's I have lived in and got to know two different parishes: St Augustine's in Manchester city centre (just near MMU) and St Patrick's in Collyhurst. While my pastoral work has been outside of the parish context, it has been wonderful to get to know these two rather different parishes and to see two Old Romans ministering to God's people in their own ways. Working a full-time job whilst also trying to keep up with daily Mass, Divine Office, and meditation has certainly been a challenge and so I am very grateful to the parishes which offer Mass times to which working people can go, especially the Manchester Oratory with its daily choice of 7am and 5:30pm.

Priestly formation is about more than just academic study and the seminarian's personal relationship with Jesus, and I could not have asked for a more formative time over the past two years than the one I have received in St Matthew's. I am genuinely gutted that almost certainly I will not be on the staff at St Matthew's when the next Ofsted monitoring visit takes place. We have already had two such visits which have highlighted the excellent progress being made, but when they next come (probably in September 2024) we hope that the inspection will be turned into a full graded inspection and that the outcome will be much more positive. Secondary schools in general, and St Matthew's in particular, will always have a special place in my heart due to this time of priestly formation in the diocese, and I truly believe that should I be called to Holy Orders in the coming months then I will be a far better and more rounded deacon and priest for having spent this time working with our many school colleagues on the front line of Catholic education. I can already see many fruits in my life from this pastoral experience, and hopefully I have been able to sow some small seeds in the life of St Matthew's RC High School and its staff and pupils. I thank God for this opportunity to get to know His Church in a completely different way which I was not expecting, and I ask His blessing upon all those I have encountered in this time.



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#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/23/148389>

<sup>2</sup> In July 2024, St Matthew's received a Good in its Catholic Schools Inspection. <https://dioceseofsalford.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/03.07.24-2.pdf>

# Father or brother? Defining priesthood in terms of fraternity. A fraternal vision of the priest in today's Church and world

JULIAN PAPARELLA

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>

The Christian brotherly community does not stand against the whole, but for it. [...] Election is always, at bottom, election for others. [...] [The Church] must always remember that she is only one of two brothers, one brother beside another, and that her mission is not to condemn the wayward brother, but to save him.<sup>2</sup>

How would you describe the role of a priest? If the Church is like a family, what kind of family member would priests be? We are accustomed to thinking of priests in terms of fatherhood. After all, we even call priests 'Father'! We can think of Father Brown of G.K. Chesterton lore, or of the many Fathers who have served as our parish priests throughout life. Of course, on a theological level, we cannot help but wonder how to reconcile this practice with Jesus' strong words: 'Call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father in heaven' (Mt. 23:9). Yet even here, we could at least say that the spiritual fatherhood of priests is in some sense a participation in the paternity of God the Father. Indeed, priestly ministry does in fact involve acting as a father in various ways. In baptism, priests are instruments of giving new life to God's children. In the Eucharist, priests help God's family to be fed. In confession, priests are witnesses with whom God's children receive His fatherly compassion and forgiveness. In Christian communities, priests serve as leaders in God's family.

Given our common parlance of addressing priests as 'Father,' it may be surprising to realize that paternity is perhaps not the most apt way of envisioning priesthood. During the rite of priestly ordination, the Bishop refers to the ordinand as a *son* in relation to himself and as a *brother* in relation to the assembly. Interestingly, at no point in the ordination rite is the candidate or newly ordained priest spoken of as a father. Rather, it is the Bishop who is presented as a paternal figure. The priest presenting the candidates addresses the principal celebrant, saying: 'Most Reverend Father, holy



mother Church asks you to ordain these men, our brothers, to the responsibility of the Priesthood' (p. 43). This evokes, on the one hand, the paternity of the Bishop and, on the other hand, the maternity of the Church. Notice that the candidates are referred to as *brothers*. The language of 'brother' then continues in the Bishop's reply: 'Relying on the help of the Lord God and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, we choose these our brothers for the Order of the Priesthood' (p. 44). These liturgical indications follow the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, which speaks much more of the priest as a *brother* than as a *father*. The conciliar documents point to the Bishop in his role as a father, and characterize the priest primarily as a brother.

These next pages look at two interrelated points. We will begin by asking ourselves: what does the Church say about the priest as brother? We shall then explore the question: in what sense is the brotherly role of priests a vital gift for the Church and the world today?

## 1. What does the Church say about the priest as brother?

Our approach will be to plumb the resources of our faith by having recourse to the two pillars of Divine Revelation: Scripture and Tradition. We will briefly examine the question of brotherhood in the New Testament, before examining priests as brothers in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and in subsequent papal magisterium.

### 1.1. *Listening to the Word of God*

Jesus called His disciples His brothers. Indeed, at that time, Masters or Rabbis frequently called their students and followers 'brothers.' Yet in the light of the resurrection, the fraternity that Jesus establishes with His friends finds its fulfilment in being sons of the same Father. Jesus tells Mary Magdalene on Easter morning: 'Go to my brothers and tell them, "I am ascending to my Father, and your Father"' (Jn. 20:9). Saint Paul develops a theology of brotherhood in Christ, whom he professes as the 'Firstborn of many brothers' (Rom. 8:29).

The Church was initially described in terms of fraternity. Indeed, fraternity was the initial way that the Christian community referred to itself. In the first generations of disciples, 'the Church was called "fraternity."<sup>3</sup> This is evident in the initial proclamations of the Good News by the apostles. Just before the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter stands up and addresses his fellow believers in the Upper Room as *Adelphoi*, 'Brothers and sisters' (Acts 1:16). In preaching to the Athenians, Paul includes them among 'God's offspring' (Acts 17:29), even though they are not Christians.

### 1.2. *In the light of the Second Vatican Council*

As we know, the teachings of the Second Vatican Council constitute the most recent, most authoritative expression of how the Church understands herself and her mission. It is not possible to *think with the Church* if we put Vatican II in parentheses, or worst yet, oppose or ridicule the latest of the Church's twenty-one ecumenical councils. Taking a

serious look at the conciliar documents, we discover that the Church, her members, and ministers are repeatedly described in markedly *familial* terms.

### 1.2.1. *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church

*Lumen Gentium* states that priests are called to wipe out all forms of division in the world, such that all of humanity can be gathered into God's family. Sharing in the ministry of the Chief Shepherd, priests 'gather together God's family as a brotherhood all of one mind, and lead them in the Spirit, through Christ, to God the Father' (LG 28§1).

The Dogmatic Constitution presents the Church's ministers as brothers of the laity in the image of Christ our Brother: 'As the laity through the divine choice have Christ as their brother, who, though Lord of all, came not to be served but to serve (cf. Mt. 20:28), they also have as brothers those in the sacred ministry who by teaching, by sanctifying and by ruling with the authority of Christ so nourish the family of God that the new commandment of love may be fulfilled by all' (LG 32§4).

### 1.2.2. *Christus Dominus*, the Decree concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church

The Decree concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church likewise frames the relationship between bishops and those they serve in familial terms. The Bishop is to be a true father who unites and forms the family entrusted to him so that all may live and work together in the bond of love. Furthermore, *Christus Dominus* describes the priests who cooperate with the Bishop, both diocesan and religious, as a family, since they 'form one priestly body and one family of which the bishop is the father' (CD 28§1). The Bishop is the father of the presbyterium and of the local Church.

### 1.2.3. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests

Conversely, as the Dominican theologian Benoît-Dominique de La Soujeole has pointed out, the Council's Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests insists more on the fraternity of priests than their paternity.<sup>4</sup> The Decree describes them as 'brothers among brothers as members of the same 'Body of Christ' sharing 'in common' with all who have been reborn in the font of baptism' (PO 9§1).

In this fraternal spirit, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* states that priests 'gather the family of God together as a brotherhood' en route to the Father in the Holy Spirit (PO 6§1): 'Priests exercise the function of Christ as Pastor and Head in proportion to their share of authority. In the name of the Bishop they gather the family of God as a brotherhood endowed with the spirit of unity and lead it in Christ through the Spirit to God the Father' (PO 6§1). Acting in the person of Christ, the Good Shepherd, priests are brothers who bring together the Church as God's family along the earthly pilgrimage to the eschatological life of the Trinity (cf. LG 21§1; 48§3). In the language of the Council, the family of God is a way of referring to the kind of communion we will experience with God and one another in the kingdom, which the whole Church in general, and priests in particular, are called to cultivate here and now.

### 1.3. In papal magisterium following Vatican II

Each pontiff since the Council has expressed a distinctive vision of priesthood, grounded in his own experience and spirituality as a priest.

#### 1.3.1. John Paul II

John Paul II spoke extensively of fraternity and brotherhood in his apostolic exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* on the formation of priests. Multiple times throughout the document, John Paul sets forth the example of Saint Andrew, who helps his brother Peter to find and encounter Jesus (cf. PDV 34; 36; 38; 46). According to John Paul, Andrew is a model for priests, who are called to help others know Christ and to accompany them in discovering their vocations.

John Paul II spoke of priests as ‘brothers and friends’ of all the baptized, who ‘recognize and uphold the dignity of the laity as children of God and help them to exercise fully their specific role in the overall context of the Church’s mission’ (PDV 18). In this connection, John Paul specified that the ordained priesthood ‘does not of itself signify a greater degree of holiness with regard to the common priesthood of the faithful’ and saw ordination as ‘a particular gift’ that priests receive ‘so they can help the People of God to exercise faithfully and fully the common priesthood which it has received’ (PDV 17). A key passage expresses the fraternal vocation of the priest as a man of communion:

Precisely because within the Church’s life the priest is a man of communion, in his relations with all people he must be a man of communion, in his relations with all people he must be a man of mission and dialogue. Deeply rooted in the truth and charity of Christ, and impelled by the desire and imperative to proclaim Christ’s salvation to all, the priest is called to witness in all his relationships to fraternity, service, and a common quest for the truth, as well as a concern for the promotion of justice and peace. (PDV 18)

As a man of communion, the priest is thus called to live as a brother, living out the charity of Christ and reaching out to all in a spirit of service.

#### 1.3.2. Benedict XVI

Benedict XVI situated the call to fraternity in a wider framework that is at once social and theological. In his encyclical letter *Caritas in Veritate*, Benedict cited the ‘lack of brotherhood between nations and peoples’ as the major cause of global inequalities, and emphasised the transcendent foundation of fraternity in God’s loving paternity: ‘As society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbours but does not make us brothers. Reason, by itself, is capable of grasping the equality between men and of giving stability to their civic coexistence, but it cannot establish fraternity. This originates in a

transcendent vocation from God the Father, who loved us first, teaching us through the Son what fraternal charity is' (CiV 19).

Accordingly, Benedict exhorted priests to be brothers to those in need: 'As priests we must also be brothers to the "least" and see in them the Lord who is waiting for us.'<sup>5</sup> In terms of sacramental ministry, Benedict saw that the priest can never work as a lone ranger, but must see himself operating within the communion of the Church, as a brother within a presbyterate: 'No priest actually administers something that is his own but he shares with his other brothers in a sacramental gift that comes directly from Jesus.'<sup>6</sup>

Benedict was also concerned by the practical need for fraternity among priests in the face of isolation and loneliness.

It is important for priests not to live off on their own somewhere, in isolation, but to accompany one another in small communities, to support one another, and so to experience, and constantly realize afresh, their communion in service to Christ and in renunciation for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. [...] Community life is therefore the expression of a form of assistance that Christ gives to our life by calling us, through the presence of brothers, to an ever deeper configuration to him. Living with others means accepting the need for one's own continuous conversion and, especially, discovering the beauty of this journey, the joy of humility, of penance, but also of conversation, of mutual forgiveness and of reciprocal support. *Ecce quam bonum et quam iucundum habitare fratres in unum* (Ps. 133:1).<sup>7</sup>

### 1.3.3. Francis

On several occasions, Francis has delineated four forms of closeness that characterise the life of a priest, namely: closeness to God, closeness to the Bishop, closeness to fellow priests, and closeness to people. These four coordinates serve as a compass for living out the relational identity of priesthood. In pursuing these forms of closeness, Francis has called priests to experience fraternity by walking alongside others and continually going out of themselves in mission:

Fraternity means choosing deliberately to pursue holiness together with others, and not by oneself. Sometimes it seems that the Church is slow, and that is true. Yet I like to think of it as the slowness of those who have chosen to walk in fraternity. Also accompanying those who are least, but always in fraternity. [...] Fraternal love, for priests, cannot be restricted to a small group, but finds expression in pastoral charity (cf. PDV 23), which inspires us to live that love concretely as mission.<sup>8</sup>

In his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Francis grounded fraternity in the law of *ekstasis*: 'In the depths of every heart, love creates bonds and expands existence, for it draws people out of themselves towards others. [...] The lover "goes outside" the self to find a fuller existence in another. For this reason, man always has to take up the challenge

of moving beyond himself' (FT 88). This calls for an open fraternity that is oriented outwards, rather than an old boys club of a privileged few, which always runs the risk of being self-referential and closed in on itself.

## 2. How is the brotherly role of priests a vital gift for the Church and the world today?

This brief survey of Church teaching opens up various pathways for living out priestly ministry in today's world. The following four, each accompanied by a quotation from the Magisterium, are not meant as a definitive conclusion but rather as a springboard to inspire further reflection.

Firstly, a priest is a brother who helps his brothers and sisters to *grow in their filial identity* as beloved children of God. As he exercises his ministry, the priest can never forget that he himself is a son, whose mission comes to fruition as the sonship of his siblings flourishes. His identity as a fellow son of God is the foundation for his mission as a brother.

The Council first affirms the 'common' vocation to holiness. This vocation is rooted in baptism, which characterizes the priest as one of the 'faithful' (*Christifideles*), as a 'brother among brothers,' a member of the People of God, joyfully sharing in the gifts of salvation (cf. Eph. 4:4-6) and in the common duty of walking 'according to the Spirit' in the footsteps of the one Master and Lord. We recall the celebrated words of St. Augustine: 'For you I am a bishop, with you I am a Christian. The former title speaks of a task undertaken, the latter of grace; the former betokens danger, the latter salvation.' (PDV 20)

Secondly, a priest is a brother who *fosters relationships and builds community*, enriching and extending the embrace of the Church's communion.

Of special importance is the capacity to relate to others. This is truly fundamental for a person who is called to be responsible for a community and to be a 'man of communion.' This demands that the priest not be arrogant, or quarrelsome, but affable, hospitable, sincere in his words and heart, prudent and discreet, generous and ready to serve, capable of opening himself to clear and brotherly relationships and of encouraging the same in others, and quick to understand, forgive and console (cf. 1 Tm. 3:1-5; Ti. 1:7-9). (PDV 43)

Thirdly, a priest is a brother who is at the service of the *charisms of his brothers and sisters in Christ* for the sake of the Church's fruitfulness. His own charism serves to enliven the charisms of his brothers and sisters. This is even more urgent in places where the number of priests is dwindling.

The priest should grow in awareness of the deep communion uniting him to the People of God: He is not only 'in the forefront of' the Church, but above all 'in' the Church. He is a brother among brothers. By baptism, which

marks him with the dignity and freedom of the children of God in the only begotten Son, the priest is a member of the one body of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:16). His consciousness of this communion leads to a need to awaken and deepen co-responsibility in the one common mission of salvation, with a prompt and heartfelt esteem for all the charisms and tasks which the Spirit gives believers for the building up of the Church. (PDV 74)

Finally, in a world marked by war, conflict, polarization, and fragmentation, a priest is a brother who *transforms human society into God's family*. The Council recognized that this priestly mission of fraternity is even more crucial in an increasingly globalised world:

Since humanity today increasingly moves toward civil, economic and social unity, it is more than ever necessary that priests, with joint concern and energy, and under the guidance of the bishops and the Supreme Pontiff, erase every cause of division, so that the whole human race may be led to the unity of the family of God. (LG 28)

As signs and instruments of Christ our Brother, priests bear abundant fruit as they walk with their brothers and sisters towards the unity and love of God's family in the midst of the Church and the world. In this light, seminary formation offers men the opportunity to grow along this path, formed by the Holy Spirit as brothers of one another, their fellow disciples, and all men and women.



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#### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Paul VI, *Encyclical Letter Ecclesiam Suam* (6 August 1964), LEV, 87.
- <sup>2</sup> J. Ratzinger, *The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1993, 75; 79-80.
- <sup>3</sup> M. Dujarier, *Église-Fraternité : L'ecclésiologie du Christ-Frère aux huit premiers siècles*, Cerf, Paris 2013, 17.
- <sup>4</sup> B.-D. de La Soujeole, "Quelle paternité du prêtre diocésain ? Réflexion à partir des textes du magistère récent," in *Nova et Vetera* 93 (2018/2), 133-146.
- <sup>5</sup> Benedict XVI, *Address to the Diocesan Clergy of Aosta* (25 July 2005).
- <sup>6</sup> Benedict XVI, *Address to the Priestly Fraternity of the Missionaries of St Charles Borromeo* (12 February 2011).
- <sup>7</sup> Benedict XVI, *Address to the Priestly Fraternity of the Missionaries of St Charles Borromeo* (12 February 2011); cf. *Light of the World*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2010, 149.
- <sup>8</sup> Francis, *Address at the International Theological Symposium on the Priesthood* (17 February 2022).



# Homily given at the Roman Association Mass

BISHOP NICHOLAS HUDSON

15<sup>th</sup> May 2024

## Mission

‘Then they escorted him to the ship.’ This passage always evokes for me the last page in *The Lord of the Rings* which recounts how the heroic Frodo takes leave of his companions and sails off into the sunset. I have often wondered why it is that Tolkien appeals to so many seminarians and priests — even if not to all. I think it has got something to do with mission. Yes, we all of us who share communion with Christ are called to participate also in his mission. But those who feel called to seminary know what it is to feel that sense of mission *urgently* — often at a young age, and with a force that surprises and humbles.

## Sent Into The World

The words we hear Jesus speak to us tonight, coming to us as they do in this time between Ascension and Pentecost, have a particular resonance — speaking, as he does, to the Father of ‘those you have given me,’ saying, ‘As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.’ It is not for nothing that so many priests choose for their ordination cards those other words of Jesus, ‘You did not choose me; no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and bear fruit.’ Choosing these words, they are expressing a feeling known by every seminarian and priest — the strong feeling that ‘I could only do this if I felt he was calling me.’

## A Powerful Place

Many will say they felt this sense of mission as soon as they walked into this house. Monsignor Mark Crisp, Old Roman and former seminary Rector, captured it when he said to me once, ‘When you were shown, on your first day here, the martyr-frescoes in the Tribune, didn’t you feel you were becoming part of an extraordinary tradition?!’ We can forget the impact these pictures first made on us. But their impact returns when we show them to visitors and friends — like the young French woman who needed to stop, almost to take her breath, after I had shown her the martyrdoms of our forebears, to say, ‘Tu sais, c’est un lieu tres fort,’ ‘This is a really powerful place.’ The Tribune is indeed powerful — powerful in the call it renews in the hearts of each one of us to share in the mission for which this house was established.

## Successors Of The Martyrs

St John Paul II liked to say — and rightly — ‘Seminary is the place where we await the gift of the Spirit for mission.’ Note he implies the call itself is gift — the call to mission a gift to be prayed for. You can imagine how moving it was, back in 2012, when we celebrated

the 650<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hospice — for us to go and be with St John Paul’s successor, Pope Benedict. I had the privilege of introducing students to him. Lastly, I presented him with a gift we had brought him — a wonderful book containing reproductions of all the frescoes in our Tribune. I opened it up for him at the final image, of Pope Gregory XIII blessing the first seminarians and priests of the new English College. Laying his hand on it, he said, ‘You are their successors.’

### Pray For The Call

I urge all of us here who aspire to follow in their footsteps to let the Holy Father’s words resonate within us; search our souls to ask, ‘Am I even beginning to live the radical generosity their lives represent?’ Pray, especially in these days before Pentecost, for a deepening of the gift of the Spirit for mission. To those of you who live in this house, I would urge you to bring such reflection and prayer most fervently to your daily sacrifice of the Mass here at this altar. Because both the relics of the martyrs which rest under the altar and the picture which adorns the wall above it speak mightily of mission.

### Fire To The Earth

The Martyrs’ Picture is about nothing if not about mission: the Father taking back to himself the crucified and risen body of the Son whom he had sent to into world to save it. The words emblazoned across it — *Ignem veni mittere in terram, I came to bring fire to the earth* — speak of Jesus’s heartfelt desire that mission continue. As we know, Jesus does not stop at saying, ‘I came to bring fire to the earth’ but adds, ‘I wish it were burning already.’ The way his blood falls to the earth and fire springs up wherever it lands reminds us: our mission is, each in our own stumbling way, to kindle the fire of Christ’s love in the hearts of his faithful.

### Return To The Mission

The day we leave this place to embark on the mission is extraordinarily poignant. I chose to take my time, to savour it, by following, with four others, the route which Sherwin, Campion and Briant would have taken back to England. So we made our way to Milan, then Geneva, up to Rheims, then Douai, before crossing the Channel to finish at Tyburn. There we stood on the site of Tyburn Tree and imagined our protomartyr, Sherwin, sitting on the scaffold to smoke his last pipe; and, looking up into the white disc of a December sun, calling out to his companion, ‘Ah, Mr Campion, tonight we shall be above yonder fellow!’ We knelt long in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament before embracing and making our farewells. So ended the Fellowship we had enjoyed those last six years; and which had formed our hearts so deeply for mission. And yet, what I have discovered is that the Fellowship does not end there, in fact: it deepens.



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# The Venerable English College and the 1656–57 Plague Epidemic in Rome

DR EMMA WALL

In 1656 the Venerable English College found itself at the centre of a public health crisis which would have severe implications for its internal community as well as for its operations abroad. In this paper<sup>1</sup> I examine the College's response to the plague of 1656–1657, demonstrating that the Jesuit administrators of the College sought to combat its impact on three different levels. This occurred on an institutional level, to protect the lives of the seminarians; on a city-wide level to ensure compliance with measures taken in Rome by the *Congregazione di Sanità*, the health body of the Papal States created to coordinate the response to epidemics; and on an international level, carefully considering the ramifications for the College's international operations in despatching its students to serve as priests in England and Wales.

In 1656–1657 the city of Rome fell victim to an epidemic which had arrived there from Sardinia, via the Kingdom of Naples.<sup>2</sup> Naples provided the gateway to Rome: after the crisis struck the Kingdom in April 1656, the plague quickly spread northwards, reaching Rome between late May and mid-June. The *Congregazione di Sanità*, a health body which had been crucial in implementing successful measures to prevent the plague of 1630 from descending from Milan,<sup>3</sup> was once again spurred into action. This time, however, they were unable to repeat their success. Despite releasing a number of edicts prohibiting the movement of people and goods in an attempt to stem the spread of the disease from Naples,<sup>4</sup> the *Congregazione* was unable to prevent the plague reaching Rome.<sup>5</sup> The first suspected death in Rome was on 15 June, in the Trastevere district, and the *Congregazione* made the decision to seal the quarter a week later, closely followed by the nearby Jewish quarter. The Venerable English College, on the borders of these two areas, narrowly avoided being caught up in the sealed area itself.

## Early Responses to the Epidemic at the Venerable English College

As the College was an institution predisposed to keeping meticulous documentation on its students, the presence of the plague in Rome is first apparent not by the evidence transmitted to us, but rather by its absence. The College's famous *Liber Ruber*, the register documenting the name of every student entering the institution, testifies to this. In 1630, while plague was raging in Northern Italy, the College was careful to note the reason for a gap in admissions. We find two notes on f. 97v: "Students did not come on account of the plague, which was ravaging widely through Italy. [...]"

In the year 1630, no one new came to the College on account of the impediments to travel.”<sup>6</sup> The same is documented in the Pilgrim Book, with an absence of entries for 1630, but a note: “this year of ravaging plague through Italy, very few came to Rome.”<sup>7</sup> The plague of 1630 had not affected Rome itself, yet College records were careful to record the impact on students’ and pilgrims’ ability to travel through Italy due to the presence of plague. In 1656–1657, the *Liber Ruber* evidences a similar pause in arrivals from England between 26 November 1655 and 11 October 1658; however, on this occasion there is no note to explain the gap in the records.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, the Pilgrim Book, recording the names of visitors to the College and Hospice, simply stops in mid-1655, with copious blank pages remaining. In none of the records do we find an explanation of these lacunae, with these silences perhaps a preliminary indication of the gravity of the situation, demonstrating that the attention of staff and students, justly, was elsewhere.

The account books and receipts maintained by the College provide precise information concerning purchases for the infirmary and dispensary in the early stages of the response to the plague. In the month of May 1656, coinciding with the plague having been discovered in Naples in April, there are indications that the College began to prepare to tackle it *in situ*, rather than pursue the favoured Jesuit policy of flight.<sup>9</sup> The *Libro di spese*, or purchase ledger, shows a purchase made on 30 April 1656 for “medical items for the pharmacy or infirmary”, and repeated purchases of “serum” are made throughout May.<sup>10</sup> At the end of May 1656, the situation begins to intensify. From 20<sup>th</sup> May, the city of Rome and the *Congregazione* had already begun issuing edicts and declarations. 29<sup>th</sup> May marked the commencement of a period in which the College issued various *bandi* and *editti*, sometimes with multiple in a day, continuing every few days for the rest of June and July.<sup>11</sup> A payment from 21 July 1656 is made for “twelve public speeches printed against the disease”,<sup>12</sup> in a clear indication that advice was being published and disseminated by the College, to ensure that its students and staff were well-informed. It is impossible to know exactly what the English College was publishing in these edicts: as very ephemeral printed items, none survive in the College archives.

Alongside the issuing of *editti*, there are continued signs of preparative and preventative measures being taken within the College community itself to maintain the good health of the students. On 31 July 1656, the College purchases “medications for the infirmary fountains”,<sup>13</sup> and “water against the disease”.<sup>14</sup> Alongside these preventative measures the College appears also to be taking preparative measures in the case of any occupant contracting the plague. In June 1656, payments are made for a variety of ingredients frequently used in plague treatment or disinfections. These range from absinthe, used for disinfecting wounds; antimony, itself commonly used as an emetic, and potassium tartrate, which, when combined with antimony, forms tartar emetic, used to induce vomiting.<sup>15</sup> These purchases suggest that the authorities were preparing medications to ensure a swift response in the case of the contagion striking the College community. Despite these initial flurries of activity, around the end of July 1656 the College enters a period of relative inactivity as far as concerns infirmary bills, indicating that it weathers the most severe months of the plague in

the autumn and winter of 1656 unaffected. The self-contained nature of the College and its buildings, being self-sufficient and restricting access to outsiders, likely aided this. In the spring of 1657 the picture is similar, with no infirmary bills at all between mid-January and mid-March. The consistent entries in the account books of food, services and goods throughout the affected period also show that on a day-to-day basis the functioning of the College continued relatively unhindered, even as nearby areas of the city were locking down and trade from neighbouring towns was suspended. The College appeared to have been successful in avoiding the plague almost entirely.

### Summer of 1657: Plague Reaches the Venerable English College

The gradual decline in the number of cases in Rome which had been occurring since December 1656 suddenly spikes once more in May-July 1657. In parallel with the increase in cases in the city, again we can see an uptick in the medications bought by the College, which appears to be keeping prepared for any escalation of the contagion. 24 May 1657 marks the beginning of a period intense with preparation, with purchases of potassium and vitriol spirit, a combination used in the treatment of carbuncles,<sup>16</sup> and, in June, oil of turpentine, also used for carbuncles, ‘acqua triacale’ (theriac), and cinnabar, used to induce sweating.<sup>17</sup> As all of these items have various medicinal uses as treatments for symptoms of the plague, it can be concluded that the College was stocking up on ingredients for treatment as the number of plague cases rose in the city itself. However, there are no infirmary food bills pertaining to the same period of these purchases, indicating that these actions were likely preparatory to ensuring the availability of treatments in case of illness, at a time where demand for such compounds was probably rising in the city.

On 14 June 1657, food purchases do however resume for the infirmary,<sup>18</sup> including a bill for 6 lemons, the juice of which was a popular ingredient for plague remedies.<sup>19</sup> The following day, a drinking flask and some beer is also listed, but then the purchases cease in the following days.<sup>20</sup> This corresponds with evidence found in the student register which allows us to deduce who was being treated in these two days. Entry 890, that of Francis Lane<sup>21</sup> who was admitted to the College on 21 December 1651, died of the plague shortly after his ordination as a priest in the College’s church on 21 May 1657.<sup>22</sup> While his recent ordination shows that the College was still carrying out its day-to-day activities, additional precautionary measures were clearly being taken, as Francis had been ordained inside the College Church, rather than externally in another church in Rome, as appears to have been more customary from the typical *Liber Ruber* entries.

A month-and-a-half later, food purchases for the infirmary restart on 29 July, coinciding with another batch of absinthe.<sup>23</sup> The student register reveals once again the identity of the next victim, who died on 30 July. Charles Baines,<sup>24</sup> first admitted in 1640, and ordained as a priest in 1644, was serving as the College confessor just before his death, and had been previously also the minister of the College’s Jesuit community. His *Liber Ruber* entry states that he passed away, gloriously, having been infected with the plague.<sup>25</sup> The purchases of absinthe, used as a disinfectant for

wounds, on the same day that Charles Baines was admitted to the infirmary, suggests that it is highly likely that he was operated upon in the days before his death; a receipt from 26 August 1657 reveals that the College hired a surgeon during the time the two victims were in the College infirmary, Francesco Galuzzi, who was paid for forty days of service during the time of the plague.<sup>26</sup> A payment made in the August appendix to “our surgeon for some services carried out”, confirms that drastic measures were indeed required.<sup>27</sup>

As the plague had reached the College, more stringent measures were put into place to combat the disease and prevent its further spread: quarantine, a measure of vital importance against the plague. The account books for July and August 1657 show two unusual additions: at the end of each month, there is an extension section, both months listing bills incurred by the hand of Nicola Spolletti while the College was closed.<sup>28</sup> From receipts in 1656, early 1657 and later in 1657, we can see that Nicola Spolletti is the College’s laundryman:<sup>29</sup> however during the time of the College’s summer closure, he is elevated to being the College’s external purchaser, conducting transactions on behalf of the Jesuit administrators while the College itself was in lockdown.<sup>30</sup> The closure period of approximately fifty days appeared to cover those members of the College living externally to College buildings, as the College provided money for the upkeep of Padre Francesco Simone in the *casa professa*, the central residence of fully professed Jesuits in Rome, alongside the Church of the Gesù, during this period.<sup>31</sup> Another of Spolletti’s errands demonstrates that being caught in quarantine elsewhere could also present a problem, as he was paid for the provisions he had been delivering for two members of the College who had been put into quarantine for forty days at San Giuliano, the Dutch Hospice and Church located a few streets away from the English College.<sup>32</sup>

After the sealing of the College in July and August is lifted, the situation returns to normal in September, where no infirmary expenses were recorded. The College’s measures in the summer of 1657, in particular the sealing of the College community, prevented further spread of the disease and kept the death rate relatively low in comparison to the devastation of the plague elsewhere.

## The Student as a Commodity and the English Dimension

The measures taken on a local level by the College to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their students, and to prevent any further transmission of the disease within the community, ensured its survival in a domestic context in Rome, with minimal damage to its student population. While the domestic aspect of its operation in Rome remained broadly under control, the international operations, that is the sending and receiving of students in order to maintain a flow of clergy back to the English and Welsh mission, was seriously threatened. That the College was suffering from a depletion in student numbers by 1658 is clear in the records which present the yearly status of the College. In 1656 the summary shows that there are 56 students and staff in the College,<sup>33</sup> but there is no status document for 1657, another gap in the records which demonstrates the impact of the plague in the city. The ramifications



of the plague become clear in 1658, by which point the College has missed out on two annual cohorts of students. This results in a substantial reduction in the College population, decreasing by around 25% to only 42. While an increase in students might be expected once restrictions were lifted, a mere 11 new students are registered in the *Liber Ruber* for 1658, in fact a slight decrease on the 13 who arrived in 1655: there is clearly no influx resulting from two years of students being unable to travel. This cuts two ways: the financial situation of the College was not threatened by a disproportionate increase in students, but on the other hand this meant fewer to be dispatched to England.

While the College could not guarantee that there would be an increase in student numbers to compensate for the plague years, it could take measures to ensure that the students remaining in the College were delivered safely to England. This was especially important given that there was no eventual influx to compensate for the two fallow years of the plague.<sup>34</sup> The account books show that several students were paid their travel expenses for them to journey to England during the height of the plague in 1657, although they did not leave until a much later date, after the plague had disappeared. The *Libro di Cassa* shows that Richard Stephens and William Sackville<sup>35</sup> were each paid 57 *scudi* — specifically detailed as being for the journey to England, on 23 May 1657.<sup>36</sup> According to their *Liber Ruber* entries both men did not depart for England until 2 September 1657,<sup>37</sup> along with one John Stanley,<sup>38</sup> who was paid his travel moneys on 29 August 1657.<sup>39</sup> Stephens and Poulton did not leave the city until after it was declared free from plague, despite having made their preparations three months in advance. This indicates that the College was keeping them in place until the threat of the plague had dissipated to ensure their safe return to England, their approach governed by a high degree of caution given both the importance of life and the students' future role back home. Tragically, Stevens and Stanley were never to make it back: after all the care taken to ensure their safety from the plague, they both drowned on their passage by ship to Livorno.<sup>40</sup>

## Conclusions

The nature of the Venerable English College, located in the city of Rome, as well as its ties with England and its dual function as a hospice and a seminary, both receiving and returning pilgrims and students to England, necessitated stringent action to combat the plague to maintain its crucial role for the Catholic community at home and abroad. Unlike the common pattern of Jesuit responses to epidemics evidenced in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Jesuit administrators of the College went against their instincts to take a 'fight' rather than 'flight' approach, tackling the plague *in situ* in line with the impositions of the *Congregazione*. Overall, the measures imposed by the *Congregazione* ensured that the mortality rate in Rome was drastically lower than the surrounding areas in the region. The College itself was required to take internal action to pre-empt and prevent the spread of disease, not only for the sake of the health of the staff and students at the College, but with the knowledge that its students were a precious commodity to be returned to England. The combination of

the three levels on which the College took measures appears to have been a successful way of managing the effects of the epidemic. On a College level, the preventative and preparatory measures deployed ensured that the infirmary was well-prepared in the event of a positive case. This enabled the College to act quickly upon the identification of the two positive cases in summer 1657, thereby preventing further spread. On a city-wide level, the College complied with the measures set out by the *Congregazione*, disseminating their messages and complying with the regulations set out in order to ensure a cohesive approach to manage the spread of the disease. This coordination was particularly important to prevent further spread of the disease both inside the College community and with the wider city. On the final level, that of the international context of the College, it is clear that stringent measures, such as travel restrictions, were necessary to ensure that students would return safely to England. These three levels come together to create a combined approach which ensured that, despite the number of students living in close proximity, the College was able to weather the epidemic in a broadly successful manner, preserving the health of the vast majority of their students and staff.



**DR EMMA WALL** recently completed her PhD in Italian Studies at Durham University, during which she obtained a Northern Bridge placement grant to work on the cataloguing project in the archives of the Venerable English College in 2018–2019. She subsequently received a CRS grant to work on the VEC's archival material pertaining to the history of the College at the Abbey of San Savino in Piacenza.

#### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This paper is a shortened version of WALL, Emma, *Disease Management in an International Context: The Venerable English College and the 1656–1657 Plague Epidemic in Rome*, in: Brejon de Lavergnée & Colombo, Emanuele (eds.), *Religious Orders, Public Health and Epidemics, From the Black Death to Covid-19*, Munster (2024). The editors and publisher have kindly granted permission for the reproduction of a reduced text in this present article.
- <sup>2</sup> For more on the plague in Italy, see ALFANI, Guido, *Plague in seventeenth century Europe and the decline of Italy: and epidemiological hypothesis*, in: *European Review of Economic History* 17 (4) (2013), pp. 408–430; ALFANI, Guido, *Pestilenze e «crisi di sistema» in Italia tra XVI e XVII secolo. Perturbazioni di breve periodo o cause di declino economico?*, in: CAVACIOCCHI, Simonetta (ed.), *Le interazioni fra economia e ambiente biologico nell'Europa Preindustriale, secc. XIII–XVIII*, Florence 2010, pp. 223–247; NAPHY, William G. / SPICER, Andrew, *La peste in Europa*, Bologna 2006; GALIANANES GALLÈN, Marta / ROMERO FRIAS, Marina (eds.), *Documenti sulla peste in Sardegna negli anni 1652–1657*, Sassari 2003; CIPOLLA, Carlo M., *Fighting the Plague in Seventeenth Century Italy*, Madison 1993; ANATRA, Bruno, *La peste del 1647–1658 nel Mediterraneo occidentale: il versante Italiano*, in: *Popolazione, società, ambiente, temi di demografia storica italiana (secc. XVII–XIX)*, Bologna 1990, pp. 549–559.
- <sup>3</sup> See GAROFALO, Fausto, *La difesa di Roma e dello Stato Pontificio contro la peste*, in: *Humana Studia* 1, no. 6, suppl. (1949), pp. 4–10.
- <sup>4</sup> These are collected in GASTALDI, Girolamo, *Tractatus, Rome 1684*, accessible freely online at: [https://archive.org/details/bub\\_gb\\_7JW\\_fmB33XEC/](https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_7JW_fmB33XEC/)
- <sup>5</sup> For more on the plague in Rome, see TOPPI, Luca, *Forme di controllo in una città “appestata”: Roma 1656–1657*, in: *Eurostudium* (2017), pp. 25–53; BENEDETTI, Roberto, *La via della peste: dalla terra di Nettuno a Roma (1656)*, in: *Roma Moderna e Contemporanea* 14, Rome 2006, pp. 13–35; FOSI, Irene (ed.), *La peste a Roma (1656–1657)*, *Roma Moderna e Contemporanea* 14, Rome 2006; CASSIANI, Gennaro, *Medici, magistrati e filosofi contro i miasmi della peste. Ricerche in margine ad alcuni documenti sull'epidemia di Roma del 1656–1657*, in: *Ricerca di storia sociale e religiosa* 46 (1994), pp. 187–215; AGO, Renata. / PARMEGGIANI, A., *La peste del 1656–1657 nel Lazio*, in: *Popolazione, società, ambiente temi di demografia storica italiana (Secoli XVII–XIX)*, Bologna 1990, pp. 595–611; D'AMELIA, Marina, *La peste a Roma nel carteggio del prefetto dell'Annona*, in: *Dimensioni e problemi della Ricerca storica* 2 (1990), pp. 135–151; BELARDELLI, Alessandra, *Il governo della peste: l'esperienza romana del 1656*, in: *Sanità, scienza e storia* 1 (1987), pp. 51–79; WELLS, Ellen B., *Prints commemorating the Rome, 1656 plague epidemic*, in: *Annali dell'Istituto Museo Storia della Scienza Firenze* 10 (1985), pp. 15–21; SONNINO, Eugenio / TRAIANA, Rosa,

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- <sup>6</sup> Archivum Venerabilis Collegii Anglorum de Urbe [henceforth AVCAU], *Liber Ruber*, f. 97v. [all translations my own].
- <sup>7</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 282, f. 105r.
- <sup>8</sup> There are two entries during this period: entry 922 is a readmission on 29 December 1657, and entry 923 on 23 February 1658 is from someone already residing in Rome. There are also no *responsa* (new student questionnaires) for the years 1656 and 1657.
- <sup>9</sup> For more on Jesuit approaches to disease, see Martin, A. Lynn, *Plague? Jesuit Accounts of Epidemic Disease in the 16th Century*, Kirksville, Mo. 1996.
- <sup>10</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 189.
- <sup>11</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 189, June 1656. Multiple issues are found for example in AVCAU, *Liber* 189, 14 July 1656.
- <sup>12</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 189, 21 July 1656.
- <sup>13</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 189, 31 July.
- <sup>14</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 189, June–July 1656.
- <sup>15</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 189, 17, 23 and 30 June 1656.
- <sup>16</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 190.
- <sup>17</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 190, May–June.
- <sup>18</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 190, 14 June. The accounts books show that typically patients in the infirmary were very well fed, with high-cost proteins such as veal, beef, and various game animals such as pheasant, wood pigeon and rooster.
- <sup>19</sup> See VARLIK, Nühket, *Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World*, Cambridge 2015, p. 234.
- <sup>20</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 190, 15 June.
- <sup>21</sup> *vere* Harcourt.
- <sup>22</sup> AVCAU *Liber Ruber*, 116v.
- <sup>23</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 190.
- <sup>24</sup> *vere* Calvert.
- <sup>25</sup> AVCAU, *Liber Ruber*, 105r.
- <sup>26</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 1003, 26 August 1657. The payment is corroborated by the Libro di Cassa, AVCAU, *Liber* 113, 52v.
- <sup>27</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 190, August 1657.
- <sup>28</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 190, July–August 1657.
- <sup>29</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 113, 51r.
- <sup>30</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 190, August 1657, from the August additional section.
- <sup>31</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 190, August 1657.
- <sup>32</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 1003, receipt from 17 August 1657. The S. Giuliano is likely to refer to San Giuliano dei Fiamminghi, the Flemish Hospice and Church located a few streets away from the English College.
- <sup>33</sup> AVCAU, *Scritture* 31/3, f. 1.
- <sup>34</sup> However, students who were originally intending to travel to Rome for their studies may have been sent to train elsewhere instead.
- <sup>35</sup> *vere* William Poulton.
- <sup>36</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 113, f. 51v.
- <sup>37</sup> Richard Stephens's entry is 874 on 115r, William Poulton's entry 897 on 117v.
- <sup>38</sup> *vere* John Wright.
- <sup>39</sup> AVCAU, *Liber* 112, f. 52v.
- <sup>40</sup> According to both of their *Liber Ruber* entries, Richard Stephens and John Wright [Stanley] drowned on their passage by ship to Livorno. Having survived the plague in Rome, it seems likely that they would likely have chosen passage by sea to avoid the possibility of encountering the plague further north. It is unclear whether William Sackville [Poulton] travelled with them: his entry simply records that he left for England around 2 September 1657. It seems likely that he did not travel by sea, as he did not perish with the other two, successfully reaching London where he worked as a priest until his death on 6 December 1672: see ANSTRUTHER, Godfrey, *The Seminary Priests: Volume 2: Early Stuarts 1603–1659*, Great Wakering 1975, p. 252.

# Ecumenical Marmalade

CANON THOMAS ATTHILL

This recipe came from Mrs Clare Watts of Stratton-on-the-Fosse, wife of Neville Watts, Classics Master at Downside School (who retired before the Atthills went there in 1948/49). It is the recipe my mother, Elizabeth Atthill, usually used. She wrote it out and sent it to me when I was Theology Tutor on the staff of the College, in March 1976.

I and some students made a large batch one Thursday — then the ‘free day’ for students at the church universities and colleges in Rome — at Palazzola. There what Italians call *merangole*, but we call Seville oranges, grew at that time. Later that month the then-Archbishop of Canterbury, Donald Coggan, stayed at the College for three days while visiting Pope Paul VI. Making a thank-you speech to the College at breakfast on his last day, he threw in, ‘And you have the best marmalade in the world.’

I hope you enjoy it! The basic text is my mother’s.

## Marmalade

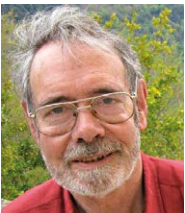
**makes 8–10 lbs**

3lbs bitter (Seville) oranges, 5 pints water, juice of 2 lemons (or 2 lemons), 6lbs granulated or preserving sugar

- 1) Scrub fruit, pick off disc, and cover with the water, in a large pan. Cover with a lid and simmer gently for 1½–2 hours till quite soft (stir and turn now and then, as one side bobs out of the water!).
- 2) When cooled sufficiently to handle, lift out oranges and keep the water.
- 3) Cut in half, squash a bit to let juice run (keep it!) and then with a spoon scoop out pith and pips. Put these back in the water and boil for ten minutes.
- 4) Strain all the cooking water and either make up to or reduce to 2¼ pints.
- 5) With a kitchen knife, on a board is best — or a large meat dish to make sure you don’t lose any juice — cut up fruit coarse or fine as you prefer.
- 6) Turn the cut-up peel, juice and cooking water into a very large pan (it boils up tremendously) and add the sugar. Stir over low heat to dissolve sugar, and when it has completely dissolved, bring up to the boil and boil fast. It takes 10–20 minutes to set.

- 7) Put a little on a cold saucer after 10 minutes and every few minutes until a little of it wrinkles on top when you push it with your finger. Towards the end test very often as it can set rather suddenly and is rather dull if allowed to get too stiff.
- 8) Skim if necessary — and/or stir in a knob of butter to disperse scum. Stand for 20 minutes before stirring and putting in jars.

**For dark colour:** after dissolving sugar, simmer very slowly indeed, possibly for an hour or even two, testing occasionally as above. When dark enough, if not yet set, boil rapidly for a minute or two. I divide into two batches after sugar has dissolved, let half simmer very slowly and get on with doing a fast batch. That way you get two varieties, light and dark, from one session.



**CANON THOMAS ATTHILL** is a priest of the Diocese of Clifton.

# Summer Spiritual Pleasantries

FR KONRAD GRECH

## Bless me, Father!

I had been waiting to pronounce the words ‘bless me, Father...’ for at least a year, that is, since our freshly minted priests were ordained deacons. There is a spiritual and emotional stirring deep within, when a spiritual director or even lecturer participates in a priestly (not forgetting a diaconal) ordination! The ordinations in the Liverpool and Birmingham cathedrals, which I participated in, were no exception! (I hear that the one in Newcastle was no less splendid, but unfortunately I do not yet have the gift of bilocation.)

It was an opportunity to witness the Church in England in two different Archdioceses. The presence of a large number of priests of all ages and ordination years emphasised the communion of the diocesan presbyterate among themselves in union with their Archbishop. A special sign of welcome and communion was the laying of hands on the ordinands’ heads by the concelebrating priests after the archbishop had done the same: it was a sure sign of the newly ordained being welcomed into the ‘college’ of the clergy.

Ordination day in Liverpool and Birmingham was not only a ‘priests’ occasion.’ It was the joy of the whole People of God in those dioceses: family, friends and the congregation. — one can say it was a *communio fidelium* lived and expressed in the *communio ecclesiarum* — the visibility of the Church celebrating together and walking together, in Greek *synodos*! Additionally, they made visible an interior reality of the Church’s life: because of the one baptism shared by all present, the Holy Spirit continued His life-giving presence, and moved to bear the fruit of communion, participation, and mission, for which Fathers Martin, James, Dave and Joseph are called.

The ordination Masses in both cathedrals were beautiful and moving: *kronos* could have been slightly long for modern patience, but *kairos* was abundant leaving a serene and joyful effect in all!

The 13<sup>th</sup> July and the 20<sup>th</sup> July were also joyful ecclesial moments. The three ‘first Masses of Thanksgiving’ which I participated in, captured something of the character of each of the newly ordained celebrants. Priesthood and grace adopt the expression of the personality of the priest.

An in-between ordination visit to York and the Oratorians proved to be different and complementary experience! I was swept into history — from Constantine being declared emperor to medieval times, to the martyrdom of St Margaret Clitherow and discovering that Guy Fawkes, that misguided Catholic youth, was actually born and schooled there! One of the ‘spiritual delights’ was discovering more about the



Oratorians and recognizing that Saint Ignatius and St Philip Neri through their friendship ‘fertilised’ each other in the spiritual life, and left a legacy, which is still enjoyed by many.

### **E-cab please!**

It is not often that I take a taxi either in Rome or in Malta. However, this summer I did take a few, which was quite an experience in universal fraternity! The inflow of nationals from Nepal, India, North Africa, and Turkey, among other places, gave me cause for reflection. My country, which years ago was mostly a mix of Maltese, Italian and British cultures, is in the process of becoming even more diverse.

I had very interesting conversations during the 20-minute to half hour ride: each taxi driver had his or her narrative, so diverse in experience, so human in content! It reminded me of Pope Francis’ 4 October 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, in which he states that the ‘whole of humankind forms one family, due to the common origin of all men and women, created by God in his own image.’ In between listening to the personal narratives of the driver and watching out for some crazy motorcyclists, the thoughts filtering through my mind were on the meditation in the Spiritual Exercises of the Blessed Trinity looking upon the world, and the fact that ‘all are called to a common destiny, the fullness of life in God. Moreover, there is but one plan of salvation for humankind, with its centre in Jesus Christ, who in his incarnation “has united himself in a certain manner to every person.”’

In his first encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam*, Pope Paul VI described a dialogue of salvation between the Church and the world where ‘in faithfulness to the divine initiative, the Church too must enter into a dialogue of salvation with all men and women.’ In the same spirit, Pope Francis encourages ‘dialogue and friendship in society,’ from which the concept of life as the ‘art of encounter’ with everyone, even with those at the world’s peripheries, emerges.

I do not know where I found this prayer — it sounds good! ‘O Lord the creator and redeemer of all mankind, we humbly pray for all men and women of every race in every kind of need... [we ask you to] reveal your salvation to all nations.’

### **Stalked during prayer!**

I do not know whether you ever had the experience of being watched by a cat during supper! There is a quiet intimacy established between the human and animal world! Any animal lover can confirm this. However, what about a different type of ‘human-animal’ connection? *Bellino*, my cat, would wait for me patiently on the dining room windowsill, not for me to feed him, but to go out into the Jesuit retreat house garden and start praying the rosary! Once out in the garden, he would either fall in line beside me, in front of me, occasionally causing me to trip (usually during the fourth sorrowful mystery), and sometimes he would stalk me at a near distance, which reminded me of

Peter and John who followed Jesus, at a distance, when he was arrested and taken to the High Priest's house.

Strolling in the garden at sunset, gently caressed by the slight breeze after a hot summer day with *Bellino* and his cat friends prowling around while praying the rosary often propelled my flight of spiritual fantasy into the Garden of Eden, and somehow I understood why God used to meet Adam and Even in the evening! Our first parents used to pray! They used to converse with God! My own Jesuit garden brought this very vividly to mind — with cats, birds and crickets and an odd dog or two barking further afield! The necessity of prayer is so evident in Scripture that there is nothing more clearly taught.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his general audience of 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2011, in presenting St Robert Bellarmine S.J. writing on prayer, pointed out that ‘first, prayer enlightens the mind; second, prayer nourishes faith and trust; third, prayer kindles love and prepares the mind to receive greater gifts; fourth, prayer increases humility and holy fear; fifth, frequent prayer leads to a contempt for all temporal things in the heart of the one who prays; sixth, prayer brings forth an incredible delight since by its means a man begins to taste the sweetness of the Lord; finally, prayer also confers upon one who prays no small dignity and honour.’

In his spiritually delightful book *The Gardens of God*, Cardinal Arthur Roche writes, ‘the prayer of longing which comes from the heart connects us with the long procession throughout the ages of distinguished servants of God who longed for the Lord and who lived as we do today within the poverty of our own lives, a poverty that longs for something greater.’

As to gardens, according to VEC tradition, we entrusted this coming year to the protection of God's own Rose Garden, Our Lady under the title of ‘La Madonna della Rivelazione.’

## Keep the Flame Blazing!

At sixty-two, Tom Cruise is still full of energy, surprising his fans and all with his stunts, as those who watched his performance during the closing ceremony (thankfully not a repeat of the opening one) of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games can confirm.

He received the Olympic Torch and dashed off on a bike.... across Paris to L.A. where the next Olympic Games (2028) will take place.

The combination of Tom Cruise's and the Olympic athletes' determination, perseverance and self-discipline, in keeping the Olympic torch ablaze — fire and light — reminded me of the VEC motto, ‘*Ignem veni mittere in terram.*’

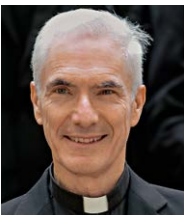
We are also invited to persevere: indeed, our life is intimately connected with a blazing torch, that of divine love and apostolic zeal! We are invited to a single heartedness, which accompanies single mindedness and a well-ordered life, to be attentive to the Lord's inner promptings and graces, and to react with a generous response. Priestly integrity springs from what God promises: ‘I will give them a single heart.’

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Let us ask for the grace to continue doing the same — receiving His gratuitous life — giving love and building up the Body of Christ in the seminary with the vision of going beyond!

A flaming Olympic torch? What is better than an elderly nun's lit up face and twinkling eyes full of love for the Lord to encourage us to keep our own Olympic flame burning?!

Or a prayerful reading of Pope Francis' new encyclical on the Sacred Heart, *Dilexit Nos*, which the deeper it is assimilated the better our own torch will be kept ablaze individually and as a College!



**FR KONRAD GRECH** has been Spiritual Director at the VEC since 2020.

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# Reflection on the Stations of the Cross

JACK RYAN

Good Friday 2024

It is easy to point to and talk about something without actually looking at it. Museum guides, tour operators, professors, they all do it. Most of the time, it is because they know well the painting, the statue, or the PowerPoint slide and they have done it so many times before that they can gesture in the correct direction whilst still looking at the group in front of them. The same cannot be true though for us and our relationship with the Cross.

The stations of the Cross are a way of making sure that we don't end up treating the Cross as an exhibit, something that we can stand next to and talk to others about, whilst still remaining somewhat detached. In these 14 stations, we are challenged to engage with, to join, and to enter into the sufferings of Christ. It is, to put it another way, a dynamic, not a static, invitation. To this end, the Holy Father, Pope Francis, reminds the Church in his Good Friday Stations of the Cross that it is Christ *who allows us* to accompany him on his way to calvary.<sup>1</sup> It is Christ now who is allowing us to join Him, and not the other way around.

It is admittedly, perhaps, far easier to talk about and point others to Christ on the Cross, than actually living the reality ourselves. It is perhaps less challenging for us to form in our minds a model of the Church that stands next to, suitably distant, from the Cross than the model of the Church formed *in and on* the Cross.

It is an uncomfortable reality, but to live as members of the Church is to live in Christ on the Cross. To put this sentiment into the words of the popular hymn, 'deep in your wounds Lord, hide and shelter me.' This jarring image invites us to consider 'to what extent do I, do we, *want* to live in Christ, wounded on the Cross?

In a few hours' time, we will hear how St John records how blood and water flowed from the pierced side of our Lord. This water and blood have, since the Church Fathers, been understood as an image for two of the sacraments: baptism and the Eucharist. The Church, and therefore, we, draw from the Cross our very sacramental existence. In a very real sense, the wood of the Cross becomes the wood with which the Church's foundations are built.

On this day especially then, when we celebrate the Cross which unites all the followers of Christ, let's pray particularly for unity amongst Christians. That what we share in the water of baptism, we may also one day share in the blood of the Eucharist.

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And, as individuals gathered here, let's ask for the grace to allow the wood of the Cross to also become the foundation with which we build our lives. Not something we are merely able to talk about or point others towards, but the place where we find genuine shelter and happiness.



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

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#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2024-03/pope-himself-writing-mediations-for-via-crucis-at-rome-colosseum.html>.

# Rosary Reflection: Pentecost

REV. MATHIAS LEDUM

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is often spoken of to be the birthday of the Church. I don't know about you, but being crammed in a house, with a loud noise filling the room like a rushing wind and people starting to speak in other tongues sounds awfully similar to one of those Filipino karaoke birthday parties I went to when I was growing up.

Jokes aside, there is something with this energetic enthusiasm of these Filipinos that can teach us something about being filled with the Spirit. Ironically enough, being filled with the Spirit made the apostles look drunk by the crowd surrounding them. Bishop Erik Varden makes the observation that 'the first recorded instance of public preaching in the Catholic Church was thought by onlookers to be a display of drunkenness.'<sup>1</sup> What was it that made them look drunk? It wasn't lads shouting silly things in a hooligan-like manner, or people trying to put a sentence together but forgetting to use consonants, neither are we talking about barely dressed girls desperately holding on to each other so as not to fall over.

On the contrary, the Apostles were filled with a power that made them speak so clearly that people from all around the world understood them, and so convincingly that up to three thousand people were baptized.

The thing that made them seem drunk was the enthusiasm, glow and fearlessness of their preaching. Isn't that something that we associate with being under the influence of wine? People tend to be more honest, more straight forward, bolder, less held back by shyness or fear. This is not saying that wine will make us better preachers, but that the eagerness of the Apostles to spread the Good News about Jesus was so great, that their influence under the Spirit with a capital S was mistaken by some to be the spirit with a small S.

Going from praying behind closed doors, to boldly preaching in the streets proves that they had received something new, something that changed their lives and something that made them want to change the lives of others. It was the Advocate, the Consoler that Jesus himself promised before his Ascension. It is here that the Church very visibly goes from being a private matter of the few, to being something universal that wants to gather the whole world into the one flock of the Good Shepherd. Rather than seeing Pentecost as the birthday of the Church, Wilfrid Stinissen, a Carmelite friar who served in Sweden, says that 'Underneath the Cross the Church is born, but on Pentecost she begins to speak.'



It is this boldness and shameless expression of the faith that I have always admired in my Filipino relatives and friends. Although to some they might seem like they're drunk, it isn't for nothing that they were called 'smugglers of the faith' by Pope Francis, because they go literally everywhere, and everywhere they go, they don't shy away from speaking about Jesus and to live out their faith, in both big and small ways.

So, the question is then: how have we used the gifts of the Holy Spirit poured out on us, on the Pentecost of our Confirmation day? Do we speak eagerly about our faith with strangers? Do we live out our faith in a convincing manner? Do our words and actions attract people to the Church, or do we just seem like a bunch of drunkards talking in our own coded language? Have we realized how empowered we are by the Holy Spirit if we dare to invoke him, or are we still hiding behind closed doors, waiting in vain for gifts that have already been given us?

Come, Lord Jesus! Come, Holy Spirit. Amen.

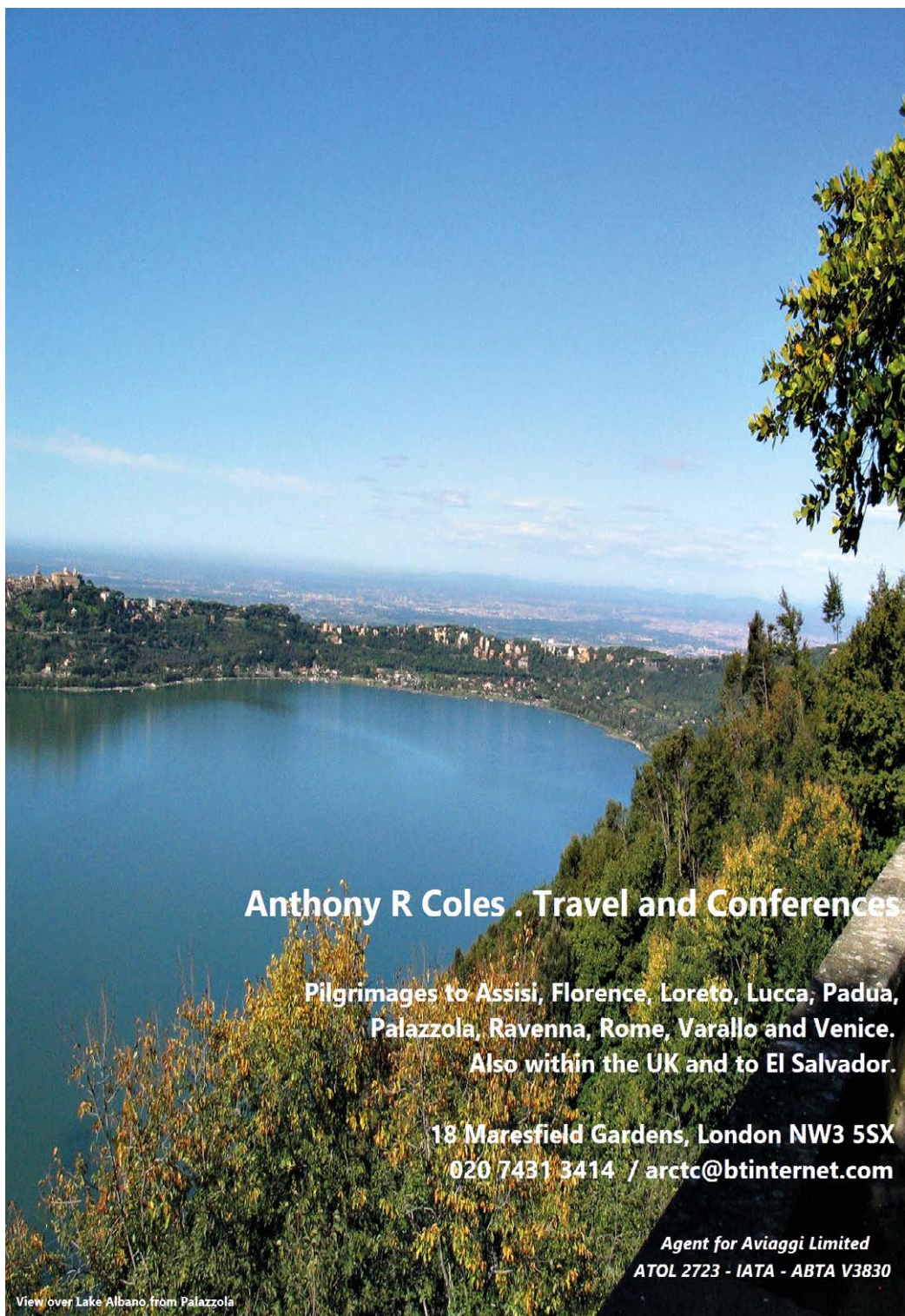


**REV. MATHIAS LEDUM** is a Deacon for the Diocese of Oslo.

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#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> <https://coramfratribus.com/words-on-the-word/pentecost-c-2019/>



## **Anthony R Coles . Travel and Conferences**

**Pilgrimages to Assisi, Florence, Loreto, Lucca, Padua,  
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View over Lake Albano from Palazzola

# News from the College Heritage Collections, 2023–24

MAURICE WHITEHEAD

The academic year 2023–24 has been the *Year of Exhibitions*, as the Venerable English College (VEC) was invited to contribute to three major international exhibitions.

## ***Sharing Treasures and Inspiration: Anglican Centre, Rome, September 2023–September 2024***

The first exhibition marked the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation in Rome in 1973 of the John Moorman Library, a specialist collection on the theology, spirituality, and history of the Anglican Communion. Entitled *Sharing Treasures and Inspiration*, the exhibition was opened by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Justin Welby, on 30 September 2023 at the Anglican Centre, located in the Palazzo Doria Pamphilj.

Fr Stephen Wang, in a short talk preceding the formal opening, explained the significance of the exhibition: he recalled the ecumenical leadership provided in 1966 both by Dr John Moorman (1905–89), then bishop of Ripon, and by Monsignor Joseph Leo Alston (1917–2006), Rector of the VEC from 1964 to 1971, at the time of the first post-Reformation official visit of an archbishop of Canterbury — Dr Michael Ramsey — to a pope — namely Paul VI. A section of the exhibition focused on the 1966 visit and the ecumenical role played by the VEC since 1966 in hosting every archbishop of Canterbury visiting Rome on business relating to ecumenical matters.

The exhibition remained in place until the end of September 2024 and was seen by many visitors, including the senior archbishops, presiding bishops, and moderators of the 42 member churches of the Anglican Communion during their meeting in Rome from 29 April to 2 May 2024.



*Items from the VEC Archives on display at the Anglican Centre exhibition*

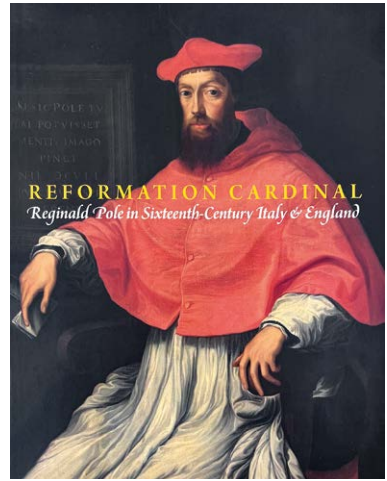
## ***Reformation Cardinal: Reginald Pole in Sixteenth-Century Italy & England, Lambeth Palace Library, 5 October to 15 December 2023***

The second exhibition was a joint enterprise between New College, Oxford, the Venerable English College, and Lambeth Palace Library which hosted the exhibition

from 5 October to 15 December 2023: it was the brainchild of Miles Young, Warden of New College.

The exhibition brought together, for the first time ever, books and manuscripts donated by Cardinal Pole to New College and to the English Hospice in Rome. The latter books survive today in the VEC heritage collections and were supplemented in the exhibition by rare items from the collections at Lambeth.

The opening, attended by Fr Stephen Wang and Professor Maurice Whitehead, also saw the launch of the accompanying book, illustrated above, edited by Dr James Willoughby (New College, Oxford), who has published on the library of the English Hospice in Rome which today forms part of the VEC Heritage Collections. With contributions from ten scholars, including Professor Abigail Brundin, Director of the British School at Rome, and Maurice Whitehead, the lavishly illustrated book traces the life and work of Cardinal Pole. The exhibition proved to be a major success.



## The Tolkien exhibitions in Rome, Naples, and Turin, 2023 and 2024

Fifty years after the death of J.R.R. Tolkien (1892–1973) and the first Italian edition of *The Hobbit*, the Italian Ministry of Culture hosted in Rome, at the *Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea* in Valle Giulia, from 16 November 2023 to 11 February 2024, a major bilingual exhibition entitled *TOLKIEN: Uomo, Professore, Autore/TOLKIEN: Man, Professor, Author*.

Compared to the large Tolkien exhibitions held in Oxford (2018), Paris (2020), and Milwaukee (2022), which highlighted particular aspects of his literary works, the Rome exhibition for the first time explored Tolkien the man, father, and friend. It included his relationships with Rome and also with the Venerable English College. On display in the exhibition were the VEC Literary Society Minute Books relating to Tolkien's association with the VEC at St Mary's Hall, Stonyhurst, during the Second World War.

As the exhibition in Rome attracted more than 80,000 visitors and proved to be a runaway success, the Italian Ministry of Culture decided at short notice to transfer it to Naples, from 16 March to 28 April 2024, and the College



*Maurice Whitehead indicating the official acknowledgement of the Venerable English College loans at the exhibition opening in Rome on 5 November 2023*



happily extended the loan of its exhibits. In Naples, a further 82,000 people visited the exhibition, prompting — again at short notice — a move to a third venue, this time Turin, for the autumn of 2024, with a second extension of the College's loan of archival materials. All of this has helped to raise the profile of the College and its Heritage Collections.

## Cataloguing the Rare Book Collection

The project to catalogue the College's rare book collection, reported on in the 2023 edition of *The Venerabile*, has made significant progress in 2024. By the end of October 2024, more than 2,100 works had been registered in the new database. The sections of the collection containing books on philosophy, numerous versions of the Bible, and the theological collections relating to the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, have been completed in their entirety for the period up to 1818 and the re-opening of the College in that year.

Close analysis of the bibliographical data reveals thus far, firstly that those volumes that made up the library's initial collection, when the College opened in 1579, appear to be largely intact. That part of the collection was built up either through donations from eminent English scholars living in Rome, such as Alan Cope (*d.* 1578), who acquired books from Christophe Plantin (*c.* 1520–89) in Antwerp, or through purchases from Roman booksellers, as proven by surviving financial records in the College Archives.

Whether books were acquired by gift or purchase, they were added to the College library by connoisseurs who were clearly familiar with the best publishers of their day. The names of the greatest printers of that era adorn the title-pages of books in the historic library: among others, these include Aldus Manutius (*c.* 1449/1452–1515), the Giunti family, active in Venice from 1489 and in Lyon from 1519, and Plantin.

As might be expected in an ecclesiastical library, Latin predominates, and very few works are printed in vernacular languages such as English, French, or Italian. The bulk of those works printed in Arabic, Syriac, and Aramaic were donated in the nineteenth century by Dr (later Cardinal) Nicholas Wiseman (1802–65), Rector from 1828 to 1840, and Cardinal Edward Howard (1829–92), cardinal protector of the College from 1878 to 1892. As a working study library, the collection contains very few illustrated books, and most of the bindings are in vellum, with only a handful of volumes having high-quality armorial bindings.

Losses attributable to sequestration of volumes following the Napoleonic invasion of Rome in 1798 mainly relate to works published during the Age of the Enlightenment, as well as volumes on sciences such as astronomy, mathematics, and physics. Though Napoleonic requisitions certainly emptied part of our collection, a recently discovered uncatalogued archival document seems to indicate that some books were returned to the College shortly before it reopened in 1818. A typewritten report drawn up 150 years later, in March 1968, indicates that a section of the library devoted to scientific works, although then in a poor state of preservation, still existed. Among those volumes, the College had, for example, an edition by the renowned Jesuit polymath, Athanasius

Kircher (1602–80), entitled *Iter exstaticum coeleste*, published in 1671, as well as a rare work by Galileo, *Discorso al Ser[enissi]mo Cosimo*, published in 1612.

Between 1968 and 1974, some of the College's rare scientific books unfortunately appear to have been lost or stolen. This is confirmed by several letters exchanged between Sotheby & Co in July 1974: the above-mentioned Galileo volume had initially been in the possession of a 'continental dealer' who had bought it in Heidelberg in 1972. It ultimately ended up as a lot in an auction in 1974, and, as the College did not have the financial means to buy it back, it was definitively lost to the VEC Heritage Collections.

On a more positive note, the current on-going systematic survey of the provenance of books still in the Collections, which is being made available through our emerging new catalogue, now enables us to reconstruct a network of donors stretching from Bavaria to northern Europe. Renowned Catholic authors regularly offered the College library copies of their newly published works: these included Cesare Baronio (1538–1607), an Oratorian based at Santa Maria in Vallicella (the *Chiesa Nuova*), who donated volumes of his *Annales Ecclesiastici* as and when they were published. The invaluable work of our specialist cataloguer, Dr Renaud Milazzo, is progressively revealing, literally daily, new facets of the College's history, most notably through the identity of numerous members of the English Catholic nobility and gentry among its benefactors and students.

## Researcher visits to the Heritage Collections

During the academic year 2023–24, the Schwarzenbach Reading Room has continued to be a busy place: 43 researchers were welcomed from Austria (1), Belgium (1), Germany (1), Italy (22), The Netherlands (1), the UK (11) and the USA (6), and they consulted a total of 145 documents. Additionally, dozens of e-mail research enquiries from all corners of the globe were answered.

While almost every researcher discovers useful information in the heritage collections, some make truly ground-breaking discoveries which significantly help propel forward their research, including towards other archival collections elsewhere: such moments are rewarding for all concerned. One such 'golden moment' occurred in June 2024 when a doctoral student from the USA, researching the life of Thomas Baker (1606–58), the only Englishman for whom a bust by Bernini survives, found important evidence of his having visited the College in 1638: this discovery promises to lead on to further significant discoveries elsewhere which would not otherwise be possible without the important details contained in the College Archives.

## Recent acquisitions

Thanks to an international network of friends of the College aware of the development of the heritage collections in recent years, there now exists an informal early warning system to help identify — and, hopefully, acquire — College-related artefacts and documents which may appear on the market. The past year has witnessed two

acquisitions safely secured through this channel.

To illustrate this, during the summer of 2023, an eagle-eyed friend of the College spotted for sale online, on the website of an art-dealer based in Vienna, a framed miniature portrait of *circa* 1840, described as the ‘Portrait of an Anglican priest’, which thitherto had belonged to an unidentified collection in England. Thanks to a detailed knowledge of English Catholic history, the person concerned recognized the portrait as being that of Dr Charles Michael Baggs (1806–45), who studied at the Venerable English College, subsequently becoming vice-rector, then rector (1840–44), and *cameriere d’onore* to Pope Gregory XVI, with particular responsibility for presenting all English visitors, both Catholic and protestant, admitted to a private audience with the pope.



*The newly acquired portrait of Dr Charles Michael Baggs (1806–45)*

The portrait, by an unknown miniaturist, was presumably completed soon after Dr Baggs’s nomination in 1844 as vicar apostolic of the Western District of England, the seat of which was then at Prior Park, Bath.

Interestingly, the pectoral cross that he is shown as wearing is almost certainly the one presented to him by the students of the Venerable English College on his appointment as vicar-apostolic, a post that he was to hold only for a short time owing to his untimely death at the age of thirty-nine years.<sup>1</sup>

The following list of historical material, donated over the past year by former students, staff, and friends of the Venerable English College, demonstrates the ways in which the heritage collections are continually being enriched:

- Ephemera, including tickets and postcards, relating to visits to the Vatican Museums, catacombs, etc., kept by Robert Gowland (1903–73) at the time of his priestly ordination in Rome at Easter 1929, donated by his niece, Judith Clancy.
- Examination certificates and papers of Peter Laurence Kirkham (1942–2023), priest of the diocese of Leeds, donated through the good offices of Fr John Metcalfe.
- Additional notebooks and historical notes compiled by Fr Henry Rope (1880–1978), Archivist of the Venerable English College, 1936–57, donated through the good offices of Monsignor John Allen.
- *Liturgy at the Venerabile, 1960–1970* — a portfolio of liturgical music used at the College between 1960 and 1970, with accompanying background notes compiled by John Ainslie (VEC, 1960–67, and Choirmaster, 1963–66),



Thomas Atthill (VEC 1963–70, and Choirmaster 1966–68), Stephen Dean (VEC 1965–69, and Choirmaster 1968–69), and Christopher Larkman (VEC, 1963–70), donated by John Ainslie.

- Photographs of Fr Francis Wahle (1929–2024), and correspondence with his father, Dr Karl Wahle in Vienna, during his years at a seminarian at the VEC (1959–66): donated by Fr Wahle shortly before his death.
- Doctoral robes of Francis Clark (1919–2009), Doctor of Divinity of the Gregorian University, Rome (1959), and subsequently Reader in Religious Studies at the Open University, and a friend of the Venerable English College: donated by his wife, the late Mrs Pauline Clark, through the good offices of Provost Emeritus Canon Anthony Churchill.
- A complete run of *The Ushaw Magazine*, 1891–1994, donated by Quentin and Lucien Smith, in memory of their father, John Wilfred Smith, KGCHS (1930–2006), an alumnus of Ushaw College, Durham.
- Alban Butler, *The Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs and other Principal Saints* (4 vols, London, 1928), a gift of the estate of Joan Frances Diamond (1919–2002), presented by her nephew, John Adamson, of Cambridge.
- A small collection of books on English Catholic history from the late-nineteenth-century St George’s Lending Library, operated by the community of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God at the Mater Dei Convent, Piazza di Spagna following its opening in 1886. ‘The volumes were presented to the VEC Heritage Collections on the occasion of the departure of the community from Rome in September 2023.

We are truly grateful for all of the above generous donations.

## Outreach from the Heritage Collections

The outreach work of the Heritage Collections has continued apace over the past year.

By special request of the students of the College, Maurice Whitehead provided a number of informal evening talks throughout the academic year on the history of post-Reformation British Catholicism.

Owing to the fact that many of the students attending had already had up to six hours of academic lectures earlier in any particular day, the evening events, which began on 16 October 2023, were made as interactive as possible and included the singing of ballads relating to Reformation history. Many of those present will long remember being introduced to the particularly lively ballad by John Heywood (c. 1497–c. 1580), written for the marriage in 1554 of Mary Tudor and Philip II of Spain. Sung with gusto on several repeated occasions, by popular request from the students, to the catchy music of *Pastime with Good Company*, composed by Henry VIII, the strains from the common room reverberated around the College and must have been audible over successive weeks to many of our neighbours!

During the year, the Heritage Collections provided a series of visits and talks for the following guests:

- 13 November 2023: twelve award-holders from the British School at Rome, followed on 18 December by an archival workshop.
- 7 December 2023: the Archbishop of Wales, the Most Reverend Andrew John (Bishop of Bangor), his chaplain, the Reverend James Tout, and his personal assistant, Verity Sterling.
- 12 February 2024: 50 students of Haberdashers' Hatcham College, led by their teacher, Samuel Thompson.
- 15 February 2024: Professor Raphaële Mouren, Head of Research Collections at the British School at Rome, and Cécile Martini, Director of the Library of the *École française de Rome*.
- 21 February 2024: a group of 12 History of Art Masters students and staff from the University of Edinburgh, led by Professor Carol Richardson. The visit included an archival workshop.
- 8 April 2024: Anne Giles, from Canberra, collateral descendant of the family of Bishop William Giles (1830–1913), Rector of the Venerable English College from 1888 until his death.
- 9 April 2024: Visit of members of the Association of Spouses of Ambassadors to the Holy See (Angola, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cuba, Germany, Poland, Senegal, and the United Kingdom)
- 15 April 2024: Christian Elwes and Margaret Hood Elwes, Chair of Sir Harold Hood's Charitable Trust.
- 24 April 2024: Dr Matthew Payne, Keeper of the Muniments of Westminster Abbey.
- 25 April 2024: a group of 30 UK papal knights and dames of Association of Papal Orders in Great Britain, led by John W. B Gibbs, KCSG.
- 5 May 2024: visit of Lord Browne of Madingley, Lord David Neuberger, former President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom from 2012 to 2017, and Lady Neuberger, and Patrick Milner.
- 16 May 2024: visit of members of the British Catholic Parliamentarians' group — Alexander Stafford MP, and Sir Edward Leigh MP, together with Lady Mary Leigh, and Dr Anabel Inge and Simona Prete from the British Embassy to the Holy See.
- 10 June 2024: visit of 12 members of the Farm Street (London) Young Adults' Group, led by Fr James Conway, SJ.

Additionally, on 9 April 2024 at the Beda College, Maurice Whitehead gave a talk to staff and students both of the Beda and of the Scots College entitled 'Hiding

in plain sight: Jesuits and seminary priests in late Tudor and early Stuart England and Wales’. This explored a range of new theories as to how, despite an elaborate system of English government espionage, so many priests managed to re-enter their native land largely undetected following their years of training as seminarians in the English colleges in continental Europe.

## Consalvi symposium and concert, 24 January 2024

The bicentenary of the death of Ercole Consalvi (1757–1824), Cardinal Secretary of State (1800–06 and 1814–23), and cardinal protector of the Venerable English College from its re-opening in 1818 until 1823, was duly commemorated on Wednesday 24 January 2024.

The day began with a Requiem Mass at San Marcello al Corso, where the cardinal is buried. There, the chief concelebrant was the current Cardinal Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, with the Reverend James Finnegan of the Venerable English College as deacon.

At the invitation of the Vatican Secretariat of State, the VEC and the British Embassy to the Holy See — which have a long track record of working together closely — jointly promoted two events honouring the cardinal’s memory: a symposium entitled *Consalvi and the United Kingdom* — an invitation-only event, owing to limitations of space — held at the VEC on 24 January 2024; and, that same evening, a concert entitled *Power, Patronage, & Diplomacy: Cardinal Ercole Consalvi (1757–1824) and music*, given by the British professional ensemble, Cappella Fede, directed by Dr Peter Leech of Cardiff University: this was held at the Basilica of San Lorenzo in Damaso, the church where Consalvi was baptized, and which is also the parish church of the College.

At the symposium, chaired by Dr Richard Smith, Principal Historian of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in London, four speakers explored the impact of Consalvi on Britain, including his key role as cardinal protector:

- Dr John Martin Robinson, the biographer of Ercole Consalvi, in a paper entitled ‘The Young Consalvi’, focussed on his education, particularly at the diocesan seminary at Frascati as a protégé of the then bishop, Cardinal Henry Benedict Stuart (1725–1807), the Jacobite pretender to the throne of England.
- Professor Judith Champ, of Oscott College, Birmingham, and a member of the VEC Trust, explored the subject of ‘England, Ireland and Rome: Ercole Consalvi and the struggle for Catholic Emancipation’.
- Tim Knox, Director of the Royal Collection, London, provided an illustrated talk entitled ‘Sir Thomas Lawrence’s portrait of Cardinal Consalvi for the Waterloo Chamber at Windsor Castle’.
- Alice Martin, Head of the Devonshire Collection at Chatsworth rounded off the symposium with ‘Consalvi and the Devonshires’, a paper exploring Consalvi’s friendship with Elizabeth Christiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire (1758–1824).



*Members of Cappella Fede, director Peter Leech (second from the right) at the end their concert at San Lorenzo in Damaso*

The concert recreated, for the first time since 1824, the sophisticated sound worlds of Ercole Consalvi from three church settings that he would have known well: the cathedral at Frascati that he knew as a student studying at the diocesan seminary there; St Peter's Basilica in Rome; and his own family's parish church, San Lorenzo in Damaso.

Drawing on a range of recently re-discovered, high quality late baroque manuscript music which has never been published, the concert included exciting modern first performances by composers including Sebastiano Bolis (c. 1750–1804), Pietro Alessandro Guglielmi (1728–1804), and Niccolò Zingarelli (1752–1837) who were all active in Ercole Consalvi's circle. The concert also included a work by Domenico Cimarosa (1749–1801), whose compositions were much admired by Consalvi.

Members of Cappella Fede, who had previously provided memorable music under the baton of Peter Leech at the *Memory, Martyrs, and Mission* concert given at the VEC in April 2018, and at San Giorgio al Velabro, the titular church of St John Henry Newman, on the evening of the latter's canonization in 2019, again excelled themselves: their stunning performance of outstanding late baroque Roman music helped further explode the popular myth that Italian baroque music came to an end around 1750.

### **The Rome launch of the *Oxford History of British and Irish Catholicism*, 12 April 2024**

The past year has witnessed a major development in the historiography of British and Irish Catholicism with the publication of the five-volume *Oxford History of British and Irish Catholicism*.

Co-edited by Professor John McCafferty, Chair of the Irish Manuscripts Commission and Director of the Mícheál Ó Cléirigh Institute at University College,

Dublin, and Dr James Kelly, Sweeting Associate Professor in the history of Catholicism at Durham University, the five volumes of contributions from more than 80 authors analyze, for the first time in an integrated manner, Catholicism in the British Isles from the break with Rome to the present day. The aim of the volumes is to transcend insularity by adopting a ‘three kingdoms’ approach to subjects covered, analyzing developments in England and Wales, Scotland, and Ireland.

This major publishing event was celebrated with three book launches — in Dublin, London, and in Rome. The latter was held at St Isidore’s College on 12 April 2024, and the VEC was represented at the event by Fr Stephen Wang, Dr Renaud Milazzo, and by Maurice Whitehead who had contributed to Volume IV of the collection a chapter on Catholic education in the period from Catholic Emancipation in 1829 to the outbreak of the First World War.

### A personal valedictory note

As many readers will already be aware, this report is my final one as Director of Heritage Collections and Research Fellow, as I plan to retire in the spring of 2025, by which time I shall have completed ten years at the College.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the very many people — staff, students, alumni, members of the Venerable English College Trust, and many friends of the College, too numerous to list individually — who have helped me in my work over the past decade. In particular, thanks are due to my Italian colleagues who have shown great patience and kindness in tolerating and making sense of my faltering Italian. Especial thanks are due to my wife, Janet, and to our two sons, Lawrence and Edward, who have supported me constantly during my time in Rome.

It has been a great privilege to be the temporary custodian of collections of such international historical importance. I wish my successor every success in conserving and promoting the College’s Heritage Collections long into the future. *Ad meliora semper!*



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

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#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Williams, Michael E. “Baggs, Charles Michael (1806–1845), college head and vicar apostolic of the western district.” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 Sep. 2004; accessed 20 Oct. 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1033>

# Schola Report 2023–24

RYAN HAWKES

The great American musician Frank Zappa said that ‘a composer is a guy who goes around forcing his will on unsuspecting air molecules, often with the assistance of unsuspecting musicians,’ and I’m quite sure that the same might be said of an English College Schola Master. Over this year I have found the opportunity to direct the *Schola Cantorum* a pleasure and a privilege, and I must begin this note by thanking the singers and the community at large for always being gracious and dedicated co-conspirators in our wonderful attacks on the air molecules of Rome. We’ve had an enjoyable and very successful year of singing thanks to their hard work.

Of course, mention must be made of the author’s predecessor, Fr James Finnegan (Liverpool), who was responsible for leading the Schola through some challenging moments and ensuring that our great musical tradition was not weakened by the COVID-19 pandemic, nor the reduction in the size of the community. His time as Schola Master was marked, yes, by outstanding musical excellence, but also by his (in-)famous sense of humour. He does not, however, find himself ‘off the hook’ post-resignation, and continues to be an important presence in the rich musical life of our Venerable College.

The year began well with all of the New Men enlisting, including Mr Xavier Ryan (Melbourne) to whom I am grateful for his expert accompaniment both of our rehearsals and our performances throughout the year. Several other new and former members also chose to join the ranks, making us 16-strong.

Our first engagement was the traditional Advent Meditation which ran from 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> December. The Schola sang some beloved classics such as Mgr Whitmore’s arrangement of Boris Ord’s well-known *Adam lay y-bounden*, and an arrangement by the same of the traditional German carol *Es ist ein Ros entsprungen*, as well as original descants for *Lo! He comes with clouds descending* and *Hills of the north, rejoice!* which benefited from the addition of the trumpeting of Mr Matteo Gentile (Conservatorio di Musica ‘S. Cecilia’) which never fails to astonish. Fr Andrew Coy’s beautiful setting of the *Ave Maria* text was sung by a small ensemble: Rev. Ryan Browne (Portsmouth), Mr Jonathan Henry (Birmingham), and the Schola Master. Both evenings’ Meditations were well attended and well received, and many of our regular guests commented that year after year they are impressed anew by the quality of the singing; some even seemed to be moved to tears... good tears, we presume!

Our second showing of the year was in our parish church of San Lorenzo in Damaso where we were fortunate enough to be invited again by the Rector of the Pontifical North American College to sing at the Station Mass on Tuesday in the fourth week of Lent. The Schola sang some simple chant and the Lent Prose, *Attende Domine*, with polyphonic verses sung by a small group. It was a great success, especially considering that Mass began before dawn, and it was wonderful to see the scores of pilgrims who had come from all over the city to assist before going on to work or university.

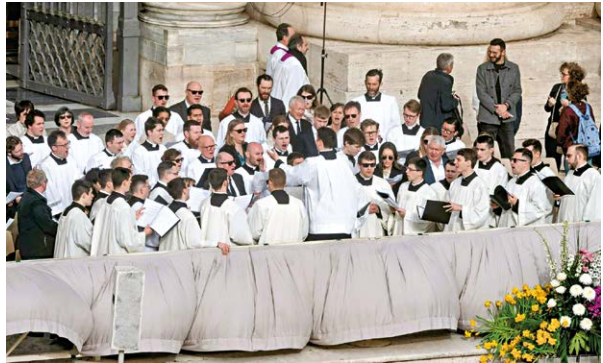


From a Lenten morning's mourning to paschal joy! A couple of busy weeks passed and we found ourselves once more in St Peter's Square asking 'can it really be Easter again already?' with our visiting friends and family and our peers from the Pontifical Beda College. Before the



Papal Mass we belted out our favourite *Alleluia! Sing to Jesus* in heavenly harmony before joining forces with the Pontifical German and Hungarian College to sing a four-part canon *Resurrexit Christus*. It's traditional for both colleges to sing on this occasion, but this is the first time in recorded history that the two have actually sung together. Thanks must go to Mr Jack Ryan (Diocese of Portsmouth) for suggesting this initiative and also to Maestro Alexander Deick, the Schola Master at the Germanicum et Hungaricum for his enthusiasm and cooperation. The question was raised, of course, of whether we should use an Italianate or Germanic pronunciation of the Latin, but it was settled amicably and, as far as the Schola Master can recollect, we ended up with something of a compromise. The sound of the massed choir of 85 voices was quite stunning, and surely a fitting way for the Resurrection to be announced to the City of Rome.

We decided to wrap up the year by singing during Holy Communion at our community Mass on Trinity Sunday, treating pilgrims to César Franc's *Panis Angelicus* and a newly-written hymn set to the German volkslied tune *Kein schöner Land in dieser Zeit*.



As my time as Schola Master draws to a close, I must again thank the Schola for their trust and hard work throughout what has been a musically impressive year. May all of our attacks on the air molecules of the city of Rome be for the greater glory of Almighty God.



**RYAN HAWKES** is a fifth-year seminarian for the Diocese of Portsmouth, currently on placement in his Diocese.



# The Year in Pictures

BARNABAS MERCER



*The seminary begins its year with an unforgettable pilgrimage to the Holy Land (picture taken at the steps just by the Holy Sepulchre). Thankfully we returned to Rome safely before the escalation of the conflict. We continue to pray as a community for peace in the Holy Land and all war-torn countries. Special thanks to Fr Mervyn Tower (bottom right) for guiding us so remarkably throughout the pilgrimage.*



*The community visits the seminary of the Latin Patriarchate in Beit Jala, as well as its parish church for Mass. The Rector of the seminary, Fr Bernard Poggi, gives a moving and encouraging address to the community.*



*Following our College's tradition, Holy Mass is offered during November for the repose of the souls of all deceased friends and benefactors of the college, as well as for any names inscribed by seminarians or Mass attendees in our book of remembrance.*



*It was our pleasure to welcome this year's jubilarians to celebrate their priestly anniversaries with a Mass presided by Bishop Tom Williams. Ad multos annos!*



*The College celebrates its greatest annual feast on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December: Martyrs' Day. Celebrated on the anniversary of the death of the college's first martyr, St Ralph Sherwin, this feast commemorates the sacrifice made by the college's forty-four martyrs who ministered to the faithful during the persecution in England and Wales. In the evening, a relic of St Ralph Sherwin is venerated, and the Te Deum is sung in thanksgiving for the martyrs' witness to the faith, a tradition that has continued for hundreds of years.*



*The College opens its doors for a public Rorate Mass, presided over by Fr Michael Glover, traditionally celebrated in Advent during the sunrise. Candles provide the only source of lighting during the celebration before the coming of the day.*

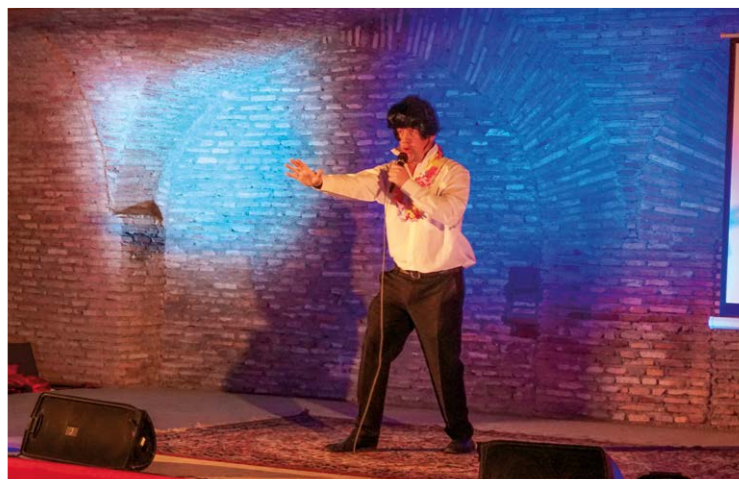


*The College hosts our beautiful Advent meditation with readings, hymns and music led by our Schola, and a reflection given by the Rector.*





*The Schola, full of anticipatory Advent joy in its post-Advent Meditation photo.*



*The College treats the unsuspecting public with a show after the Advent Meditation, with acts ranging from barbershop to sketches and even some audience-participation!*



*Rector Fr Stephen Wang conducts the traditional Epiphany blessing of the College doors with the help of some enthusiastic seminarians and our trusty stepladder.*



*At the College's Parish church, San Lorenzo in Damaso, a concert marking the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the Cardinal Secretary of State, Ercole Consalvi was hosted by the College and the British Embassy to the Holy See. The concert was performed by the Capella Fede, and conducted by Peter Leech.*



*In the same church, Vice-Rector Fr Christopher Warren presides over the College's 'Station Mass,' as part of the series of Masses being said in different churches in Rome during Lent.*



*The procession during our Palm Sunday Mass, celebrated at Palazzola.*





*'I give you a new commandment...'* Our house Spiritual Director Fr Konrad washes the feet of some of the seminarians and Mass-attendees during the beautiful celebration of Christ's Institution of the Eucharist on Maundy Thursday.



*The Blessed Sacrament is brought to our resplendent Altar of Repose for Adoration until midnight.*



*'We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world.'* The Cross is venerated as part of our Good Friday Liturgy.



*'By his holy and glorious wounds, may Christ the Lord guard us and protect us.'*  
Pastoral Director Fr David King prepares the Paschal Candle during the Easter Vigil.



*The College Schola continues its annual tradition of singing with great bravado at St Peter's on Easter Sunday along with the Beda College, led by our Schola Master, Mr Ryan Hawkes.*



*Rev. Mr James Finnegan does the College proud whilst 'deaconing' the Easter Sunday Mass at St Peter's. Image © Vatican Media*







*The first batch of new Candidates for Holy Orders with Cardinal Gugerotti: Mr Stuart McGovern, Mr Ryan Hawkes, Mr Jack Ryan, and Mr Jonathan Henry.*



*Mr Xavier Ryan signs his name into the Liber Ruber along with other new members of the house.*



*Déjà vu! The second batch of new Candidates for Holy Orders with Cardinal Roche: Mr Ludvig Hareide, Mr Barnabas Mercer, Mr Luke Theobald, and Mr Xavier Ryan.*



*For this year's celebration of the College's Scandinavian presence, 'Nordic Night,' Ludvig Hareide dons the beard and helmet to give the traditional speech commemorating the College's relationship with the Scandinavian Church, with perhaps a couple of comments concerning ancestral pillaging thrown in...*





*Pastoral Director Fr David King presides over the procession of the Blessed Sacrament within the College during the feast of Corpus Christi.*



*Tanti auguri to Rev. Ryan Browne, who was ordained to the diaconate at the end of the Villaggiatura in the Chapel at Palazzola on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024.*



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# The College Diary 2023–24

FR MARTIN FYLES

**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> September – Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2023:** The year begins with the induction days for our new men! Our two first years, Aleksander and Andre, are picked up from the airport, and within minutes Andre falls asleep in the car on the way back to the college, a premonition of things to come. Conversation at dinner time for the duration of the induction period is dominated by the Sourtoe Cocktail, a somewhat curious beverage: a shot of whisky with the unusual accompaniment of a mummified human toe. The new men are quick to memorise the anthem, ‘You can drink it fast, you can drink it slow, but your lips must touch the toe.’ Why we are talking about this remains unclear. Plans are made for a (new) college cocktail, the ingredients of which are unsuitable for publication. Otherwise, the Induction Week passes smoothly and the new men settle in well.

**Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> September – Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2023:** For the first time since the Covid pandemic brought the world to a halt in 2020, the new academic year begins with a pilgrimage. Our destination is the Holy Land, and an introductory session in the Third Library serves both to get us all in the mood, and to introduce our guide for the week, Canon Mervyn Tower. A peculiar mixture of intrigue and inadequacy fills the hearts of the assembled seminarians every time Mervyn pronounces the words, ‘as you already know,’ before dazzling us with yet another nugget of information mined from the remotest corners of biblical academia. Our excitement continues to build throughout the journey that begins the next day, and by the time we first set eyes on the illuminated walls of Old Jerusalem, some time in the early hours of the following morning, it is at a veritable fever pitch.

Finding ourselves amid the elegant surroundings of the Austrian Hospice in the very heart of the city only enhances the experience (as does the food of said hospice), and the next few days are full of highlights such as the Via Crucis to the Holy Sepulchre, visits to other shrines marking major moments in the life and ministry of Jesus, prayer at the Western Wall, and a trip to join the community at Beit Jala for Sunday Mass. There are also some surprising revelations: forced to celebrate *ad orientem* due to architectural limitations, Fr Konrad makes the most of this unexpected opportunity to live out his secret traditionalist fantasy and engage in some mutual enrichment at the most memorable VEC Mass since the concelebration experiments of the 1960s. And, as we sample the delights of freshly squeezed pomegranate juice on the edge of one of the world’s oldest cities, Jericho, Viktor Torres Airava decides it’s time to have a go on one of the world’s oldest forms of transport, the camel. No-one is quite sure what the camel makes of it all, but its jovial rider has rarely looked happier (which is saying something).



After exploring Jerusalem and the surrounding region (including a prolonged float on the Dead Sea — compared poetically by Canon Mervyn to the oil from a can of tuna), we head north towards the Sea of Galilee. A stroll down the promenade at Tiberias leaves a group of happy VEC pilgrims with a thirst that proves remarkably difficult to slake at one of the local seaside bars, the reason being that it appears to be staffed entirely by people who, though friendly, have never before served drinks nor, apparently, seen money. Rather more refreshing — and significantly quicker — are the dips that we take in the Sea of Galilee itself, while a boat trip on its pleasant waters proves one of the most memorable experiences of the whole pilgrimage. Just as noteworthy, though for different reasons, is our visit to a church with an altar shaped like a boat, where the obligatory tour provided by the on-site expert turns out to last somewhat longer than the Exodus. The seminarians and, it should be noted, the Rector, remain upright, if not necessarily attentive, as the guide proceeds relentlessly; a breakaway group led by the Spiritual Director and consisting of almost all the other formation staff proves rather less tenacious, and seeks much-needed succour in the form of ice cream. More spiritual nourishment — with fewer calories — is found at sites of such stunning beauty and religious significance as Capernaum or the Mount of the Beatitudes, and by the time we return home, not even a bout of food poisoning can completely take the shine of what has been an unforgettable experience for us all.

**Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023:** The community bids a very fond farewell to one of its most colourful characters, the legendary Viktor Torres Airava, as he heads back to Helsinki to begin his pastoral year. The Rector assures him of our prayers at Sunday lunch, and Finland's greatest (indeed, only) seminarian responds in inimitable fashion with a lengthy and highly informative account of the bitter rivalry between the country's capital, where he is from, and Turku, where he will soon be based. He departs after lunch, wearing his duffel coat and both of his passports around his neck, somewhat in the manner of a Finnish-Brazilian Paddington Bear. There is a spring in Viktor's step: after months, nay, years of tireless intercession (including, at one point, urging the Almighty at Vespers to fulfil his desires 'by the end of the week, or, at the very least, the end of the month'), Helsinki finally has a bishop!

**Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023:** The house is in a frenzy, and for good reason. Not only house jobs reshufflement upon us, but, contrary to what has apparently been common practice since the day when St Ralph Sherwin was first appointed horse-and-cartman, the reshuffle is to take place over two whole days, via pre-booked appointments with the Rector, and in October, not February. The revered tradition of waiting in an anxious huddle outside the Rector's office, rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep as they emerge one by one, beaming or ashen-faced from the inner sanctum, is thus consigned to history. 'Is nothing sacred?' lament the college elders. By Tuesday evening, the upshot of the Rector's rejigging is nonetheless clear: Mathias Ledum takes over from Joseph O'Brien as MC, as widely predicted; Stuart McGovern will bring some straightforward Irish savviness to the role of Capo Sacristan; it seems that Ryan Hawkes might never stop singing (or at least, encouraging us to sing), as he

becomes both Capo Choirmaster and Schola Master; while Jonathan Henry takes the helm as Editor of this august publication.

**Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2023:** In the morning, the house gathers for what proves to be a fruitful workshop on the Synod, presented by our Academic Tutor, Julian Paparella. The encouraging experience of open conversations in the Spirit that form the bulk of the session prompts the Rector to let down his guard and make an excessively bold claim over supper, namely that the hummus in the Holy Land has nothing on the hummus from the Co-op opposite Franco's barbershop on the Corso. Fr David King and Barnabas Mercer are clearly unconvinced. A passing James Finnegan notes that, as proud members of Arundel and Brighton — a diocese that must have more branches of Waitrose than one could shake a proverbial stick at — these two definitely know a thing or two about quality hummus.

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023:** An unusual package arrives at breakfast, delivered to the Diarist by Stuart. Upon opening it, the Diarist discovers a pair of M&S slippers, quite unmistakably from their 'For the Older Gentleman' range. This is not, however, a none-too-subtle comment on the recipient's age (which would be a bit rich, coming from one of the few people in the entire house who's even more ancient than he is). It transpires instead that this superbly comfy footwear was left in a room at Palazzola in October 2022, and, in a turn of events reminiscent of the Italian postal service at its most whimsically inept, the slippers have now somehow been delivered to the College sacristy in October 2023. This leads Dave Bench to wonder wistfully if the cologne he left behind at Villeggiatura might come back to him in similar fashion. His concern is understandable: after all, this is cologne that has been tried and tested to allegedly devastating effect on the female population of Coventry. On another level — and one hardly has the heart to say it — it's a bit late for all that, Deacon Dave...

In the evening, new man Aleksander Roscins puts in an early bid to be a future Choirmaster by being his own personal conductor throughout the year's first Choir Practice. Capo Choirmaster, Ryan Hawkes, is probably just relieved to see at least one person who is clearly very happy to be at the event, as well as to get his first rehearsal as Capo under his belt.

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2023:** A week into his idiosyncratic choice of licence, namely, Arabic and Islamic Studies at PISAI, James Finnegan has now taken to greeting all and sundry with a cheery, if barely comprehensible, 'sabah al-khayr' (or 'good morning,' as the less incorrigibly quirky might put it). His wholehearted enthusiasm for his newly chosen path is, of course, to be admired, but one fears it can only be a matter of time before he is found lying prone on a divan in his quarters, puffing languidly on a shisha pipe, while mumbling unintelligible nonsense about the souks of Old Baghdad.

**Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2023:** Howls of despair echo around the snug. Their source is Stuart McGovern, and their cause is Ireland crashing out of the rugby union World Cup at the hands of the All Blacks. Still, one assumes the fact that England have



progressed safely to the semi-finals will be of some consolation to *any* seminarian of the Venerable English College, no? (Best not to voice such an opinion to Stuart directly, however. No responsibility can be taken for what might happen if one does).

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023:** An eventful Wednesday community night. First of all, what sounds like a small bomb going off just before dinner turns out to be a table collapsing under the weight of prosecco bottles (no harm done, though, as, mercifully, their contents were already coursing through the veins of the assembled guests). Then, as the entire refectory sings Happy Birthday in his honour, Jonathan Henry's face is a picture. A picture that suggests one of three things: a) he wants to kill somebody, b) he's eaten too much Bibos amatriciana and now has chronic indigestion, or c) he's just not that keen on a large group of people — many of whom he doesn't even know — singing at him. (Actually, the answer may well be both a) and c), with the person he wants to kill being James Finnegan, who started the singing.)

The musical tributes don't end there, however. Beloved former Rector Mgr Philip Whitmore is also among us, together with a number of fellow priests of his year group. As they are celebrating thirty years of priesthood, a heartfelt chorus of *Ad Multos Annos* ensues, prompting the Rector Emeritus to remark that, in all his years as Schola Master and then as the man in charge, he never managed to persuade any of us to sing *Ad Multos* any faster. If anything, it's got even slower since he left us, and now probably feels about as long as his priesthood.

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023:** The appearance of Aleksander Roscins in the corridor, as various members of the community are enjoying their post-prandial coffee, causes some consternation. This is because he is dressed in what appears to be an antique white nightshirt, grey shorts, knee-length black socks and black shoes. The word that springs to mind to describe such a fashion catastrophe is 'totalitarian.' No explanation is forthcoming.

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2023:** Far away in Stockholm, Antonio Bajlovic (late of this parish) is ordained deacon. Alas, the fact that flights are either very expensive or involve a 12 hour stop off in Belgrade, of all places, means that in the end only the Rector is able to get to Sweden to support everybody's favourite Croatian on his big day. He takes our warmest wishes with us, although they are somewhat tempered by our indignation when we hear afterwards that Antonio — a man never known to have voluntarily produced a musical note before — opted to sing every part of the Mass available to him, and with some panache. Antonio later confirms that, yes, of course he could have been Schola Master during his time here, he'd just had far too many house jobs already. (He had had two.)

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2023:** The *entente cordiale* receives a welcome boost in an age of British isolationism on the one hand, and persistent, irredeemable Frenchness on the other, as the splendidly monikered Fr Simon Liot de Nortbécourt joins the community for the rest of the academic year. Certain members of the house naturally approve very

warmly of the little aristocratic preposition in his elongated surname. And whatever attitude the rest of us may take to the *ancien régime*, we all hope he settles in well in our increasingly international community.

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2023:** Fr Simon is indeed settling in well and, in his unassuming way, making quite an impression. Not many people, when faced with the old conversation starter, ‘What would be your specialist subject on Mastermind?’ could give a confident answer in a heartbeat. Even fewer are likely to respond, ‘The Imperial Japanese Navy in the Pacific War, of course.’ There is a palpable sense that the academic standing of the College has received a notable boost in the shape of this doctoral student.

Later on, an otherwise unmemorable exchange between Stuart McGovern and the Diarist is enlivened by the sudden appearance of Nico Lorenz Panlican at the top of the stairs, and he is unusually agitated. Polite as ever, he utters the immortal words, ‘Sorry to bother you, but there’s a bat in my room.’ Cue an excited rush to the Common Room corridor, where we do indeed find a furry flying intruder in a state of frantic anxiety, bouncing off Nico’s ceiling like the world’s largest moth. The initial excitement quickly gives way to the realisation that bat removal is one of the things for which even six years in seminary do not remotely prepare us. Fortunately, turning the lights off and closing the door for a few minutes appears to have the desired effect, and it would seem that Nico’s unwelcome roommate eventually leaves of his or her own accord.

**Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023:** The VEC’s resident mixologist, Luke Theobald, decides that the College’s social life needs a little spicing up, and puts on a cocktail evening. The garden room is transformed into a dimly lit speakeasy, and an enthusiastic group of would-be cocktail connoisseurs sample the delights of the Basil Smash, the Cosmonaut, the Mint Julep and the New York Sour. Somehow one feels that a) the standard gin and tonic at the college bar is no longer going to cut the mustard, and b) parish fundraisers at the future Fr Theobald’s parish will be a whole lot of fun.

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2023:** Ludvig Hareide receives a private revelation in the presence of Blessed Sacrament and decides to share it with a somewhat stunned community, from his seat in the second row. Oh no, wait a moment — it later transpires that he was merely first in line to deliver a reflection during Sunday Adoration and Vespers, but hardly anyone realised this at the time. Indeed, James Finnegan, presiding for the very first time, looked like he might well fall out of his *prie-dieu* in shock.

**Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> October – Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023:** The first Human Development session of the year takes us to Palazzola, and the New Men undergo the trauma of realising that the villa really can get quite chilly — after all, the church is not called Our Lady of the Snows for nothing. The weather is largely awful for most of the two days, but the input from James Arthur, head of the Jubilee Virtues Centre for Character and Virtues, is stimulating, perhaps especially for those Greg students who last heard that rather arcane term ‘virtue’ mentioned by the late, great Fr D’Amécourt in the dim and distant days of First Cycle philosophy at Mother Angelicum.

**Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2023:** There is a buzz about the house today, and it's not just because of the new vestments that are due to be blessed at Vespers this evening (eye-catching though they certainly are). What's really on everybody's mind is the annual patchwork quilt of musical pastiche, strictly in-house comedy, and borderline insanity that will forever be known as the New Men's Show (regardless of any announcements from on high that it is now officially the House Entertainment Evening). This year's session of group catharsis takes place under the highly competent command of Ryan Hawkes, and the tone is set by a deafening performance by the ever-passionate James Finnegan. Other potentially memorable moments include the Seminarian Sleepolympics, in which Barnabas Mercer channelled his inner Murray Walker to great effect, as Mathias Ledum and André Nguyen showed us what it must be like to be both seminarians and narcoleptics (precious little acting was required on their part, one feels); Brian Wilson put Michael Flatley to shame with 'An Irish Jig' that conveyed joyful abandon and the risk of imminent mental and physical collapse in equal measure; and the admirably creative Xavier Ryan paid heartfelt tribute to the late Cardinal Pell, Julie Andrews and the VEC's highly popular Italian teacher, Lucia (though not all in the same act).

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2023:** The first Night of Light for more than a year sees almost the whole College community helping out in some way with our evangelising effort. Special thanks must also go to the Servant Sisters of the Home of the Mother, our near neighbours, who, along with a number of plucky seminarians, ensure that it becomes nigh on impossible for anyone to navigate the Via di Monserrato without being invited at least half a dozen times to come and light a candle in the College church. And many people respond positively — quite a few of them in the company of their dogs, who show admirable decorum in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. A great success all round.

**Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023:** Ludvig Hareide signals his desire to get this whole tiresome Tuesday business over and done with as quickly as possible at Morning Prayer by attempting to lead us in a rousing rendition of Magnificat number 7... at 6:55am, rather than in its more conventional place at Evening Prayer. Such is the confidence with which he intones the opening line, that several of those present (including the Capo Choirmaster himself) feel compelled to join in, before the whole church lapses into confused and semi-conscious silence.

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023:** Ryan Hawkes pays worthy tribute to his predecessor as Schola Master at a party held in the maestro emeritus' honour. The highlight of James Finnegan's year — and arguably of his entire life — arrives in the form of a congratulatory message from none other than the British Ambassador to the Holy See.

**Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023:** The tap-tap-tap of walking sticks along the corridor; the creaking of ageing joints; lengthy and enthusiastic reminiscences about days gone by... No, it's not Stuart McGovern and the Diarist having a catch-up over a mug

of cocoa, but the annual and always eagerly anticipated visit of our dear Jubilarians. A hugely enjoyable evening is had by all, as ever, including a fond tribute to our beloved statue of Our Lady, from its donor of a few years ago, Bishop Tom Williams.

**Friday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023:** As the heating is switched on, Xavier Ryan is spotted indoors without his big coat for the first time since mid-October. He still prudently wears a scarf for sung First Vespers of Christ the King in the Martyrs' Chapel, though — the conclusion to a beautiful day of recollection led by our pastoral coordinator, Sr Valentina, on the theme of the Word of God. And given that she belongs to a community called *Verbum Dei*, she's definitely on home turf.

**Friday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023:** There may only be about three people in the congregation, but that doesn't stop those members of the community who are actually in Rome for Martyrs' Day from marking the occasion as is fitting. Mass this year is notable, not only for including some of Ryan Hawkes' splendid compositions, but also because — for the first time in the history of the world (probably) — *a non-acolyte is called upon to act as acolyte*. Naturally, he is still not permitted to do anything as risky as fold a corporal, lest the apocalypse ensue.

Meanwhile, far away in Warrington, Hugh Donleavy (late of this parish) is ordained a priest, and numerous College members, past and present, are in attendance to see it happen. They include Viktor — a remarkable achievement, given that he arrived at Helsinki airport to catch his flight to the UK and only then discovered that he didn't have his passport. Properly speaking, of course, the achievement belongs to the Finnish administrative system. The Finns have evidently achieved the sort of visionary sweep and jaw-dropping efficiency that is only conceivable when you design your whole country around a clear awareness of the natural phenomenon that is Viktor Torres Airava, and he is thus able to pick up a new passport while literally waiting for his flight.

**Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023:** Fr Torbjørn Holt returns to the VEC and kindly presides at Mass. In his homily, he feels moved to lament the modern cult of the body, and, reading between the lines of the Gospel, identifies a clear and hitherto largely unremarked tendency in Our Lord's teaching, which can apparently be summarised as follows: more cream cakes, fewer carrots. He expounds further on this very grounded philosophy while basking in the warm afterglow of a Hollycam supper at the Villa, declaring laconically, 'If I have to run somewhere, I don't go.' Quite how Fr Torbjørn has arrived at the idea that the VEC is a community of exercise-obsessed diet gurus is anyone's guess: we can't even field a seven-a-side football team with more than one player under forty.

**Monday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023:** The college community is up at the crack of dawn (even more so than usual) for our Rorate Mass. The highly appreciative congregation, which includes many visitors and both new and familiar faces, shows that its appetite for early morning candlelit liturgy is matched only by an equally impressive hunger for coffee and cornetti in the ref once Mass is over. A demonstrable success, the occasion is surely set to become a permanent fixture in the college calendar.

**Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023:** The Bibos Christmas dinner may not quite have *all* the trimmings — not only is the brandy butter absent this time round, but the roast potatoes that it famously accompanied a couple of years ago are also conspicuous by their absence — but the meal is a delight, and Andrea, Carmela and Anika certainly deserve their standing ovation. After supper is eaten and the traditionally abysmal cracker jokes are read, the community decamps to the common room, where Aleksander Roscins makes for a congenially manic Fr Christmas, as Secret Santa gifts are distributed in the customary fashion. Once the Ferrero Rocher appear, however, the instantaneous lurch into terrifying internecine violence becomes sadly inevitable, as everything from sweet wrappers to entire sheets of wrapping paper are hurled across the common room (mainly by the student body's elder statesman, Stuart McGovern, but with notable assistance from none other than the Vice-Rector). The combatants stop just short of flinging Andre Nguyen's tasty Norwegian St Lucy's day rolls at one another, probably out of respect for their sheer expense. A single roll is believed to contain around a monthly stipend's worth of saffron, and André is now rumoured to be considering taking on night shift at Caffè Perù for the rest of his time at seminary in a futile attempt to pay back the debt.

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023:** Anxious to ensure that Advent Show producer Barnabas Mercer has enough material to keep our visitors richly entertained, Aleksander Roscins puts forward a daring (i.e. unhinged) proposal over breakfast, namely, what he likes to call Latvian throat-singing. Somewhat hesitantly, Barnabas asks him to demonstrate this, and immediately regrets doing so, when five seconds of Credo III in a stridently nasal tone indicate that a) if anything, this is Latvian nose-singing and b) the people of Rome are just not ready for this sort of thing. Nor is anyone else at this time in the morning, not even in Latvia.

**Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2023:** There appears to be a small tear in the fabric of the universe, briefly allowing a glimpse of another, very different dimension, as a baffled Mathias Ledum enters the student kitchen to find Barnabas Mercer, Nico Panlican and Lukas Macko dressed in civvies, while the Diarist stands in their midst, proudly becassocked. Fortunately, an explanation is at hand: the keeper of the college journal has merely got ready a little ahead of schedule for his appearance with the Schola at this evening's Advent Meditation.

Said meditation is exquisite, and represents a triumph on his debut as Schola Master for Mr Hawkes. As for the Advent Show, one of the stand-out lines is delivered by Ludvig Hareide, who reprises his favourite role by dressing up as the Pope and singing, 'If you want lay participation, bring back papal coronation.' Which seems commendably even-handed. There is also a high-octane performance from director/compère extraordinaire, Barnabas Mercer. Given that certain members of the house staff, whose knowledge of English is either limited or non-existent, nonetheless manage to guffaw heartily throughout, one begins to wonder what the kitchen team might have put in the mulled wine.

Further moments to treasure/repress for many decades to come, include the on-stage disintegration of the Diarist's wig, along with his dignity, while the biggest gasp of the

night is reserved for Fr Stephen's 'resignation speech,' which at least one of our guests took to be entirely serious. More of an extended apology than a speech, it involves saying sorry to the Church, the world, the universities of Rome, and, indeed, anyone who has ever heard of the VEC, with a special shout-out to the estates of both Elvis and Mussolini. In fairness, however, the community can be proud it was able to put on a show at all, given that only ten per cent of the New Men's Show was fit for public consumption.

**Monday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023:** Stuart McGovern triumphs in the Venerable Pool Grand Final. Rival and compatriot, Brian Wilson, is perhaps put off his stride by the Riverdance soundtrack and what must be an irresistible urge to break into a jig, as demonstrated at the New Men's Show to general hilarity/disbelief. The soundtrack takes a darker turn during the informal pool playing that follows the final, as someone makes the schoolboy error of granting Lukas Macko access to the speakers, so that he can play us all a 'Danish Christmas song.' We all know by now that the Danes do things differently, but a festive ditty entitled 'Entrance to Hell' seems a touch strong. Arrangements are being made for an impromptu exorcism of the snug by Fr Konrad.

**Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2023:** A startling turn of phrase from Fr Simon Liot de Northécourt during the morning intercessions rouses even Mathias Ledum and Andre Nguyen from their customary dosing. 'May we never despise any of our fellow-men, since we ate [sic] all your children,' he prays solemnly. And to be fair, if you are going to indulge in a spot of both infanticide and cannibalism, the least you can do is not look down on those who take a more conventional approach to life. A Christmassy thought to warm our festive cockles, as we prepare to wend our way homeward for some much-needed rest, relaxation and egregious consumption.

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2024:** Weighing at least a packet or two of mince pies more than they did when departing for the Christmas break, the members of the VEC waddle back to base and, the following afternoon, straight into a house meeting. General house business takes a matter of minutes; Synod-inspired small group discussions take rather longer. But what inspired suggestions they yield! Stand-out proposals range from the peak-VEC (the translation of Bar Perù to the roof terrace), to the peak ambitious (well, why *wouldn't* recent Hollywood convert Shia LaBeouf want to spend an evening addressing a bunch of English College seminarians?) to peak Ludvig Hareide (Latin Mass not just once a month, but once a week — and probably once a day, if such a proposal could be realised without inducing fatal apoplexy in the more Latin-averse members of the community). Where all this will lead remains to be seen. It's too cold for gin and tonics on the roof at the moment, anyway.

**Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024:** The Diarist was struck by the thought at morning Mass that it might finally be time to get some hearing aids fitted: he could barely hear a word that Fr Konrad Grech was saying. But then it transpired that nobody else could, either. Ye thurifers of the VEC, take heed — it seems too much incense can rob your Spiritual Director of the power of speech.



**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2024:** Barnabas Mercer is alarmed by an orange. Talk about the January blues: you know it's a rough week when even apparently harmless items of fruit have it in for you. Nobody seems in a position to explain exactly what happened, but this morning at breakfast, an orange moved and Barnabas yelped. Perhaps the Bibos fruit needs exorcising.

**Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024:** Rooms that are suddenly cleaner than usual, even without the threat of an imminent inspection from the Vice-Rector... Seminarians discovering where the library is located... Some of said seminarians going a bold step further and actually opening a book... A general air of civility that develops quite naturally, whenever the student body is set free from the tyranny of the alarm clock and permitted to say Morning Prayer in private, while actually conscious. It can all mean only one thing: exam season is upon us once again.

**Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2024:** For a brief few days, the conversation in an unusually animated ref shifts away from the familiar polite enquiries about exams and the quirks of the various profs that do the examining, and towards the world of music, history and the high-level Vatican politics of the early nineteenth century. (It also features the memorable claim made by one visitor that, 'Catholic Ireland is a myth! There are no Catholics in Ireland!' — a startling revelation for Messrs McGovern and Wilson, and no mistake). The cause of this welcome influx of musicians, historians and other assorted visitors is the Consalvi Conference, ably hosted by our very own Professor Maurice Whitehead, and the Consalvi Concert, stunningly performed by Peter Leech and the Cappella Fede, at the parish church of San Lorenzo in Damaso. A very fine event, of which one feels our one-time Cardinal Protector would most definitely have approved.

**Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2024:** Canon Peter Ellul is left deeply worried about the state of Fr David King's health. Everyone else is left bewildered. Then the source of his confusion becomes clear: after all, how was he to know that the telegram-esque message 'King in hospital' on the student WhatsApp group referred, not to our dear pastoral director, but to the reigning monarch of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland?

**Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024:** Question: what on earth can have prompted everyone's favourite Frenchman, the apparently mild-mannered Fr Simon Liot de Nortbécourt, to muse aloud at Wednesday supper on the desirability of having electric collars fitted to the necks of the more excitable members of the community? Answer: the explosive laughter of everyone's favourite Antipodean, the jovial Xavier Ryan, within ten inches of Fr Simon's ear. Two points spring to mind, however: 1) It should be noted that Fr Simon has, until recently, been nursing an ear infection. One can only imagine that the sound of exuberant Aussie mirth reverberating freely around freshly unclogged eustachian tubes must have been particularly unnerving for a man who had hitherto spent the week in blissful ignorance of the ceaseless chatter surrounding him. 2) Significantly, Fr

Simon has never spent time in a confined space with the Rev. Dave Bench and Fr Toby Duckworth (late of this parish). He has thus never been subjected to the Birmingham Guffaw, and consequently has no idea what the term ‘explosive laughter’ even means. One shudders to think what kind of collar he’d come up with if he did.

**Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024:** In a surprising twist on the usual conspiracy theories, Fr David King lays the blame for the COVID pandemic squarely at the door of the Panlican. Yes, Nico seems an unlikely cause of economy-ravaging chaos, but so then so did the gentle, armadillo-like creature more commonly known as the pangolin.

**Friday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2024:** The post-exam period free weekend arrives, and travel plans are somewhat less exotic this time round. A happy band of post-exam students who know what they like (wine) and how much they’re prepared to pay for it (nothing) head for a few days at the Villa. Frs Christopher Warren and David King make their way to Tuscany, where they’ve heard there’s a wonky tower. Ryan Browne and Mathias Ledum travel back to the UK and Norway respectively, for their canonical retreats. The only one taking a path less trodden is Luke Theobald, who goes to lovely Budapest. Oh no, wait a minute, James Finnegan and Ryan Hawkes enter the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2024:** Fortified by a Shrove Tuesday double whammy of Brian Wilson’s pancakes and Luke Theobald’s now legendary cocktails, the community steels itself to embrace the dire austerities of that notoriously joyful season of Lent. At evening Mass for Ash Wednesday, Fr David King shows just why he’s Pastoral Director, as he distributes ashes with the kind of nonchalant efficiency that can only be cultivated through years of hard-won experience at the parish coalface. The Diarist’s novice daubings are embarrassingly faint and ill-formed by comparison, although one visitor does leave with a rather snazzy Harry Potter scar in place of the more customary cross. Also noted by all present are the brand new and strikingly purple vestments. It should be emphasised: these are *in no way* strongly reminiscent of a box of Quality Street Brazil Nuts, and that will most certainly *not* be the first thought that comes to mind when we see them every day during Lent. How could you even suggest such a thing? Meanwhile, at the prosecco-free post-Mass gathering in the corridor, Sr Valentina Stilo reveals previously unsuspected expertise in the rather niche area of methods of public execution (which seem a little strong as penances go, even during Lent). Did you know the Aztecs choked people to death with chilli smoke? Or that malefactors in ancient Sicily were liable to be thrown into a giant bronze bull and then boiled alive? We didn’t, but Sr Valentina did, and she’s from just next door to Sicily, so whatever you do, do not incur the terrible wrath of the *coordinatrice pastorale*...

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2024:** The day begins with an email sent to the house by Nico Lorenz Panlican, informing us of his decision, after much prayerful discernment, to leave the VEC at the end of the month and begin his candidacy for the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest. We shall miss his gentle presence, but, fortunately,

Nico himself is clearly happy with his decision and is even calmer than usual (no, I didn't think that was possible either).

Later on, we head off to Palazzola for the day of recollection. A couple of noteworthy incidents before we are plunged into silence: the Capo Sacristan may or may not be able to explain why the statue of Our Lady of Walsingham arrives with one finger fewer than when she set out for the villa. It is to be hoped that the situation can be quickly remedied, and that the image's new, alternative title of Our Lady Very Slightly Vulnerata will be short-lived. And, as some members of the community sip tea on the terrace, Jack Ryan is rather surprisingly outed as a pantheist. Or was it a polytheist? Either way, no evidence is provided for the calumny, but then again, a lack of evidence has never stopped Jack Ryan himself announcing Fr Konrad Grech's appointment as titular bishop of Afufenia, or promoting the cult of the deeply holy but sadly entirely fictitious St Laurence of Corfu. Furthermore, he doesn't exactly help his case with the VEC's inquisitor-in-chief and principal accuser, Ryan Hawkes, by answering the question, 'Well, which God do you believe in, then?' with the words, 'The standard one,' leaving us with the suspicion that, rather than being pantheist or polytheist, he may just be a good, old-fashioned deist.

**Monday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024:** In the student common room, Professor Maurice Whitehead gives another of his excellent evening talks on Catholic and College history, and reveals the probable existence of a tunnel that starts from a bricked-up doorway under Caffè Perù and leads all the way to the Tiber. This underground passage may well have allowed the newly-ordained priests of dark days past to evade the watchful eyes of the government spies who were posted opposite the college entrance. Maurice also outlines the fascinating theory that Newcastle coal merchants played a vital role in the mission to English Catholics, by ferrying priests disguised as travelling players. With a historian's concern for hard evidence, he is naturally at pains to point out that, in the absence of documentation, these must remain mere hypotheses. With a seminarian's eye for a good story, Ludvig Hareide assures him that these mere hypotheses will have been incorporated into his tours of the house and transformed into incontrovertible fact by Wednesday afternoon at the latest.

**Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024:** The scurrying of seminarians to the wax sacristy to assemble as many candles as possible...the sight of the college bathed in gently flickering candlelight... the comments of visitors and community members alike on the pleasing novelty of it all... No, the success of the first Rorate Mass in December has not convinced an impatient Fr Stephen to anticipate Advent by nine months and hold another one at the end of February. All this highly efficient candle-grabbing is, rather, an eminently practical response to the ref being plunged instantaneously into darkness at around the halfway point of the annual supper for the visiting bishops and trustees. Contrary to what some might have thought, this darkness is *not* a cover for Andrea to supply us surreptitiously with what we might diplomatically describe as his 'experimental' tagine for a third consecutive mealtime, but merely a common or garden power cut. Still, the candlelight adds an unusually romantic edge to the proceedings —

which is perhaps what prompts the touching declarations of love for the seminarians exchanged across the refectory by the auxiliary Bishop of Westminster, Mary Reynolds, and the Archbishop of Southwark (the love-in's main instigator, in his fine and moving after-dinner speech). Not surprisingly, the evening concludes with everyone suffused in a warm and fuzzy glow (though perhaps that's just the amaro).

**Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024:** Nico's farewell High Tea gives us a strong indication that he will be well-suited to the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest, if reports cited by Joseph O'Brien are in any way reliable. These would have us believe that the organisation's novitiate consists of a unique combination: a conciliar spirit of noble simplicity on the one hand, and an innate and ultimately irrepressible fondness for Baroque splendour on the other. The grandeur of the invitation alone makes it clear that his farewell event will definitely represent the best of the latter tendency. The tables are positively groaning with food, and it is all quite beautifully arranged, as one would expect from the college's only resident shrine-builder. He goes with our prayers to Tuscany, and then to what must surely be the most heavily becassocked corner of France, but promises to return in due course to visit us all at the VEC. Those corridor shrines aren't going to build themselves, after all...

**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2024:** The day of the Seven Churches' Pilgrimage, which is very capably led by Joseph O'Brien, veteran ecclesiastical pilgrimage guide and locator of viable options for a less-than-penitential lunch. This year he has sniffed out a family trattoria a few minutes from the Vatican, run by staff of such conspicuous antiquity that they may well have been dishing out gnocchi to hungry pilgrims when St Philip Neri first decided that walking 28km was the ideal way to spend a Lenten Saturday. Wise walking advice is dispensed to the group by a Seven Churches novice, Paula, the fellow Verbum Dei sister of our own dear Pastoral Coordinator. She more or less orders her pilgrim companions to consume large quantities of chocolate, purely as a post-pilgrimage strategy to stave off lactic acid build-up. The Diarist can confirm the strategy works: he woke up the next day feeling remarkably sprightly, especially considering that he was forced to celebrate his 777<sup>th</sup> [sic] birthday in the common room only the night before.

**Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024:** WhatsApp Curiosity 1: Something inspires everybody's favourite angry-looking teddy bear, the Maltese Canon, to forward a message to the student WhatsApp group wishing us all 'a day filled with lots of Hugs, Smiles, Friends, Family, Love, Sleep, Laughter and Memerise [sic].' One assumes that the something in question is the early stages of a mental breakdown.

**Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2024:** WhatsApp curiosity 2: Something else inspires Fr Simon Liot de Nortbécourt to send us a photo of himself with an elephant. One might ask many questions at this point, but Ryan Browne gets there first: 'Why is an elephant living in a 1970s church?' he wonders. Presumably because the ecclesiastical architects of that unlamented era were also hired to build Rome's zoo, that's why.

**Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024:** In a wide-ranging homily that touches on everything from why we talk to our pets to the average American's innate ability to say 'I love you' in a way that can provoke only a mixture of deep suspicion and scorn in any right-thinking and hopelessly repressed Englishman, Deacon Dave Bench makes an impassioned plea for the sign of peace to make a full, physical comeback. Alas, Fr Simon later squanders a gold-plated opportunity for some liturgical comedy by not opting to launch straight into the Agnus Dei before the Reverend Bench is able to invite us to practise what he preaches.

**Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024:** On the translated feast of St Patrick, Xavier Ryan surely deserves a medal for ploughing on gamely through the third verse of the seemingly endless breviary version of St Patrick's Breastplate, when lesser men had long since fallen by the wayside. Indeed, it is debatable which was longer — the elongated hymn, or the similarly interminable story of Susanna which once again turns up as the first reading at Mass. The general rush to wolf down breakfast and coffee before heading out to university is reminiscent of the days of the midday Mass experiment. Let's keep it to a verse of Hail Glorious Saint Patrick in future, for the sake of everyone's digestive health...

**Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024:** A traumatic morning at the Greg leaves assorted nuns and the more feeble sort of lay student trampled underfoot (with a few of the more robust sisters no doubt doing a fair bit of the trampling) as the now defunct university bookshop gives away the last remaining copies of whatever dross they realised they wouldn't be able to shift even for fifty cents and a pickled egg. Following scenes that make Black Friday on Oxford Street look like a cross between Nico Panlican's Baroque High Tea and the Cardinal Consalvi concert, one of the few lucky scavengers to emerge unscathed from the ordeal is our very own Canon Peter Ellul, who may or may not have been seen clutching a second-hand copy of a Dictionary of Biblical Hittite. We can be sure that the tiny Indian nun on whose fragile shoulders he (allegedly) stood in order to grab this literally priceless work of scholarship will understand that the (alleged) fractured collar bone was well worth it.

**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024:** As a few of the community set off on the annual walk to Palazzola ahead of the Holy Week retreat, nobody is remotely prepared for the eye-scalding mystery that is Aleksander Roscins' dress sense. Wearing an ensemble that Jean-Paul Gaultier himself might well have rejected as just a little *too* quirky, he somehow manages to combine three different looks, as strong as they are entirely unconnected. Indeed, as Luke Theobald observes admiringly, it's not entirely clear if his destination is the beach, an archaeological adventure, or the Henley Regatta. But hats off to him, anyway (hats previously worn by Indiana Jones, in this instance).

**Easter Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024:** There were those — not least himself — who thought the high point of James Finnegan's entire existence had been reached for all time with the success of last year's coronation celebrations. They were wrong: the 2024 Easter Triduum will take some beating. First of all, the VEC's resident Environmental



Sacristan got to read about his work on the altar of repose in the National Catholic Register, where it was compared to a scene from Dante's *Paradiso*, no less. And, as if this were a mere bagatelle, he also got to sing the Gospel at the Papal Mass on Easter Sunday morning (but only because, for once, he happened to actually answer his phone the day before, and thus find himself being summoned to a rehearsal for which he was already twenty minutes late by none other than the Papal Master of Ceremonies himself). It turns out that appearing on the big screen at St Peter's in such a prominent role can also get you all sorts of attention from the faithful on the way back to college — attention which the notoriously shy and retiring Reverend Finnegan *absolutely hated*, of course...

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024:** What is that curious sound? Plaintive... heartfelt... semi-comatose... As the presider and his deacons reach the altar at the beginning of the 6:45am Mass for the translated Solemnity of the Annunciation, to be celebrated with full liturgical trimmings, the Reverend Dave Bench lets forth the sort of highly audible sigh from the depths that might mean many things: profound religious devotion (obviously), a yearning for the transcendent (certainly)... But also, and above all, the sudden and arresting insight: it's far too early in the morning for this kind of carry-on, straight after the Easter holidays...

**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2024:** As Canon Peter Ellul emerges from his room shortly before lunch, his usual demeanour, which is that of a somewhat crotchety teddy bear, is even more pronounced than usual. The reason for his malaise can be found in the sounds emanating from the room next door, where Fr Simon has decided to start practising the trumpet. 'The value of my property has fallen through the floor,' grumbles the canonical teddy bear (apparently under the peculiar illusion that he might actually be able to sell his room in the first place). He then goes off in search of a consoling lunch.

**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2024:** This year, as the College adapts to new formation guidelines, we are fortunate to have not one, but two batches of brand-new candidates. Mass for the first batch is presided over with style and charm by Cardinal Gugerotti, who delivers a homily that is eloquent, structured and, for an Italian prelate, brief. We are then delighted to welcome the Cardinal for the celebratory meal as well, which features an enjoyable speech in English and Italian by one of the four new men in black, Jack Ryan. The only disappointment is that, for some reason, he decides not to channel whichever elderly Italian lady it is who normally possesses him whenever he feels moved to converse in the language of Dante.

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024:** We didn't know that the grace of Candidacy was a thing, but it appears that it is... How else to explain that all three new Greg candidates actually attended lectures this morning?

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2024:** The Diarist is facing his mid-term exam for Hebrew 3 this morning, and, having failed to do much preparation for it, is feeling despondent

at the prospect. But never mind — here's Fr Simon Liot de Nortbécourt to cheer him up! Which he attempts to do via the curious technique of declaiming the entirety of 1 Samuel 16, in Hebrew and off by heart, and then insisting that his hapless interlocutor identify the episode and translate where possible. All are rightly amazed by this remarkable feat — apart from the Diarist himself, who feels less amazed, more depressed and filled with a sense of impending doom and personal inadequacy.

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2024:** Senior Student Ryan Browne wins the whole-hearted approval of just about everybody by keeping this semester's Sunday afternoon house meeting down to half an hour. No mean feat when you have such weighty matters to address as, er... how to ring a bell. It surely says something about the collective mental health of the house that Luke Theobald's delicate one-fingered technique draws a spontaneous gasp of approval and a round of applause verging on a standing ovation. We've clearly all been here for far, far too long...

**Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024:** Something fishy seems to be going on at around 1:30pm in the Gradwell Room. The giveaway is the sight of a highly animated Jack Ryan, emerging briefly from said room to shout '*Extra omnes!*' at unsuspecting passers-by, plus a more viscerally Anglo-Saxon variation on the same theme. The reason for such secrecy is made clear a few minutes later: Barnabas becomes the new head of Ents, by popular acclaim, and is dragged from the Gradwell Room like a latter-day St Augustine (albeit slightly less reluctantly) and paraded before his adoring public (or the half a dozen or so bemused individuals still eating in the ref, depending on which version you wish to believe). A new era beckons, perhaps raising the question: how much musical comedy is *too much* musical comedy?

**Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024:** On the Solemnity of St George, questions about national identity, and our national saint, as indeed, they are wont to do. In a stirring homily for the occasion, Fr Michael Glover calls on us English to use our patron and his intercession to 'fight a cause in our own time: not one of crusade, invasion or reformation, but of conversion.'

Later on at supper, Fr Stephen takes a more mischievous approach, by bestowing the title of 'honorary Englishman' upon none other than the Rector of the Scots College, who, it must be acknowledged, reacts to this impromptu change of nationality better than William Wallace would have done. But only just.

Finally, Barnabas Mercer rounds off the night in style in his first engagement as Ents chief. An inspired bit of after-dinner lunacy includes some increasingly frenetic riffing on the familiar question of what it means to be English, culminating in the awesome insight: 'To be an Englishman is to be English, and to be English is to be an Englishman.' The formation team are delighted to see that two years of philosophy classes at the Angelicum have clearly not been wasted.

**Friday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2024:** Prompted by a mutual interest in the two Colleges' history, Jack Ryan and Luke Theobald join three German seminarians for a reimaged 'College

Villa Tour'. Beginning at the Germanicum-Hungaricum's Villa of San Pastore, they are greeted with the traditional 'Salve in Domino,' before proceeding to visit the chapel dedicated to Blessed Robert Johnson, an English martyr and alumnus of the College, who studied in Rome before the foundation of the VEC. After lunch, the group head to Palazzola, where the German students are introduced to croquet. Somewhat annoyingly, they turn out to be rather good at it, and so it seems there is absolutely no need at all to record the result of this encounter for posterity.

Continuing the sporting theme, the Senior Student and the Sports Man undertake entirely separate and almost simultaneous missions to the same branch of Decathlon, to purchase practically identical sporting equipment for the following day's annual gita. After all, can a seminary community with our remarkable level of sporting prowess ever have too many volleyballs? (Yes. Yes, it can.)

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2024:** The gita turns out to be what Fr Metcalfe, late of this parish, would describe approvingly as a slug gita. Apart from the morning trip to the shrine of Our Lady of Fatima (in Lazio, rather than Portugal), the excursion consists almost entirely of eating and drinking, albeit in the quite delightful location of Lago del Turano. Indeed, forget about volleyball — the most strenuous physical activity undertaken all day is the postprandial dancing on the back seats of the coach, enthusiastically performed by the Bibos ladies, with Alessia as the undisputed ringleader. Still, a good time is had by everyone, and now we won't have to eat anything at all until Monday evening at the earliest.

**Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2024:** Now in its fourth year and thus qualifying, not only as a mere tradition, but a hallowed one, the Nordic Night already contains some dearly familiar elements. There is the careful, not entirely successful excision of Jansenist tendencies from the English translations of Norwegian hymns. There is the smoked salmon, and the meatballs with loganberries, that Bibos provide for supper. And, above all, there is the merciless haranguing of the English from the pulpit by whichever Nordic seminarian gets to wear the Viking beard and clutch the Viking spear. On this occasion, that task falls to Ludvig, the most genetically Viking of all our more northerly brethren, who also brings some novelty to the proceedings by generously extending the after-dinner ridicule to include not only the English, but also all the other Nordic countries. He very nearly succeeds in making his speech especially memorable by endangering the life of a certain Birmingham deacon with his spear. After some energetic waving, the pointed end of said weapon comes perilously close to detaching itself from the shaft and dropping straight on to Dave Bench's head. As the Vice-Rector comments drily, Deacon Dave came within a whisker of being turned into a Coventry kebab.

**Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024:** The Diarist is elected charities Czar in place of Brian Wilson. Dr Wilson, who has discerned that his future lies away from seminary, stands down after a gruelling... er, three weeks or so in the charitable hotseat. He thus instantly becomes what Ryan Browne memorably describes as the Liz Truss of the Charities Committee.

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2024:** It's that time of year again: the blasted seagulls are nesting on the roof. Joseph O'Brien warns against venturing up there, unless one is bent on seeking a 'Gandalf-Balrog style battle with the forces of nature.' Barnabas Mercer replies, *de profundis*, that a Gandalf-Balrog style battle with the forces of nature sounds distinctly preferable to his book report for Metaphysical Theology. Be that as it may, it is to be hoped the feathery wretches can be persuaded to go and invade someone else's roof by next Friday. Has nobody told them that we need our terrace for the final Theobaldian Cocktail Evening of the year?

**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2024:** Such is the outburst of hilarity at one of the two tables in use at Wednesday lunchtime that Jack Ryan is forced to exit the ref, having turned the precise shade of a Bibos blueberry yoghurt. Discreet research reveals merely that A Joke Was Told. Alas, it would seem that even to hint at the content of said joke would bring this august publication, its editor, and perhaps the entire Catholic Church, into disrepute...

**Friday 24<sup>th</sup> May 2024:** Joseph O'Brien resorts to punitive action in a bid to rid the roof terrace of its unwanted avian tenants, and the judicious application of a hosepipe soon sends at least one squawky psychopath flying elsewhere. Even more extreme squawking emanates from the garden below — not from the beak of a seagull, however, but from an abruptly dampened and understandably aggrieved James Finnegan. Is there nowhere that a venerable deacon can go for a quiet ciggie nowadays, without getting caught in anti-seagull crossfire?

**Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2024:** Another first at the VEC: a Mass and supper in honour of the pastoral supervisors with whom the seminarians of the VEC carry out their many and varied pastoral placements. A triumph for Fr David and Sr Valentina, the fruit of many missions around Rome and its periphery in search of worthwhile projects to keep us off the streets and (more or less) on the straight and narrow. A very enjoyable evening, which will undoubtedly be repeated in the future.

**Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2024:** MC Ledum masterminds the Corpus Christi procession to end all Corpus Christi processions, with the morning liturgy requiring a staggering one and three quarter hours. Is it too much to claim that a minor Eucharistic miracle took place, as well? (Answer: yes, but it's not going to stop me, I've got a diary to fill). Let it be recorded, then, that the two candelabras that the Diarist sent casually crashing to the ground during the procession around a rainy college garden included one plucky little candle that simply refused to be extinguished, *even after the fall!* Makes you think, doesn't it? Primarily that this journaler needs a long lie down, it's been a long year...

At the college barbecue that follows the liturgical epic, Joseph O'Brien performs his customary role as cooker of choice meat products with great aplomb, only occasionally looking like he might burst into tears on account of the billowing smoke. The Rector suggests that he might want to don some swimming goggles next time — which at one

point looks a reasonable bet on meteorological grounds as well, as Rome has decided to do a convincing impression of a wet Wednesday afternoon on Southport prom.

**Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2024:** There are times when one wonders what the tourists who occupy the many Airbnb apartments behind the college garden must make of the peculiar institution on the other side of the wall. This particular evening, one imagines that they must hardly believe their luck, as the strains of classical music of a very high calibre indeed waft upwards and without charge towards their holiday homes. The music is the product of award-winning violinist Amber Emson, accompanied by our very own Ryan Hawkes, and forms the highpoint of a reception for the British Embassy to the Holy See. We shall miss Mr Hawkes' talents next year when he's away on pastoral placement, and no mistake.

**Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2024:** The first full day of Villeggiatura, and already there are grounds for further concern regarding the community's collective mental health. Barnabas Mercer proves temporarily unable to complete sentences or even produce human noises at lunch, while Aleksander Roscins suffers a debilitating flashback to the '80's vortex' in which he was apparently trapped one unfortunate day at Valladolid. It would seem that the opening chords of *Follow Me, Follow Me* are sufficient to open up such a breach in the space-time continuum (not much risk of this happening at the VEC, then). When asked to elaborate on what might constitute an 80's vortex, Aleksander grows strangely taciturn, almost as if we are treading on forbidden ground. This doesn't stop the bold assertion by Ludvig Hareide that he will buy his next clerical jacket with shoulder pads. If he returns to college after summer having grown a mullet as well, we'll know he means business.

In even more significant news, Jack Ryan is elected Senior Student, and Peter Ellul feels moved to mark the event in verse, like an unofficial College Laureate with a fondness for ChatGPT. And in the evening, Luke Theobald proves an amiable host at the annual wine-tasting. The college's in-house cocktail expert freely admits that he is no oenologist, but plenty of wine is tasted, and frankly, what more does anyone want from a wine-tasting? While there is less (indeed, no) emphasis on tasting notes this time round, the evening does yield the unnerving revelation that Fr Stephen apparently knows what cyanide tastes like. Bewilderment, curiosity, and nameless dread descend on those within earshot of the Rector, in roughly equal measure.

**Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2024:** The weather has taken a funny turn, but in traditional British (or, indeed, Nordic) defiance of the elements, the community opts to hold the quiz outside anyway. Many of those taking part also decide to wrap themselves in one of Palazzola's red blankets as well, however, leaving them looking less like carefree quizzers, more like disgruntled Roman legionaries at an outpost of Hadrian's Wall. The Vice Rector, the Diarist and guest speaker Greg prove triumphant, among much shivering.

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024:** It can be difficult even in normal circumstances to convey the impression that Palazzola and its garden must make on the unsuspecting first-time



visitor. When the visitor arrives in said garden in the middle of the annual Villeggiatura karaoke evening — and, specifically, as Jonathan Henry is nearing the climax of his frankly astonishing rendition of Kate Bush’s Wuthering Heights... well, one imagines that not even the lyrical musings of Peter Ellul (or ChatGPT) could do justice to the emotional depth of such an experience. To her credit, the visitor in question, who has just flown in from Manchester to start her villa summer job, seems remarkably unfazed by this colourful introduction to the VEC in party mode. We’re made of stern stuff in Lancashire, you know.

**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024:** The day of ordination dawns for soon-to-be deacon, and now Senior Student emeritus, Ryan Browne. There to welcome him into the diaconal fold is freshly baked Deacon Mathias Ledum — ordained in Oslo on 29<sup>th</sup> June — and, of course, a host of Ryan’s family and friends. Everything comes together, as it almost invariably does, to make for a worthy celebration and a very pleasant day. The inclement gusts of a few evenings ago are already fading from memory, and normal meteorological service has been resumed. Palazzola looks palatial, the liturgy is lovely, the mini-schola magnificent, the Aperol Spritz is supremely quaffable, the culinary delights are delightful, the speeches are, undeniably, spoken, the *Ad multos annos* is stirringly sung, the Diarist is growing strangely woozy, the coffee is admirably coffee-like but also oddly insufficient, the swimming pool is terribly, terribly inviting but the flight back home is even more terribly missable, the taxi is now urgently required, the sight of Ciampino Airport is a blessed relief. As a wise man once said, there is a time for every matter under heaven. A time for celebrating a brand-new deacon and the end of another year in this College’s distinguished history, and a time to know when to stop celebrating and catch one’s flight home. *Buona estate a tutti!*



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# Leavers' Profiles

## Rev. Ryan Browne

Smooth operator. That's the abiding memory Deacon Ryan will leave many members of the College community with. His warm, approachable, smiling self has certainly been a great gift over these past five years. For Ryan has a big heart without the big ego. Funnily enough, this means that he could well have coped with the now-proposed longer stint in seminary training, but, as it turns out, he is part of the last cohort to be ordained and returning home after the base half decade of formation. Yet, what an eventful few years they have been.



When Ryan arrived at the VEC — the vision of Portsmouth's bright and sunny future — he perhaps didn't foresee being sent home as soon as his second semester due to a pandemic. We were just growing so fond of his Donald Trump impressions and equally impressive musical talents. The latter had undoubtedly been duly noted because Ryan would go on to serving on the Choir Team (formally and informally) for the entirety of his remaining years in College. Likewise, he has sang beautifully with the Mini Schola at key events, such as the Advent Meditation, Coronation Gala, and at a moment's notice in the Holy Land. The generosity of spirit behind this so as to provide an upliftingly prayerful atmosphere for the rest of the community is something we are all grateful for. When asked to help, Ryan rarely says no. It's something he's quietly taught the rest of us by example.

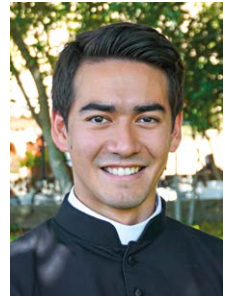
It is not surprising, then, that Ryan would go on to be entrusted with greater responsibility as he moved further up the house. He was editor of the 2023 edition of *The Venerabile*, pulling in some big hitters to provide interesting articles, and has ended his fifth and final year as Senior Student, always speaking frankly and honestly from a centre of conviction in the role. A lightness of touch, however, was always Ryan's style. Indeed, with our sometimes-hectic schedule, a cheery demeanour goes a long way. It even caused him to be spotted once by a local artist who asked for him to model his cassock for a painting in which he would feature as a silhouette of life on Via di Monserrato. Romanità personified!

On a personal level, befriending Ryan relatively late on in the years we've known each other has been one of the delights of our shared seminary experience. Many an hour has been spent laughing, musing and celebrating the amazing privilege that studying in Rome affords. He has enriched my time and lovingly shared his journey in faith as a brother in Christ. It takes real openness and strength of character to be willing to let oneself be truly seen by a fellow seminarian. I can only thank Ryan for trusting me with that level of depth, and praise God for this mutual support as we head out into the Lord's vineyard in our respective dioceses. May God ever sustain him as he embarks on the next leg of the adventure.

*Fr Dave Bench*

## Rev. Mathias Ledum

When the Rector was surveying the candidates to replace MC O'Brien in the hottest of hot seats in last year's house job reshuffle, he can't have been scratching his head for long. One figure in particular must have stood out as a bastion of common sense and composure. That figure was the now freshly baked deacon, Mathias Bruno Ledum. The elder statesman — at least in seminary years — of the Nordic contingent at the Venerable English College. A man who would not crack under pressure, who would remain unruffled, no matter what challenges the liturgical loose canons of the community might present him with.



And so it proved. If organising the VEC's Easter Triduum was a stressful experience, MC Ledum didn't show it. I had cause to be grateful for his unflappable Norwegian calm on various occasions, most notably when I made the curious and ill-advised decision in this year's Corpus Christi procession to send not one, but two candelabras crashing from the altar at one of the most solemn points in the entire liturgy. The Venerable MC merely looked at me with the sort of indulgent, encouraging smile one might reserve for a well-intentioned but incompetent child, and proceeded on his smooth and stately way. A true pro.

But hang on a minute! I wouldn't want you to think that our favourite half-Norwegian, half-Filipino was only about liturgical precision and holy efficiency. This is, after all, the very same Mathias Ledum who each year has produced exactly the sort of comic gem for the New Men's Show which can never, ever be unleashed on the more delicate (i.e. sober) Advent Show audiences, because, if it were, the Rector would probably have to resign, and its creator would be on a flight back to Oslo faster than you can say 'The Brothers of the Aunts of the Hand of the Sacred Heart.' (And believe me, that is the only part of the act that I can quote without getting the *Venerabile* editor the sack as well.) At least he managed one crossover hit: a song listing the Latin name of every papal encyclical from Pius XII to Francis. (I'm happy to report this was a lot funnier than it sounds.)

Clearly, then, the newly Reverend Ledum is a man of many qualities. Another that springs to mind is generosity. As a staunch promoter of all things Norwegian, he is unfailingly generous with the delicacies of his northerly homeland, whether these are the ones we know and love (chocolate), the new and surprisingly delightful (brown cheese, aquavit), or the new and unsurprisingly awful (salty liquorice). He is a man who is proud of his dual heritage, but who has also explored the world well beyond either Norway or the Philippines. Indeed, this may be one explanation for his unflappability: if you can survive and thrive in Honduras (one of the most dangerous of all the countries in the world that are not actually at war), then you surely have little to fear from seminarians, however highly strung, or from the pontifical university system, however insane. Mathias appears to have taken it all in his stride — perhaps because he is also, palpably, a man of prayer. We are fortunate to have had him with us these last five years, and the diocese of Oslo is very lucky to have him back.

*Fr Martin Fyles*

## Dr Brian Wilson

In his unassuming way, Dr Brian Wilson made a memorable impression from the moment he first entered the doors of the Venerable English College two years ago. There was the distinguished title, of course — not that he was one to proclaim his credentials to the world, despite gaining a PhD from Oxford and then leaving behind a promising career in the arcane world of industrial chemistry. However, while it's fair to say that the thinning ranks of seminarians at the VEC are not exactly bursting with outstanding scientists, vegetarians are even rarer beasts, and yet Brian was one of those as well. I use the past tense advisedly: vegetarians are certainly far from common within our hallowed walls, but as Brian soon discovered, the chances of finding a Bibos veggie *secondo* featuring something other than cheese and rocket are practically non-existent. At some point during his first year, Dr Wilson, crushed by sheer gastronomic monotony, and clogged with cholesterol, finally caved in, and embraced the devoutly carnivorous ways of his fellow seminarians. Even now he can barely look at a rocket leaf without flinching.



There has always been more to Brian than a razor-sharp scientific mind and a faltering commitment to ethical dietary habits, however. There is his gift (if one can call it that) for enlivening lunchtimes with puns of world-class awfulness, capable of curdling the cheese sauce in one's Bibos veggie pasta, but delivered with such shameless panache that his fellow diners can't help but chuckle, despite the overwhelming urge to weep. There is, moreover, his remorseless obsession with the restorative powers of antioxidants. You would struggle to find a more enthusiastic champion of the miraculous qualities of the humble cup of tea (just one a day brings the sort of inner calm that can otherwise only be obtained from ten years of trained Zen meditation, apparently) or the bark of the cinnamon tree (a remedy for all known human ills, up to and probably including biological death). Much to his fellow Irishman's outrage, there is also Brian's complex attitude to the question of national identity. For Stuart, this might entail sneakily flying the tricolour on the college roof on Coronation weekend, for example. For Brian, it meant actually inviting his parents to the full Coronation celebrations, while reminiscing loudly about happy times in his favourite Ballymena pub, the Londonderry Arms. Which just goes to show, as well as being a distinguished chemist, a nutritional guru and a lapsed vegetarian, Dr Wilson is also a first rate wind-up merchant.

Where will life take one of the quirkiest of the VEC's recent imports now? Perhaps a publishing deal for *The Wilson Diet* (cinnamon, white tea, and fiercely contested pool matches)? Or maybe a Damascene conversion to an entirely new way of living (intravenous injections of gin and tonic, and a heavy smoking habit)? As someone who will never quite forget his notorious "Irish Jig" at this year's New Man Show, I suspect that the *real* reason he's leaving is because he's been made an offer he can't refuse by one Michael Flatley. Wherever he ends up, however, I hope Brian knows how much we'll miss him, and that we look forward to having him back again soon, at least for a visit.

*Fr Martin Fyles*



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**Birmingham:** Fr Ryan Service, Holy Trinity, 69 Lichfield Road, Sutton Coldfield, B74 2NU  
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Stoddard, St Mary's Cathedral, Clayton  
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revmichaeldocherty@me.com

**Leeds:** Canon Matthew Habron,  
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**Liverpool:** Vacant

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**Plymouth:** Mgr Adrian Toffolo,  
Via XX Settembre 20, 33092 Fanna (PN),  
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**Portsmouth:** Canon James McAuley,  
Bishop's House, Bishop Crispian Way,  
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jmcauley@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

**Salford:** Fr Paul Daly,  
St Joseph's Presbytery, Mary Street,  
Heywood, Lancs OL10 1EG

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Road, Chester CH1 1QJ  
werburgh465@btinternet.com

**Southwark:** Fr Francis Murphy,  
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CR8 2EF  
francismurphy@gmail.com

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Newman House, 111 Gower St,  
London WC1E 6AR  
philipmiller@recdow.org.uk

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3, Seren y Mor, 8 Caroline Road,  
Llandudno, Conwy LL30 2YA  
antonyjones23@gmail.com

# The 155<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting Palazzola 2024 Minutes

Thirty-Five members of the Roman Association attended the AGM: John Ainslie, John Allen, Chris Beirne, Anthony Churchill, Benito Colangelo, Anthony Coles, Stephen Coonan, Pamela Coote, John Fegan, Tom Finnegan, Archbishop Paul Gallagher, Joseph Gee, Mark Harold, Sean Healy, Bishop Nicholas Hudson, Chris Larkman, Chris Lough, Damien McGrath, Sean Middleton, Patrick Mileham, Seamus O'Boyle, Anthony O'Neill, Anthony Pateman, Terry Phipps, Peter Purdue, Alexander Sherbrooke, Chris Sloan, Aaron Spinelli, Mervyn Tower, Stephen Wang, Maurice Whitehead, Philip Whitmore, Anthony Wilcox, Mark Woods.

**1) Prayer to the Holy Spirit** – The meeting began at 10:30am in the Conference Room at Palazzola, Bishop Nicholas Hudson was in the chair and Association Secretary Fr Aaron Spinelli took minutes. Proceedings began with a prayer to the Holy Spirit followed by welcomes to the Rector and to members.

**2) Apologies and best wishes** – Received from Cardinal Arthur Roche, Archbishop John Wilson, Bishop Crispian Hollis, Bishop John Arnold, Philip Andrews, Anthony Barrett, Austin Bennett, David Blower, Liam Bradley, Tom Cooper, Joe Coughlan, Francis Coveney, Mark

Crisp, Paul Crowe, Brian Dazeley, Tony Dearman, John Deehan, Robert Draper, Marco Egawary, Hugh Ellwood, Kevin Firth, Peter Fleetwood, Tim Galligan, Miguel Garnett, Philip Gillespie, Michael Gilmore, John Guest, Matthew Habron, Andrew Headon, Michael Healy, Tim Hopkins, Paul Keane, Edward Koroway, Stephen Langridge, David McLoughlin, Timothy Menzes, John Metcalfe, Gerard Murray, Robert Murphy, Tony Myers, James Neal, Jim Overton, John Osman, John Pardo, Nicholas Paxton, Aiden Prescott, Richard Pring, Stephen Porter, Michael Quinlan, Jim Robinson, Roderick Strange, Andrew Stringfellow, David Standley, Andrew Summersgill, Simon Thomson, Adrian Toffolo, Michael Tuck, William Young.

**3) Minutes of 154<sup>th</sup> AGM** – these were approved by members.

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

## **5) The De Profundis for deceased members**

Mgr Philip Carroll  
Mgr George Hay  
Fr David Standley  
Fr Michael Butler  
Mgr Peter Kirkham  
Fr David Forrester  
Fr Paul Chavasse

Mr Mike Lang  
Fr Frank O'Loughlin  
Fr Paul Hardy  
Joe Ibett

**6) Prayer for sick members** – Archbishop Patrick Kelly, Michael Cooley, Anthony Jones, Michael Wheaton, Urs Ernst Schwarzenbach, Joe Howell, Michael Murphy, Frank Wahle (The gathering heard of Frank Wahle's death immediately after the AGM meeting, prayers were offered for his eternal repose).

**7) Chairman's Remarks** – The chair remarked on how good it was to be together again and noted the encouraging numbers of attendees. The chair remarked on preparations for celebrating the Holy Year together as the Roman Association. Bishop Hudson offered thanks and prayers to the College and to all those who serve as officers in the Roman Association.

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

The accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023 were presented to the Trustees, Committee and the AGM. These were approved and ratified in the Trustees meeting and by the AGM. This approval was noted by the Treasurer who will sign off the accounts and file them with the Charities Commission.

### 1. 2023 Accounts

Improvement on return on investment from prior year (2022 = loss £257k v 2023 gain £79k). However we are still down on pre-2022 position  
Value of investments @ 31/12/23 was £1,377k

Value of bank @ 31/12/23 was £39k

During the year:

### Expenditure

Pool refurbishment £56k (mostly paid from sale of investments)  
Consalvi concert £5k  
Refurb of College vault £2.5k

### Income

Legacy from Rev Creasey £41k  
Subs approx £5k (basically the subs pay for the cost of the Venerable Magazine now being £11/copy)

2. Gift Aid — only 19 forms completed and returned so currently no reclaim is being made as it is not economical

3. Investment details are shown in the pack that was handed out.

Value at end 2023 £1,377k

Value at end March 2024 £1,414k

Value at 13/5/24 £1,445k

It was noted that performance is below the Rathbones investment benchmark

Estimated income approx £25-30k/annum

4. Professional feed much reduced as no legal costs incurred with fee for audit being £3k

5. Post Balance Sheet events.

Sale of 25,590 shares from PIHL property holdings following compulsory winding up. 8.9p/share therefore income £2,277 (this being part of the legacy from Chestle bequest)

Questions from the floor:

- 1) Whether there could be an investment to fund a college place for a diocesan student — this will be taken forward to a November Trustees and Council Meeting.
- 2) Investment on AI and Fossil fuel in the portfolio? This will also be discussed in November.

**9) Rector's Report** – The Rector shared with us his report in the form of a photo slide show, after which Members had an opportunity to put questions and queries to the rector. The Rector was thanked by all for being with the gathering and addressing the AGM.

**10) Election of new members** – The college leavers of 2024 were elected members of the association, namely: Rev. Ryan Browne, Fr Simon de Northécourt, Rev. Mathias Ledum, Lukas Macko, Nico Panlican, Aleksander Roscins, Viktor Torres Airava, and Dr Brian Wilson.

- a) Election of the Chair and President of the Roman Association — Fergus Mulligan was proposed and elected Chair for the next year.
- b) Election of Councillors of the Roman Association — members decided to carry over the existing membership a year. Seamus O'Boyle and Liam Bradley (until 2024), Philip Gillespie, James Neal, Fergus Mulligan (until 2025) Andrew Coy (until 2026) TBC (Until 2027).
- c) Election of a new Trustee — Mervyn Tower was proposed and seconded, and consequently approved by members at the meeting.

**13) 156<sup>th</sup> AGM** – would take place on May 12<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> 2025 at Palazzola to celebrate the Holy Year.

**14) Martyrs' Day Gatherings** – these gatherings were held in their usual locations.

**15) Any Other Business** – A continued discussion took place on whether the AGM should be held in Rome (Palazzola) each year after the next AGM. Some members felt some members may be excluded from being able to come to Rome for a number of reasons. Future explorations on Live-streaming to be considered. This matter will be taken to the Council meeting in November.

Anthony Coles reminded the meeting that although we were unable to celebrate the centenary of the College purchasing Palazzola due to COVID, (and have only Mgr John Allen's booklet *The Palazzola Story 1920 to 2020* as a record), this year (2024) marked 50 years of group summer holidays at Palazzola and 40 years since the College opened Palazzola on a year round basis.

By inviting those present at the meeting to record, by a show of hands, their involvement as students, staff or as chaplains who had worked with pilgrim groups or who had later organised pilgrimages, retreats, conferences or birthday, wedding, anniversary and jubilee celebrations, Anthony was able to show that the success of Palazzola was due in great part to the active support given by members of the Roman Association. The secretary in closing the meeting invited those present to celebrate these anniversaries with a DBL on the terrace.

**16) Closing Prayer** – was led by the Chair, Bishop Nicholas.



# News from Old Romans

## Arundel and Brighton

Our diocese still claims its foothold in on the College staff while Fr David King walks the *Lungotevere*; meanwhile, the banks of the Arun have seen a few comings and goings among Old Romans in the last few months.

- Bishop Emeritus Kieran Conry is in Hampshire.
- Canon Tony Churchill is in retirement in Cobham.
- Monsignor Michael Jackson continues in his retirement in Hove.
- Fr Tony Bridson continues as parish priest of Redhill, Reigate and Merstham.
- Fr Raglan Hay-Will is parish priest of Haywards Heath, and now Burgess Hill.
- Canon Kieran O' Brien remains parish priest of St Joseph's, Brighton and of St John the Baptist, Kemp Town, Brighton, and is Episcopal Vicar for the Pastoral Plan.
- Canon Bill Davern is parish priest in Epsom.
- Canon Rob Esdaile continues as parish priest of Woking and 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 has moved to become Cathedral Dean, and is parish priest of Arundel and Storrington too.
- Fr Stephen Hardaker takes up a new appointment in Rottingdean and Woodingdean.
- Fr Terry Martin returns from sabbatical to a new appointment in the diocese.
- Fr Chris Bergin has moved to be parish priest of Ashted, and along with Frs Stephen and Terry, celebrated a Silver Jubilee in 2024. *Ad multos annos* to all three!
- Fr Simon Hall is currently taking time out from ministry.
- Canon David Parmiter has moved to be parish priest of St Peter's, Hove.
- Fr Andrew Pinsent remains at the Ian Ramsey Centre at Oxford University.
- Fr Aaron Spinelli is parish priest of West Byfleet.
- Fr Bruno Witchalls continues in Eastbourne as an assistant priest.
- Fr Tristan Cranfield has moved to be parish priest of Horsham.
- Fr Stephen O'Brien continues as assistant priest in Epsom.
- Rev. Mark Woods continues as parish deacon at Worthing.

*Fr Tristan Cranfield*

## Birmingham

This year we especially give thanks for the ordinations of our new Auxiliary Bishops, Timothy Menezes and Richard Walker, ordained Tuesday 16 July 2024. Bishop Timothy (Titular Bishop of Dougga) has responsibility for the Diocesan Pastoral Area of North Staffordshire, Stafford, Lichfield and Walsall and Dudley and Wolverhampton, while Bishop Richard (Titular Bishop of Mortlach) has responsibility for the Pastoral Area of Coventry, Warwickshire and Oxfordshire. We pray for them that the Lord will sustain their ministry.

We were also delighted to celebrate the priestly ordination of VEC student Dave Bench at St Chad's on 20 July 2024. Dave is a Coventry lad and those of us who have lived with him know what a fun character he is and we look forward to welcoming home to the Archdiocese when he finishes his Licence at the Ange next July. *Ad multos annos!*

*Welcome* to Birmingham priest Michael Glover who is studying at the Angelicum and living at the VEC. He is a great addition to the Birmingham contingent. Toby Duckworth is serving St Dunstan, Kings Heath and St Jude's Maypole. Marco Egawhary is at Sacred Heart and Holy Souls, Acock's Green. Ryan Service is at Holy Trinity and Sacred Heart, Sutton Coldfield and Four Oaks. John Waters is at Holy Trinity, Newcastle-under-Lyme. Martyrs' Day 2023 was celebrated at Holy Cross, Lichfield, with Archbishop Bernard Longley as the principal celebrant and Anthony Wilcox as the preacher. In his homily, Wilcox reflected on the life of John Kirk, founder of the parish, who also made his journey to the VEC (aged 13!) exactly 250 years ago in 1773.

He is buried in the sanctuary where Mass was celebrated by the VEC community in Birmingham all these years later. St Joseph's school children were present at the celebration and they were really inspired to hear about the history of the college and how their local church is part of this great story. Martyrs' Day 2024 will be on 2 December at St Mary Immaculate, Warwick. Come, join!

*Fr Ryan Service*

## Brentwood

We have had a number of changes since the last report. **Fr Mark Reilly** became the Parish Priest of St Mary's, Hornchurch, in 2023. **Mgr Christopher Brooks** has stepped down as the Episcopal Vicar for Finance but continues as Parish Priest of Colchester. **Canon Paul Bruxby** is now also Mgr Bruxby, having been named as a Chaplain to His Holiness. Your humble scribe continues to be resplendent in purple as Diocesan MC and will continue in this role as the new Parish Priest of St Joseph the Worker, Hutton & Shenfield. **Canon William Young** has retired this year as Parish Priest of St Mary and St Ethelburga in and we wish him well as he rests from the fever of his work in the vineyard. Sadly, I have to report the death of **Fr Michael Butler**. News of this has already been communicated to Old Romans but we continue to pray that his gentle soul may rest in the peace of the Lord's embrace.

*Fr Gary Dench*

## Clifton

**Michael Healy** is no longer PP of, although still active in the family of parishes that covers Withywood (Bristol) Chew Magna

and Keynsham. **Michael Robertson** continues at Fairford and Cricklade on the upper reaches of the Thames. **Philip Beisly has retired from** Dursley and Nympsfield and now lives at his native Weston-super-Mare, and sometimes supplies in that area. **Colin Mason**, one of our two Vicars General has been appointed Dean of Clifton Cathedral. **Michael Patey** of Northampton, is Chaplain of Downside School. Bishop (Emeritus of Portsmouth) **Crispian (Sam) Hollis**, is still 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 from time to time from Mendip by your correspondent.

*Canon Thomas Atthill*

## East Anglia

The handful of Old Romans in East Anglia have been enjoying a period of stability in recent years however this seems to be coming to an end. Holding fast are Michael Griffin who continues to enjoy retirement, Mark Hackeson in Swaffham, and Eugène Harkness, celebrating his Ruby Jubilee this year, who remains at the helm of Our Lady and the English Martyrs, Cambridge. However, Sean Connolly has been moved from St George's, Norwich, to St Edmund's, Bury Saint Edmunds, and has been appointed as a second Vicar General. Simon Blakesley, leaving St Lawrence's, Cambridge, will be taking up care of the Minster in Beccles, as well as the sister parish of Bungay. I myself have left Sheringham and Cromer to move into the attic of the White House, Poringland, as Private Secretary to Bishop Peter, from

where I also serve as Catholic Chaplain to the University of East Anglia.

*Fr Peter Wagnanski*

## Hallam

I regret to report the death of Peter Kirkham (1967). Otherwise all is much the same, with the odd exception: John Ryan is at Saint Bede's, Rotherham; Mark McManus at Saint Joseph's; Handsworth; Adrian Tomlinson at the Annunciation, Chesterfield; Dominic Jenkinson is on sick-leave, and Craig Fitzpatrick is somewhere in Leeds. The odd exception is Henry Woodhouse who is at the cathedral.

Tom Clark is enjoying his retirement and Kevan Grady is teaching and involved with adult education.

Your correspondent is at the Royal College in Spain.

*Fr John Metcalfe*

## Leeds

*Changes from 2023 are indicated in **bold** type.*

This year we report with sadness the deaths of two long-standing members of the Roman Association, Father John Kelly (13<sup>th</sup> March) and Father Peter Nealon (23<sup>rd</sup> June). 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

Canon Kevin Firth  
'Ashlea House', Hinsley Hall, 62 Heading-  
ley 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-in-Wharfedale and continuing  
work in Catechesis and Adult Formation  
in the Vicariate for Education

Rev David Bulmer  
'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 Steven 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 HD 1 5JY; providing  
chaplaincy 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.

Rev Anthony Rosso (Parish Priest)  
St Joseph's Presbytery, Queen's Road,  
Ingrow, Keighley BD21 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 Elliott Wright  
c/o Bishop's House, 13 North Grange  
Road, Leeds LS6 2BR

**Rev Benjamin Hilton (Assistant Priest  
of the Parish of St John Henry Newman  
and Chaplain to Armley Prison)**

**St Gregory's Presbytery, Swarcliffe  
Drive, Leeds LS114 5AW**

Rev Sean Elliott (Assistant Priest of the  
Parish of Holy Redeemer)  
St Patrick's Presbytery, 34 New North  
Road, Huddersfield HD 1 5JY; providing  
chaplaincy 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 Mother of Unfailing  
Help, Leeds and Chaplain to the Young  
Offenders Institution, Wetherby)  
Cathedral House, Great George Street,  
Leeds LS2 8BE**

*Canon Matthew Habron*

## Liverpool

Starting with youth, James Finnegan and  
Martin Fyles were ordained priest in the  
Metropolitan Cathedral on 13 July 2024.  
*Ad multos annos!* Both have returned to  
the College to finish a licence. Archbishop  
Patrick Kelly lives in retirement at Hesketh  
Park Lodge, Southport while Archbishop  
Paul Gallagher is Secretary for Relations  
with States in the Vatican. Aidan Prescott  
is Vicar General and Moderator of the  
Curia, as well as being parish priest of St  
Clares's and St Hugh's, Sefton Park.  
Philip Gillespie is Rector of the Beda  
College in Rome where Peter Fleetwood  
teaches. Andrew Robinson is Dean of  
Theology and Formation Tutor at Oscott



College. Anthony Murphy is retired and living in Woolton. Anthony Slingo is parish priest at St Teresa's, Norris Green, Brian Murphy is Judicial Vicar at the Tribunal and Brian Newns is retired and living at Christopher Grange. David Potter is parish priest at St Francis of Assisi, Garston and Francis Marsden is parish priest at St Mary's, Chorley. Gerald Anders is at St Agnes, Eccleston, John Furnival is at SS Peter and Paul, Crosby, while John McLoughlin is PP at St Stephen's, Orford. John Poland is Private Secretary to Archbishop McMahon while also working at the National Tribunal Service in London and teaching at Allen Hall. Kevan O'Brien is at Holy Cross, St Helens, and Mark Drew is in charge of St Peter and St Michael's, Woolston. Michael O'Connor joined the Roman Association recently and teaches at St Michael's College, University of Toronto and Paul Crowe is retired in Prescot. Paul Robbins is living in St Helens and still does canon law work for various tribunals, Paul Rowan teaches at Beaulieu Convent School on Jersey and finally, Peter McGrail is Professor of Liturgical Theology at Liverpool Hope University.

*Fergus Mulligan*

## Northampton

Grateful to the Editor for allowing this rather tardy submission to be included in this year's *Venerabile*, Northampton has only one or two updates to offer. Fr David Barrett has taken up a full-time post as Director of Human Formation at Allen Hall Seminary. Up until this point, Fr David had been working at Allen Hall part-time, alongside his ministry at Our Lady Help of Christians and St Lawrence, Olney. Mgr Seán Healy continues to minister to the good people of Beaconsfield and Bourne

End, while Mgr Kevin McGinnell recently marked his 19<sup>th</sup> year at Holy Ghost, Luton. Canon John Udris is happily ensconced in Marlow, and Fr Michael Patey continues as Priest Chaplain at Downside School. Shortly after writing last year's report, Fr Andrew Coy was asked to serve as Local Collaborator at the Apostolic Nunciature, and so now finds himself living in Wimbledon. Hardly the best place from which to offer updates from the Diocese of Northampton — but he does try so very hard to stay 'in the know.'

*Fr Andrew Coy*

## Plymouth

This year we lost one of our great Roman priests, Mgr George Hay. You will find elsewhere in this edition an obituary. This leaves one 'retired' priest, Mgr Adrian Toffolo, who lives in Friuli. He is kept occupied in the local parishes with many requests for help.

Mgr Robert Draper continues as parish priest in Sherborne, where he has developed a supportive community which helps him greatly as he has had some health issues in this past year.

Fr Michael Wheaton remains at Crediton and Exeter University, also with some health issues, but he has been greatly helped by Fr Albert Lawes who is certainly not idle in his curacy in Exeter. Apart from the parish and the University, he has responsibilities in the district hospital and in the prison. But he is shortly to be moved to Teignmouth as Parish Priest. Similarly well occupied is Fr James Barber in Poole where he assists in two parishes and in school chaplaincy work.

We never forget in these lines Fr Guy de Gaynesford who acts as chaplain to a Community of Sisters of Mary

Morning Star in Lynton, and who helps at Ilfracombe, and Fr Mark Skelton, Dean of Torbay and Parish Priest of Teignmouth, who also has Diocesan responsibilities in Safeguarding and on-going Clergy formation. But he will also shortly be on the move to Newquay, where he will also act as chaplain to Falmouth University. And then there is the Russian Orthodox priest, Hieromonk Porphyrios, alias Robert Plant, who lives and ministers in Exeter.

*Mgr Adrian Toffolo*

## Portsmouth

In July, Bishop Egan ordained Ryan **Browne** to the diaconate at Palazzola. Deacon Ryan has been appointed to St John's Cathedral, Portsmouth. We look forward to his ordination as priest, *Deo volente*, in summer 2025.

Fr David **Forrester** (1972), who had been living in retirement in Cumbria, died on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023. *Requiescat in pace.*

This past year, Bishop Philip **Egan** and Monsignor John **Nelson** both celebrated their ruby jubilee of priestly ordination and Canon Gerald **Flynn** celebrated his silver jubilee. *Ad multos annos!*

Fr Bruce **Barnes** (1997) has retired. Fr Ansel **D'Mello** (2017) has become parish priest in Parkgate, near Fareham. After 20 years' service as Vocations Director, Canon Gerard **Flynn** (1999) has stepped down from this role, while remaining parish priest in Leigh Park, near Havant. Fr Anthony **Fyk** (2021) has become priest-in-charge at Our Lady of Lourdes with St Swithun, Southsea, while remaining as priest secretary to the bishop. Fr Phillip **Harris** (2010) is now priest-in-charge in Ascot. Fr Edward **Hauschild** (2023) has returned to Rome for further studies in Canon Law at the Gregorian. He will reside at the College.

James **McAuley** (2010) has become a member of the Cathedral Chapter. There have been no changes regarding any of the other Portsmouth Old Romans.

*Canon James McAuley*

## Salford

Bishop John Arnold is in his tenth year as Bishop of Salford. He is currently presiding over the 38<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Synod which was convoked on Maundy Thursday 2023, met in formal session in May 2024 to receive the report and summary of the 30 000 responses received to the Synod's Listening Exercise, and which will meet over a weekend in March 2025 to chart the priorities for the way forward.

Mgr John Allen is now actively retired, always willing to cover for brother priests, and working hard on his book on the history of the Diocese of Salford. If you haven't read his history of Palazzola 1920–2020 you have missed out.

His contemporary, Fr Tony Dearman, is ministering as Chaplain to Nazareth House, which, of course, welcomed St. John Paul II on his visit to Manchester in 1982.

Mgr Michael Quinlan has also retired, in his case back to Kerry, after a long ministry in parish ministry, canonical studies, work as Chancellor, Judicial Vicar, Vicar General, Diocesan Administrator, and Provost.

Mgr John Marsland has retired and handed over to his curate while remaining in the parish. He remains President of Ushaw.

Fr Chris Lough has not yet retired as

Parish Priest of Openshaw and Dean. He will, even in retirement, continue his role of coordinating the Diocesan Programme for the Jubilee Year 2025.

Fr Nicholas Paxton continues his supportive role in supplying for brother priests and his own research.

Fr Robert Lasia, from his many years' service in prison chaplaincy, now ministers as parish priest of the parish of St. John XXIII in Rochdale.

Fr David Quiligotti has retired but remains a great support to the Diocesan Chaplaincy with Deaf People and the Portuguese Language Chaplaincy.

Fr Geoffrey Marlor continues his ministry as parish priest of the parish of St Mary, Heaton Norris, perched precariously on a cliff-top over the M60.

Fr Ian Farrell is settling in as parish priest of St Joseph and All Souls sited right in the heart of Salford Precinct.

Canon Paul Daly is parish priest of St. Patrick's, Collyhurst, and Episcopal Vicar for Formation.

Fr James Manock is parish priest of St. Vincent'. Norden, Dean of the Little Flower Deanery, and the Director of the Diocesan Liturgy Office.

Fr Philip Caldwell is parish priest of Our Lady of Grace, Prestwich.

Fr Mark Harold is the first Diocesan Parish Priest of St. Mary's, Bamber Bridge, having taken over from the Benedictines. He is also Director of Junior Clergy and Dean.

Fr Gerard Fieldhouse-Byrne continues his important ministry as Director of the St. Luke's Centre, his work in human formation in Rome and elsewhere, and also manages to find the time to be Director of the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes.

Fr Christopher Dawson remains as Chancellor and, having stood down as Judicial Vicar, is parish priest of the Sacred Heart, Westhoughton.

Fr John Flynn, following his work as Vice-Rector of our Alma Mater, has become the Rector of its younger sister, the Royal English College, in Valladolid.

Fr Joe Gee is parish priest of St. Mary and St John Fisher, Denton, and continues his work in spirituality.

Fr Michael Deas is parish priest of St. Augustine's, Manchester, in the heart of University Land.

Fr Mark Paver is parish priest of St. Winifred's, Heaton Mersey.

Fr Michael and Fr Mark, between them, are responsible for the promotion of priestly vocations, the accompaniment of enquirers, applicants and seminarians.

Fr Richard Howard is parish priest of St. Mary's, Horwich, and also one of our Diocesan Team of Youth and Young Adult Chaplains.

Fr Ray Matus, who worked in the Diocese for very many years in establishing the Oratory, saw the dream come true, as serving in chaplaincy to His Majesty's Prison, Manchester, and in hospital ministry. Sadly, he died in September.

There may well be members of organisations in our Diocese who studied in Rome, but not at the College. Your scribe thinks of Fr Peter Haverty, of Opus Dei, who has gone home to God, and was a great member of the priestly diocesan, Roman, and golfing family. For all who studied in Rome and minister in our Diocese, prayers.

And finally, there will be some whom your scribe has forgotten to include, as well as brothers no longer in the Diocesan Almanac or those who left before Ordination. For us all, we seek your prayers.

*Canon Paul J. Daly*

## Shrewsbury

Just a couple of moves to report this year. Tony McGrath continues his colonisation of South Manchester by moving to Sacred Heart and St Teresa, Wilmslow, St Pius X Alderley Edge and St Benedict, Handforth. He will be resident at St Teresa's Presbytery, Wilmslow and continues as Diocesan Vocations Director. Wilmslow and Alderley edge are seriously WAG territory, so we await developments. Further down into Cheshire, David Long, PP at St Vincent's Knutsford, is also now looking after St Winefride's Lymm. David Irwin has joined the Wythenshawe Team Ministry, resident at St Anthony's, and assisting David for Sunday Mass at Lymm and Knutsford.

Are congratulations or commiserations in order when you are appointed Vicar General? Jonathan Brandon is our new Vicar General alongside Canon Michael Gannon. Jonathan is PP of one of the largest parishes of our Diocese, St Vincent's Altrincham, and we all wish him well with this major new responsibility.

I had a very enjoyable visit down to Allen Hall in June for the Diaconate Ordinations in Westminster Cathedral, staying with my old friend John O'Leary, now *Rettore Magnifico*. It was good to catch up with so many Old Romans at the Ordination. I was there to support Gary Carter, a former student here at Chester University, training for Arundel and Brighton Diocese. We must pray for him.

And good to meet the month before for the first time John Fegan, Permanent Deacon in SS Catherine and Martina, Hoylake. John was a student for Liverpool at the VEC in the 1980's, a contemporary of Stephen Coonan, Chris Lough and Fergus Mulligan. Like our own Mark Woods, now a Permanent Deacon down in Worthing, John subsequently trained for the Diaconate for Shrewsbury Diocese. It meant Crossing the Mersey, from Liverpool to the Wirral, which is a bit like Crossing the Tiber, only much, much more serious.

*Fr Paul Shaw*

## Southwark

Since last year's edition Fr David Standley and Canon Michael Cooley have died; we pray for the repose of their souls. At the time of writing the following is an accurate reflection of where the various Southwark Old Romans find themselves:

Bishop Paul Hendricks — Auxiliary Bishop for Southwark (Kent Area).

Bishop John Hine — retired, St Clare's Care Home (St George's Park).

Bishop Nicholas Hudson — Auxiliary Bishop for Westminster.

Bishop Paul Mason — Bishop of the Forces.

Fr Dominic Allain — International Pastoral Director, *Grief to Grace*.

Fr Philip Andrews — Private Secretary to the Archbishop of Southwark.

Fr Stephen Boyle — Parish Priest, St Anselm (Dartford).

Fr Paul Connelly — retired, Heritage Care Centre (Tooting).

Canon Martin Edwards — Parish Priest, St Mary Magdalen (Wandsworth East Hill).

Fr Tim Finigan — retired, 4 Bonfield Road (Lewisham).

Msgr Tim Galligan — Parish Priest, St Vincent de Paul (Altenburg Gardens).

Fr Matthew O’Gorman — Parish Priest, Corpus Christi (Brixton Hill).

Fr David Gummett — Parish Priest, St Mary of the Crays (Crayford).

Fr Marcus Holden — Parish Priest, St Bede (Clapham Park).

Fr David Howell — Assistant Priest, St Bede (Clapham Park).

Fr Stephen Langridge — Parish Priest, St Elizabeth of Portugal (Richmond upon Thames).

Canon Leo Mooney — retired, St Peter’s Residence (Vauxhall).

Fr Francis Murphy — Parish Priest, St John the Baptist (Purley).

Canon Michael O’Dea — Parish Priest, Our Lady of Pity and St Simon Stock (Putney).

Fr Simon Peat — Parish Priest, St Winefride (Wimbledon).

Fr Victor Vella — Parish Priest, Holy Innocents (Orpington).

Fr Richard Whinder — Parish Priest, Holy Ghost (Balham).

*Francis Murphy*

## Westminster

Recent changes in **bold** print

+ Vincent Nichols

Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

+ John Arnold

Bishop of Salford

+ Nicholas Hudson

Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster

Guido Amari

Deacon

Mark Anwyll

PP, *Our Lady of Muswell*, Muswell Hill

**Alexander Balzanella**

**Assistant priest, *Our Lady’s*, St John’s Wood and *Our Lady of the Rosary*, Marylebone**

Keith Bartrop

PP, *St Mary of the Angels*, Bayswater

David Barnes

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

**Andrew Bowden**

**PP, *St Mary & St Joseph*, Poplar and *Our Lady & St Frederick*, Limehouse**

Michael Brockie

Retired — resident in Chelsea

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**

**RIP — 26<sup>th</sup> August 2023**

Michael Garnett

Santa Apolonia, Cajamarca, Peru

Daniel Humphreys

PP, *Our Lady of Mt Carmel & St George*, Enfield



**William Johnstone**

**Assistant priest, *Our Lady of Willesden, Willesden***

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

Paul McPartlan

Professor Emeritus, 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 Thomas of Canterbury*,  
Fulham**

**Seamus O'Boyle**

**PP, *Immaculate Conception & St  
Joseph*, Hertford; and Episcopal  
Vicar for Safeguarding**

John O'Leary

Rector of Allen Hall seminary

Brian O'Mahony

Sub-Dean, Westminster Cathedral

Jim Overton

Retired — resident in Stoke  
Newington

**Terence Phipps**

**Retired — living in Bury St  
Edmund's**

**Antonio Pineda**

**PP, *St Theresa of the Child Jesus*,  
Headstone Lane**

**Sean Power**

**Ordained deacon 15<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

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

Nicholas Schofield

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

Alexander Sherbrooke

PP, *St Patrick*, Soho Square  
— on sabbatical in 2024

Gerard Skinner

PP, *St Francis of Assisi*, Notting Hill

Michael Tuck

Retired — living in Sunbury

Mark Vickers

PP, *Holy Ghost & St Stephen*,  
Shepherds Bush

Chris Vipera

PP, *St Mary*, Moorfields & *St Joseph*,  
Bunhill Row; and Director of Agency  
for Evangelization

**Frank Wahle**

**RIP — 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

Stephen Wang

Rector of the *Venerabile*

Philip Whitmore

Parish Priest, *St James*, Spanish Place

**Ben Woodley**

**PP, *St Mary Magdalen*, Whetstone**

*Fr Philip Miller*

# Roman Association AGM, Rector's Report, May 2024

FR STEPHEN WANG

## Overview

We had seven new men join the community in September 2023: three seminarians (two from Oslo, Norway, and one from Melbourne, Australia), and four priests in further studies (from France, South Sudan, Malta and Birmingham). So the formation community this year consists of twenty-one seminarians (with two on year-long placements), four priests in further studies, four resident priests on the formation team, and our three non-resident formation team members — a healthy size for a community! The new men and formation team were very privileged to meet Pope Francis personally at a Papal Audience.

The seminarians returned in September really energised by their pastoral placements and by their experiences of World Youth Day in Lisbon. The highlight of September was our pilgrimage to the Holy Land, guided by Canon Mervyn Tower. It touched us very deeply to be in the holy places, and it was a great time of community-building as we travelled together. We arrived back safely just one week before the terrible violence started there, which has overshadowed our memories.

There were, thankfully, no changes to the formation team this year. Fr David King, the Pastoral Director, started his licentiate in Biblical Theology (part-time); Fr Christopher Warren, the

Vice Rector, continues his licentiate in Liturgical Theology (part-time); and Sr Valentina Stilo, the Pastoral Coordinator, moved from the STL programme to the doctoral programme in Fundamental Theology. She and two other Verbum Dei sisters have moved into a flat on College property and created a small convent there. It is good to have these praying sisters as our close neighbours.

We are delighted that we now have two new portraits of St Ralph Sherwin and St David Lewis hanging in the Refectory. This was an 18-month project that came to fruition on Martyrs' Day, 1 December 2023. We wanted to celebrate the martyrs in a more public way and put them at the centre of our life here: up until now the only images we have had are hidden in the Tribune. The idea came about to commission portraits of the first and the last of the College martyrs, to represent all 44 martyrs. The two men in question, providentially, also represent England and Wales, and they are a secular priest and a Jesuit religious. They were painted by Spanish artist Raúl Berzosa. They now hang in the refectory beside our two founders, Cardinal Allen and Pope Gregory XIII. We could not have a more fitting tribute to the martyrs nor a stronger impetus to mission in our own time.

On 24 January Rome celebrated the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cardinal Consalvi's death, the renowned Vatican Secretary of State, and the man treated as the "second

founder” of the College because of his support for the seminary and our patrimony after the period of French occupation. The VEC was at the heart of the celebrations: we were part of the central planning committee under the chairmanship of Archbishop Paul Gallagher; we hosted an academic symposium on his relationships with England in the Third Library; and we co-sponsored with the British Embassy to the Holy See a concert of sacred music known to Consalvi in our local parish, San Lorenzo, performed by Peter Leech and the Cappella Fede. It was a busy and joyful time for the College.

## Highlights

Some of the highlights since my last report in May 2023 include: our Coronation Gala (a wonderful way to connect with people across Rome), Mass and lunch at the Beda, the Scots College visiting for Mass and supper, the Solemnity of St George, a Nordic Night a few weeks later (to give due emphasis to all our national traditions), a pilgrimage to Divino Amore Sanctuary to dedicate our vocations to the Blessed Mother, Martyrs’ Day, and of course the celebration of Holy Week (always the most important week of our year together). This was the first year in our history when the Liber Ruber was signed by the new men not in private but in the College church in a context of prayer and celebration, with evening prayer and a short discourse from Professor Whitehead about the Missionary Oath.

We were pleased to welcome six guests who were participating in the Synod during October — the four delegates from England and Wales and two others from Malta and Perth, Australia. It was a

joy to have them with us and there were some very good conversations over the period. Julian Paparella, our Coordinator of Intellectual Formation, gave a very fruitful morning of formation about the Synod and an experience of “listening in the Spirit” for the community.

We have had some great visiting speakers (including Fr Mark Vickers on the faith of British Prime Ministers, and Sr Marie Kolbe on her work in the Synod Committee), some eminent visitors (the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, and Bishop Douglas Crosby of Hamilton, Canada, who came for our diaconal ordinations in July 2023), some significant groups visiting (including religious education advisers and inspectors from E&W, Anglican ordinands from St Mellitus Theological College, Australian teachers on their way to World Youth Day, and Jubilarians from England and Wales this November).

We have had a large number of school groups coming for Mass and/or tours of the College. It is a credit to the vision and leadership of these schools that they embed a pilgrimage to Rome into their school year. We are very pleased to welcome them. Other visitors include: the Archbishop of Wales, Andrew John; Ambassador Beresford-Hill of the Knights of Malta who organised a UN Internship for one of our seminarians last summer; Archbishop Peter Comensoli of Melbourne; Cardinal Stephen Ameyu Mulla from the Diocese of Juba, South Sudan; newly appointed Bishop Raimo Goyarrola of Helsinki; and English rugby fans who came for the Italy match and found their way to the College for Mass.

Perhaps the most important visit was of the Vocations Directors and Promoters of England and Wales who stayed for a week

at Palazzola and spent a day with us at the College, meeting the new formation team and getting a feel for our mission here, as well as joining us for Mass and a festal meal. I think they left with a good understanding of our life and our priorities and a greater ability to discern which of their candidates might flourish here with us.

We have wanted to keep the missionary focus to our formation and open up the house as much as possible. The seminarians organised some Nights of Light, when the church was open on a Saturday evening with dozens of people coming in for prayer or simply out of curiosity. They are also running an enquiry/evangelisation group after Sunday Mass for those who wish to learn more about the Catholic faith.

The Advent Meditation and Entertainment ran for two nights on the weekend before we came home for Christmas, with guests coming from across Rome to savour the home-made mince pies. Members of our music team led the British Embassy Christmas carol service as well. Fr Mike Pratt, Vice Rector of the North American College, gave a conference about his vocational promotion programme in the States.

As Rector I have tried to be present at important meetings to represent the College. I was able to travel to the launch of the Cardinal Pole exhibition at Lambeth Palace Archives (which includes some VEC manuscripts), and to Ireland and Sweden for two of our ordinations. I have recently been re-elected onto the Council of the Association of Roman Rectors.

### **The four dimensions of formation**

There have been no significant changes to the formation programme and the

men have been very committed to their formation and to the community, and wanting to make the most of the year.

We received a letter from the Dicastery for Clergy in response to our annual report from last year. This was very encouraging and was an affirmation of the work we have been doing here, especially in the area of implementing the *Ratio*, adjusting the formation programme, and introducing the new Pastoral Theology Year, and asking deacons to have a full-time pastoral experience back in their dioceses.

We have been growing together as a formation team. We meet weekly, and had some important planning days in May and September. We are giving more time to prayer and *lectio divina* at the start of our meetings so that we can be more open to the Lord and what he is asking of us. We had some “formation for the formators” this spring with Fr Michael Doyle, to focus on formation tutorials themselves and how to make the most of them and put them at the centre of our relationship with the seminarians.

Here are a few bullet points for each dimension of formation, not summarising the programme but highlighting any novelties:

*Human Formation:* In the light of feedback from the seminarians and from the Overseas Seminary Committee, we have been spending this year reviewing our human formation programme, to have a revised programme and curriculum in place that is more suited to the needs of the seminarians and the demands of ministry. We have support from Pete Smallwood at Oscott, Fr Michael Doyle (formerly at Allen Hall), Fr Gerard Byrne (St Luke’s Centre, UK), and St Luke’s Institute in the United States. There

have been two human formation days that focus on the topic of what human formation is (a self-referential process, a bit like having a Synod on Synodality).

*Spiritual Formation:* Fr Paul Moss is settled as our new external confessor, coming to hear confessions once a week. We had a very fruitful Holy Week retreat with Fr Gerard Bradley of the Archdiocese of Southwark, and a Day of Recollection about the Word of God and *lectio divina* with Sr Valentina Stilo. We are very pleased that, for the first time, a full 8-day Ignatian retreat will be part of our formation programme, via the new Pastoral Theology Year.

*Intellectual Formation:* There continue to be improvements at the Angelicum and the Gregorian, especially with some good recruiting of new lecturers. The Gregorian has published the results of its strategic review. Julian Paparella, our Coordinator of Intellectual Formation (the role used to be titled “Academic Tutor”), has moved from 8 to 10 hours per week. He is getting on well both with his practical work (Italian lessons, enrolment, etc) and with the deeper formation work (helping seminarians to reflect on their formation and goals in the intellectual area).

Our normal pattern is that the seminarians move from philosophy at the Angelicum (in English) to theology at the Gregorian (in Italian). At the beginning of the year we had a review of this current policy and of the academic provision at both universities. It’s clear, as a result of this review, that they are both excellent universities and can serve us well. We have, however, concluded that our current policy is still a good one.

We are delighted with the provision of philosophy at the Angelicum, which

continues to improve each year. On balance, we believe that the Gregorian is a better place for theology, for various reasons: the quality of the teaching; the breadth of theological approaches; the larger size of the university; the greater internationality of the student body; the fact that there is a greater proportion of diocesan seminarians studying there; the benefit of our seminarians studying at two different universities (both the Angelicum and the Gregorian, one Dominican and one Jesuit), with different traditions, rather than having five or six years at the same one; the feedback from seminarians who have moved to the Greg in recent years — which has been very positive; the chance to study in Italian — for the richness and challenge of thinking in a new way, and as a commitment to growing in Italian fluency while in Rome (which also allows more fruitful pastoral placements in Italian); and the historical link between the VEC and the Gregorian which goes back to 1579. This is not to downplay the quality of the teaching or the overall experience at the Angelicum, but on balance the advantages of moving make us want to keep this as our pattern.

*Pastoral Formation:* Sr Valentina has moved from 8 to 16 hours per week this year, since she has more time and flexibility within her doctoral programme and is no longer working in her former parish. She now attends our weekly formation meetings. She is still setting up new pastoral placements within Rome on top of the many that were set up last year (for example, with the San Lorenzo evangelisation and outreach project in St Peter’s Square).

We have put even more time into giving experiences of preaching and public speaking for seminarians, at their



request. We now have deacons preaching at weekday Masses, Years 5 and 4 giving rosary reflections each week, Years 3 and 2 giving meditations during Sunday Exposition, and every seminarian giving homilies each semester during pastoral classes (and not just during homiletics class). At the request of seminarians, we had a singing teacher stay in Rome for one week to give individual tutorials, which will help not only their singing but also their confidence and public speaking.

The Pastoral Theology programme for 2024–25 is developing well. Last year I shared our draft plans for the emerging pastoral theology year, and we have been reviewing this with the seminarians who will be involved over the coming years. Their feedback and suggestions have been invaluable and helped us to give a final shape to the year, especially with regards to the eight week-long modules of pastoral theology that will take place this October–November. The main themes and the invited facilitators will be:

- Pastoral Counselling and Spiritual Direction: Fr Roger Dawson SJ
- Marriage, Sexuality, Family Life, Gender: Kerry and Ryan Christopher
- Pastoral Care of the Sick and Bioethical Challenges: Bishop Paul Mason
- Contemporary Culture and Contemporary Challenges: Brenden Thompson
- The Priest as Pastor: Bishop David Oakley
- 8-Day Ignatian Retreat: Fr Paul Nicholson SJ

- A Vision for Catholic Education: Fr Paul Grogan
- Leadership in a Missional Age: Fiona O'Reilly

It is a really exciting set of modules and facilitators.

## Safeguarding

There have been no safeguarding incidents to report in this period. We have reviewed and re-ratified our safeguarding policy, which can be read on our website. We have renewed our safeguarding agreement (a contract for services) with the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency to cover all the support they will give us for training and reporting. We had a successful training day with Liam Ring, on behalf of CSSA, and an extra day of training for all staff at the VEC and at Palazzola. Liam will deliver all three seminary safeguarding training modules over a three-year cycle of teaching.

We had a very important visit from safeguarding leaders in England and Wales: Nazir Afzal, Chair of the Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency, Stephen Ashley, the CEO, Anne O'Brien, Chair of the Religious Life Safeguarding Service, and Bishop Paul Mason. They stayed at the College while they were visiting Vatican safeguarding teams, and also meeting Ambassador Chris Trott. Stephen Ashley was also able to have a session with the whole house about safeguarding in the UK and the wider Church, and the vision and mission of CSSA. We were all very impressed by his input and reassured that the CSSA seems to be good hands there.

## Palazzola

The Villa is in a really good place at the moment. Bookings have increased each year since the Covid pandemic so that we are now back to a healthy number of bookings. The main users are UK parish groups, school groups, and individuals on holiday, retreat or pilgrimage. There are also a few groups coming for conferences or retreats, and a trickle of Italian bookings for special events (weddings and First Holy Communion parties), or for concerts or dinners that have been put on by Palazzola in collaboration with other organisations.

A new Palazzola Working Party has been put together by the VEC Trust with members from the College, Palazzola, the Trust, and other experts. The brief is to review our vision for Palazzola and on the basis of that vision make recommendations for refurbishments and upgrades to the building and the user experience, and for marketing and outreach especially to the UK market. There is a strong feeling that the core purpose of Palazzola has not changed: to be a sanctuary for the seminary community of the Venerable English College, and a place of hospitality, pilgrimage and retreat for English-speaking groups and individuals. Palazzola is a gift for the UK Church and a spiritual home for the VEC community. There is an alignment between the mission of Palazzola and the mission of the VEC, which is to support the English and Welsh Mission and the wider English-speaking Church. You should begin to see some of the improvements and upgrades when you visit over the coming months.

If you love the VEC and Palazzola, one of the best things you can do

to support us is to organise a group pilgrimage to Rome for your parish or school, and to stay at Palazzola during that time; or simply to book a stay at the Villa yourself. It makes such a difference to have regular group bookings, and if we could increase the bookings just by a handful of regular groups each year this would give us a great foundation for the years ahead.

## Other matters

Mike Lang very sadly died in October 2023, Chairman of the Friends of the Venerable. He had such a love for the College and gave so much through his work with the Friends over many years. He will be much missed. We pray for him and for his wife Teresa. Louise Bradley took over as interim-Chair for this year.

We mourn the loss of Mgr George Hay, former Rector, and Mgr Philip Carroll, former Spiritual Director, who died earlier this year. They had such an influence over different generations of seminarians and priests at the VEC. A great number of people remember and miss Mgr Philip Carroll, who was here relatively recently, and I have met one or two of our older clergy who remember Mgr Hay fondly from his time as rector.

We are so grateful to Maurice Whitehead for his work in the Archives, and to Renaud Milazzo for his work on the rare book cataloguing. We are equally grateful to the Archive Funding Committee for all their work and very hopeful about the new relationships with our two new fundraising consultants. Professor Whitehead is retiring in February 2025 and we hope to have news of his successor very soon.

There have been a number of very significant works done in the building, including new windows on the main staircase; the restoration of the tiled floor in the main corridor; the restoration of the 18<sup>th</sup> century main entrance door. The swimming pool at Palazzola has been re-tiled through a generous gift from the Roman Association.

The College Vault at Campo Verano Cemetery was completely restored last summer. It was in a terrible state, unworthy of the memory of the six men buried there. The marble has been restored, the lettering touched up, the whole sited cleaned, and a new plaque with the names of those interred there has been added. The Roman Association has very kindly funded this.

Many of our chasubles were worn and needing to be replaced. The Friends of the Venerabile have very kindly funded new sets of vestments for presiders, deacons and concelebrants. The design for the orphrey was taken from some of the decorative motifs in the College church — both in the ceiling and in the main wall of the sanctuary where the Martyrs' Picture hangs. The Polish company Alba have done a fine job of creating a unique woven pattern especially for our community.

Many congratulations to Bishop Raimo Goyarrola Belda who was consecrated as the new Bishop of

Helsinki (covering the whole of Finland), an event much anticipated by Viktor our Finnish seminarian.

Since this report was submitted in May we have had a raft of summer ordinations: the Diaconate of Rev Ryan Browne (Portsmouth) in July at Palazzola with Bishop Philip Egan, and of Rev Matthias Ledum in Oslo, as well as the priestly ordinations of Fr Antonio Bajlovic (in the Diocese of Stockholm), Fr James Finnegan and Fr Martin Fyles (in Liverpool Cathedral), Fr Dave Bench (in Birmingham Cathedral), Fr Joseph O'Brien (in Newcastle Cathedral) and Fr William Meehan (in the Diocese of Hamilton, Canada). On top of this, since my last report, Bishop Stephen Wright has been installed as Bishop of Newcastle, and more recently Old Romans Bishop Timothy Menezes and Bishop Richard Walker were ordained as auxiliary bishops for the Archdiocese of Birmingham.

### Thank you

As Rector I want to thank the Roman Association for its support and prayers over this last year. It means a great deal to us to have your support as we work together for the mission of the Church. We hope that many of you will be able to come to the next Roman Association AGM. Please continue to keep us in your prayers.

# Obituaries

## Monsignor Philip Carroll

According to Timothy, soon-to-be Cardinal, Radcliffe OP the most beautiful thing on earth is Friendship. That being so the loss of Philip Carroll has left a beautiful gap in my list of friends. He would qualify fully for Timothy Radcliffe's description of a friend as someone you don't see for a long time but on meeting again you take up without apology, exactly where you left off. With Philip I would exchange a few well-worn phrases in Italian and we'd be back on stream. I loved his sense of humour and the way his life and ministry combined a spiritual and earthly human quality which brought him close to people as a priest and as a friend.



We played rugby, football and cricket together on the English College team in Rome. Philip's crowning glory was a flying tackle on the Rugby Rome winger heading for the try line at the Stadio Flaminio, thus securing an English College victory.

That tackle turned out to be a symbol of the dedication, enthusiasm and skill with which Philip engaged in every area of ministry he was asked to undertake never losing that personal touch and blessed quality of friendship. *Arrivederci Filippo, amico mio.*

*Mgr John Marsland*

So many emotions sit together when a loved one dies. Our immediate feeling is of loss, but this is often accompanied by gratitude to the person themselves and to God for the difference they have brought to us and many others. Fr Phil — he never used the Monsignor title as he had no time for dressing up or seeking status — was a down to earth, feet on the ground man of the people. Very approachable and at ease with himself, usually, he gave out unfussy signals of welcome and appreciation. He carried a warm regard for Jane and Joe Public and for the backroom people who we learnt during Covid we depend on for keeping the world turning. He loved the ordinary because it's never ordinary. Phil made it his interest and business to get to know the folks working behind the scenes. He was friends with doorkeepers, cleaners and kitchen staff, and appreciated the complexities of parishioners' family lives. He asked names and remembered them, peoples' backgrounds and remembered them too.

For him, friendship was a sacred business. His close friends who, alongside his own family, looked out for him and cared for him, he knew as gifts from God. In his various ministries, working at the Bishops' Conference and as a spiritual director in the English Seminaries in Rome and at Valladolid in Spain, Phil spent a lot of time in the company of priests and lived for considerable times in a very male world, but he was dead set against

all aspects of clericalism and had a great regard for women, for their skills, insights and intuition and for their care and friendship. He worked collaboratively with many gifted women in his own range of responsibilities across the years. He wasn't one for top down theology. While being very familiar with the developments of Church teaching, theology for him was anchored solidly in the lives of the people of God and grew from there. He loved exploring the lived experience in peoples' life stories and discovering and sharing perceptions of what the Lord may be doing in our lives. Phil wasn't a saint. He disliked pompous individuals, control freaks and micro managers.

The scripture readings at his Requiem Mass visited St Paul's Second Letter to Timothy, outlining the qualities of leadership and accompaniment. These are costly demands, and Phil was always ready to admit being stretched at times. St Paul talks of 'fresh hardships' and we're all too familiar with how much adjustment his illness of the last two years required of him. The scripture goes on to remind us that the Spirit is a Spirit of power, of love and self-control. These are not mere words. The same passage pointedly reminds us that Timothy and ourselves have been trusted to look after something precious and that we are to guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit. We each have the task of identifying what the precious something is. For Phil it looked like the simple fact that we're all made in the image and likeness of God. To unpack the significance of how we live with and accommodate this in our relationships was a regular reminder and challenge. In the various appointments he was asked to take up Phil met a great variety of people and worked with many who held high office in the Church. He was never fazed by it. We all have a humanity shared also by Jesus himself. Phil saw the human side of authority figures and was all too aware of the often-difficult decision-making we require of them. Working as assistant general secretary then general secretary of the Bishops Conference of England and Wales meant being involved with drafting documents and statements, refining and arranging how we distil our experience and communicate it use fully. By preference Phil would rather be a team player than one in charge, but many hands and minds are involved in the eventual publication of significant documents. Landmark statements during his time included the Child Protection Guidelines, Healing the Wound, The Sign we Give, and The Common Good — the document produced before a national election. He admitted it was stressful at times. For diversion he had many interests. He was an avid reader. Novels sat easily alongside much spirituality and in the novels he found the drama of weakness and redemption being played out time and again as he witnessed it also in the lives of the many who benefited from his care. Learning from a wide range of literature is an absorbing journey. The wonderful Mgr Kevin Nichols, who spent his final days at our cathedral, is reputed to have said he learnt more theology from Shakespeare than from many other sources. Phil liked spending time with people, enjoying the company of friends and having meals out. His keenness for a good story included watching films at the Tyneside Film Theatre and reading lots of poetry. A particular favourite was the work of Welsh poet and rather austere clergyman R. S. Thomas, who he once met at a convention. Phil was a lifelong Newcastle United supporter and season ticket holder, which endeared him to Cardinal Basil Hume who he worked with frequently when with the Bishops' Conference. The two of them hit it off immediately.



In his youth Phil played in goal. Another of his passions was cricket, where he was a wicketkeeper. During his time as a student at the English College in Rome you didn't go home for holidays. Spending time in the long summers playing cricket with other enthusiasts successfully filled many a day outdoors. At home, playing for one of Ryton Cricket Club's sides and watching county cricket at the Riverside maintained his keen interest. Interspersed with the occasional game of golf he also used to be an aggressive squash player. He was also a fluent Italian speaker and would converse easily with staff in restaurants. Watching him discussing the merits of AC Milan and Inter Milan with a young barista was a spectacle of strong allegiances. I understand that his Italian vocabulary included local dialect terms for silly mid-on and other unique cricket positions. Being a good student of human nature gave Phil a good pastoral nous. He could deal with drunks at the door, was compassionate with mental illness sufferers and in discussions about specifics I would sometimes come away, after listening to his simple good sense, wondering why I hadn't thought of that. He took to heart the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm used at the Requiem, believing that most people are shepherds, caring in different capacities most of the time, looking after or being looked after. He never lost his focus on the one true priest, Jesus himself, and that we all share by self-giving and sacrifice in his priesthood. It's the language of practical love. The art of good communication involves our body language before our words. He was convinced that believing we are loved inside-out by God should somehow show in us. A friend would ask if we that if really believe this love, why don't we tell our faces? He understood the technical term incarnation to include an understanding that the human words and gestures of Jesus mirrored the love of the Father and that our humanity, at best, can be the outer wrappings of grace as God works within and through us. Engaging with individuals and being generous with his time was the creative way he explored and shared his faith. Phil never stopped learning or teaching. His familiarity with the Word of God in the scriptures was a constant encouragement and a challenge, and he was ready to discuss his understanding at any time. The gospel of St John at the Requiem Mass reminded us that we are each chosen and are under the command to love one another and sent to bear fruit that lasts. There's nothing optional about it. It became the scaffolding of his life, the daily task being to find unlimited ways of expressing the loving regard that God has for us in as uncomplicated ways as possible. When he received the diagnosis of motor neurone disease and accepted the irreversibility of a degenerative illness, we talked about it. He knew this was his journey to the cross and resurrection. A priest once told me his Methodist doctor had looked him full in the face after a serious diagnosis and said: "You don't need me to tell you what this is really about, do you?" Phil didn't either, though as time wore on more gentle and caring support was a requirement on his journey to the Lord. He received wonderful professional and gospel care through the NHS, the diocese, family and friends, the Little Sisters of the Poor and many who I hope will recognise themselves in the gratitude he expressed often. He knew it was time to leave behind a body that did not work reliably anymore. For us it's a great loss. For him, a present and eternal joy. May he rest in peace.

*Fr Dennis Tindall*

**Canon Michael Cooley**

*Homily given by Archbishop Kevin McDonald at the Funeral, 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024*

As we gather together today to pray for the repose of the soul of Canon Michael Cooley, and as we entrust him to the Lord, I want to begin by identifying myself with the words of Archbishop John at the beginning of the Mass, and by offering my own condolences and assurance of prayers to Michael's family and to all who were close to him.

So today we do entrust Michael into the hands of his heavenly Father — a faithful priest who was a priest of this diocese for over sixty years — a remarkable man, a holy man, very much a diocesan priest and very much a priest of this diocese.

He was also a man of parts: a man with considerable personal, intellectual and spiritual gifts, which were put generously at the service both of the diocese and of the wider Church. Put more simply, his personal gifts were in different ways very much at the service of people, and — as became very clear when he was a parish priest — particularly those in most need: the stranger, the sick, the migrant, the poor, and indeed anyone in any kind of need. It was never in his nature to look the other way. He was someone who did not hesitate to go the extra mile for people. In this he was someone who had a very clear personal understanding of the purpose and significance of priesthood, but it was also something that he continued to discover and to explore throughout his life, and seemingly the roots of that kind of character and that kind of sensibility went back to his childhood.

He decided very early on to be a priest. As a priest he gave himself to his tasks and responsibilities with understanding, generosity, openness and commitment. Simply put, he was someone who believed in it, or as they say today he got it and he lived it. One aspect of his ministry that I learnt recently was hugely appreciated was his involvement in schools. I was sent a remarkable testament to his work in schools by a former headteacher. He called it the 'Cooley factor' and he makes the point that his presence in the school was not just a matter of 'popping in.' 'The Cooley factor consisted of accompanying every head teacher on their journey,' and he recalls that Michael exuded warmth and mercy in his attitude to teachers and pupils and particularly students who had significant difficulties or challenges. Here again, he went the extra mile and saw it as his job to do that.

Turning to our first reading today, the prophet Isaiah looks to the future. He looks beyond the present moment to the end times and to that ultimate change and transformation, in which there will be a new heaven and a new earth. Death will be destroyed forever, as will sadness and shame. That is the context and the hope within which we work as Christians and as priests: we operate or function in confidence and in hope, hope which St Paul reminds us today is hope in a new home with the Lord. That is the future. That is the hope and that is the confidence that underpins and motivates all those who seek to follow Christ. Paul uses the very poignant image of exile to explain the condition of the Christian as someone who is on a journey home but who is positive about the challenges that the journey throws up. That was very much the spirit of Michael Cooley.

In the excellent obituary of Michael written by Michael Kennedy there is a wonderful story which illustrates how Canon Michael himself understood and explored this journey in ministry. When he was in the parish in Melior Street, apparently someone wrote to Archbishop Bowen to express his profound appreciation of a Mass that Fr Michael said for one of his colleagues who had died. He wrote this:

Fr Michael said a Mass yesterday for a colleague and his wife who both died in tragic circumstances. I do not know what religion they were, if any, but Fr Michael demonstrated the real spirit of Christianity by saying a most devout Mass for them and offering a few words of comfort to all of us. His sincerity and the simplicity of his words made a profound impression on the disparate group of people who attended, some of whom belonged to other denominations, some to eastern religions and some of no religion at all.

Clearly just being present at this Mass had touched people deeply. And this was something he did not have to do. He did it for people, and he did it because he cared. That attitude of openness and welcome very much characterised his ministry as a parish priest. He cared about people, and did so out of profound spiritual and theological conviction. And this relates to another key point made in that obituary namely that he was very much a priest whose thinking and sensibilities were shaped by the Second Vatican Council and, I would say, by Pope Francis's teaching on fraternity and connection.

His ministry was powerful not least because he was a man of parts, a man of prayer, a theologian. Among many other things he became chairman of the diocesan liturgical commission. Earlier in his life he did a degree in Cambridge and taught at the Fisher School.

I met Michael in 1971 when he came as a tutor to the English College in Rome where I was studying for the priesthood. I remember him helping our year to untangle the theological anthropology of Frs Alszeghy and Flick — two of the professors at the Gregorian University who wrote books together — one of our year referred to them as the 'pantomime horse.'

But his presence in the College was much more than that of a tutor. He was great company and he was a great Italophile. The rector at the time was Mgr Cormac Murphy O'Connor, who tried very hard to make the College a community, a community that included not only the staff and students but also the nuns who were from northern Italy who looked after the domestic side of things and who were assisted in this by some girls from near Naples.

Michael was very supportive of them. For him that was part of the job. He did what he saw needed to be done. He spoke good Italian, enjoyed Italian wine and food, walks in the hills of Lazio and was very interested in the Italian language with all the different accents and dialects. He enjoyed the dialect words and phrases that he picked up in the kitchen and would then use them himself. He was also very attached to Palazzola, the English College Villa, where we went in the summer. Michael would go up early with the sisters to help them to prepare for the arrival of the students. He later took charge

of Palazzola holidays, and it is significant that Giuseppe and Julie from Palazzola were intending to be here today but unfortunately were not able to make it.

As I have said, he was someone who fully embraced the renewal of Vatican II and this was out of profound theological conviction. He continued to take and to read Theological Studies throughout his life and to engage personally and intellectually with the great issues facing the Church today. He was disheartened by attempts to play down the significance of the Council and for him this was not about taste or sensibilities but was a matter of faith and the signs of the times.

The Eucharist was always central to him because that is where the Christian people explore and express their identity as the People of God. It was typical of him that, when he retired, he agreed to take over the chaplaincy of St Peter's Vauxhall, the home for the elderly run by the Little Sisters of the Poor. Here he provided the Eucharist every day for the sisters and residents.

I think it is interesting that he took over this role from the great Mgr Martin Lee, who now has also gone to the Lord. It seems that a certain spiritual and intellectual sophistication is a requirement for that job. And of course it was at the Home — where his sister was and is a resident — that Canon Michael died.

Today's Gospel was the Beatitudes. I found myself wondering which of them applies most immediately to Michael, and straight away it was the first of them that jumped out:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

But finally, there is another scripture passage with which I would like to end. When I was a student in Rome we had a spiritual conference every Friday evening. Usually it was given by the Spiritual Director but sometimes by other members of staff. On this occasion Michael gave the conference, and it was a meditation on the well-known Canticle from the Book of Habakkuk — familiar to those who pray the breviary — about a man who fears losing everything, but knows that he will never lose his faith in God. I finish with this simply because it is a passage that clearly spoke to Michael himself.

For even though the fig does not blossom  
nor fruit grow on the vine,  
even though the olive crop fail  
and fields produce no harvest, even though the flocks vanish from the folds  
and stalls stand empty of cattle

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord and exult in God my Saviour.  
The Lord God is my strength.  
He makes me leap like the deer,  
he guides me to the high places.

There may he rest in peace.

## Monsignor George Hay

George Hay was born in British India in 1930 (at Marden now in Pakistan) and retained many happy memories of his childhood there. Later the family returned to Britain and George was educated at Ampleforth College. He opted for military service in the Navy prior to going up to Oxford. He commenced studies for the priesthood at the Venerable English College in Rome, where he was ordained on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1959. The following year he returned to his Diocese of Plymouth and began pastoral ministry at the Sacred Heart Church in Exeter. He was to spend many happy years in Exeter, as it was not long before he was appointed chaplain to Exeter University and he was instrumental in setting up Boniface House as a Chaplaincy Centre from 1966. His duties also included being priest-in-charge of the Catholic community of Crediton where he was involved in the building of the existing church and the setting up of the National Shrine to our patron, Saint Boniface, for whom Fr George had a heartfelt devotion.



George recognised how crucial university years are, so he worked hard to create a real community at Boniface House, and a centre for Christian formation. Students at the University and parishioners at Crediton soon came to appreciate the talents and the pastoral care of Fr George, and many friendships were made that endured down the years.

In 1978 came the call to return to Rome and take up the task of Rector of the English College, helping to guide a new generation of candidates for priesthood towards ordination. Affection for this wise and gentle leader who gave such a positive example of priesthood to his students has also been enduring. Monsignor George loved Rome and so many aspects of Italian life, and always welcomed opportunities to return. However, a first spell of health problems led to a return to the Diocese in 1984, a little sooner than may have been expected.

Back in the Diocese and after a few months of welcome recuperation in healthy Dartmouth, Mgr George was appointed to Sacred Heart Paignton, where he immediately applied himself to the usual tasks of a dutiful priest. He was a happy priest sharing the life of his people, always diligent in preparing homilies and catechesis, always devout in the celebration of the Liturgy. He was appointed a Canon of the Chapter and subsequently became Provost. Other Diocesan duties included being responsible for the support of the newly ordained clergy, and the ongoing formation of all priests. In fact, in his Boniface House days, George in conjunction with Nicholas Coote, had arranged many study days for clergy to introduce the decrees of Vatican II.

In 1991 Bishop Budd felt it was time for lighter duties, and Mgr George went to the smaller parish of Okehampton. There he was as zealous as ever, and appreciated as much as ever, but felt he was rather cut off from brother priests and other friends. So in 1997 he came back to Torbay, this time to St Marychurch where he stayed until 2003 and a final parish appointment at Bovey Tracey and Chudleigh. Finally, well beyond the canonical age of retirement, a bungalow was found for him near the church of St Gregory in Kingskerswell where he was to live out his final years, and died peacefully on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.



Mgr George Hay was a priest respected by fellow clergy, parishioners and many non-Catholics who had contact with him in various capacities. He was a gentleman through and through, but there was also a steel in him that was perhaps not so easily recognised. At Boniface House he introduced squash to the students, and formed a league which he always topped: “it takes them three years to reach my standard” he would say “and then they complete their degrees and leave, so I remain at the top of the league.” It was something of the determination in him that overcame several serious health issues, and kept ministering to the end.

George was a priest to the core. He loved our monthly *Jesus Caritas Fraternity* meetings. He was humble, amiable, sincere in his devotion. He had come to know Christ as “The Way, the Truth and the Life” and he never tired of helping others to come to Christ and discover for themselves the riches of the Faith. He will be mourned by many and he will not be so easily forgotten.

*Mgr Adrian Toffolo*

## Fr Francis Wahle

At the age of 94 years and eight months Fr Francis was called by God to heaven, the God who had called him to service as a priest, service that Fr Francis gave with generosity of spirit and cheerfulness of heart for 58 years. His was an extraordinary life. In 2020 he wrote his autobiography, ‘My Story’, published by The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR). The book, available online, is compelling as Fr Francis describes his life as a child in Vienna, the Nazi invasion of March 1938, his escape to Britain, his education, studies and working life, his vocation to the priesthood, his priestly ministry and his activities in retirement. His autobiography begins, “I was born in Vienna in August 1929 to a middle-class family. My father, Karl Wahle, was a judge and my mother, Hedwig Brunner, an insurance actuary...” Towards the end of the book he offers his musings and insights, the fruit of his experiences and reflection and, no doubt, his prayer. Along with fascinating photographs of people, letters and documents the book has many gems of wisdom written by Fr Francis: “The refugees of today don’t need me to say anything to them. They know what they need. They want security, shelter, the possibility of work. But they’re not getting it. They’re not allowed in. I don’t think it’s the refugees who need my advice, rather the politicians. There are groups which help child refugees from Syria, for example. That’s what I support. If someone is drowning, you don’t give them advice”.



Born in Vienna on 14 August 1929 and Baptised eight days later, Francis had a sister, Anne. He became a priest, she a nun taking the name Sr Hedwig as a Sister of Our Lady of Zion. Sr Hedwig died in August 2001. Both Francis and Anne made gifts of themselves to God and to the Church out of gratitude for God’s goodness to them. They were two of nearly 10,000 children who escaped the Nazis in Europe, evacuated

to safety in the Kindertransport programme that took them to Britain before the start of the Second World War. The Jews faced persecution and worse as the Nazis gained power. Although Baptised as Catholic, Francis and Anne were legally Jewish because they had four Jewish grandparents. Karl Wahle had become a Catholic before Francis was born. Nazi law in Austria meant that Karl could no longer keep his job and Francis had to leave his Catholic school. As Nazi terror spread people feared for their lives and the safety of their children. The Wahle children arrived in Britain in January 1939, Francis nine years of age and Anne two years younger. He was taken to a home run by the Catholic Committee for Refugees, she to a convent. Francis was Confirmed in July 1939 at SS Francis and Anthony, Crawley. Francis learned English and went to Hodder, a Jesuit preparatory school.

Francis' secondary education was at the Jesuit-run Stonyhurst College in Lancashire from 1940-1947. He then came to London, to University College, to study for a B.Sc. in economics, graduating in 1950. He then took employment as an articled clerk and in 1955 he joined the John Lewis Partnership to work as assistant to the chief accountant until 1959. He lived in Swiss Cottage and attended Mass and parish activities in Farm Street. But his vocation to the priesthood was to shorten his promising career. The Parish Priest gave a positive recommendation in support of Francis' application to the Diocese, describing him as "...a live wire as a Catholic and a man who prays regularly". Accepted as a student for the Diocese of Westminster, Francis went to the Venerable English College in Rome from 1959-1966. As a seminarian he was described by the Rector as "...able, industrious and most methodical...an exemplary member of the community". He took part in College concerts "with commendable spirit and humour". He was ordained to the diaconate at the Church of the Sacred Heart in the Piazza Navona, Rome on 9 May 1965 and to the priesthood on 11 July 1965 in the college chapel at Palazzola by Cardinal Heard. On his return to London Fr Francis took up his appointment as a chaplain at Westminster Cathedral where he served from 1966-1974. For most of this time he was chaplain to the Westminster Hospital. Hospital chaplaincy continued when Fr Francis took up his next appointment as Assistant Priest at St Aidan, East Acton with Hammersmith Hospital in the parish. After two years Fr Francis was given a new appointment, as resident Spiritual Director at Allen Hall, the seminary of the Diocese of Westminster, from 1976-1981. His next appointment was Parish Priest at Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St George, Enfield. He remained in Enfield until 1992 when he moved to Our Lady, Queen of Heaven in Queensway where he remained until 2004 when he retired at the age of 75, the usual retirement age for priests.

Retirement did not mean inactivity for Fr Francis! He made known his availability and willingness to provide supply ministry to support priests and parishes with his characteristic generosity and cheerfulness. He had much experience and wisdom to share. Alongside 49 years of pastoral ministry in parishes and hospitals and at Allen Hall, Fr Francis had been a member of the London Society of Jews and Christians, an industrial chaplain, a member of the Catholic Evidence Guild, the St Francis Leprosy Guild and the diocesan Committee for the Welfare of Sick and Retired Priests. He had also served on the Council of the Venerable English College. But there was another service that Fr Francis gave, a personal ministry to alienated Catholics, people who felt

hurt or marginalised by the Church. He was keen to support ‘lapsed Catholics’ and to accompany them. He said, “We have a duty to reach out and search for those who feel offended by the Church, its teachings, its practices or its representatives”. His telephone number and email address were widely circulated. His personal warmth and empathy, his penetrating yet twinkling eyes and his non-threatening approach to people coupled with his gentle sense of humour equipped him well for this ministry. He knew what it was and how it felt to be rejected and excluded, intimidated and persecuted.

In retirement Fr Francis lived in a family-owned flat in Chiltern Court on Baker Street. He was well known to fellow residents and to the hall porters. In ‘My Story’ he wrote, “I’m basically the chaplain for my whole block (there are 130 flats here!) because neighbours know I’m a priest, so if somebody dies, it’s nicer to have somebody you know to do the funeral than a stranger. I’ve officiated at several funerals for non-Catholics as well”.

In the year that Fr Francis turned 90 years of age Cardinal Vincent wrote to him: “I especially thank God for all the many blessings He has given to His people through your priestly ministry. As priests, we are but instruments in the Lord’s hands and we are grateful whenever the Lord chooses us for His good purposes”. In his nineties Fr Francis continued to be a familiar sight in the church of St James, Spanish Place. Although frail and in need of assistance he concelebrated at the Chrism Mass in Westminster Cathedral on Tuesday in Holy Week 2024 at the age of 94. On 27 April he was admitted to University College Hospital and was visited by Cardinal Vincent the following day. Friends stayed with Fr Francis, one during the day, another during the night, aware that Fr Francis would not be returning to Chiltern Court. He had been chosen by the Lord for His good purposes for service as a priest and he was ready to go to God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Father of Mercies.

Fr Francis touched the lives of countless Catholics — practising and lapsed — other Christians, Jews, Muslims and people of no religious affiliation because of his humanity, humility and his love of people. He knew how blessed he was by the God of mercy and compassion, and he wanted to share such blessings with others, indeed with everyone he met in person or through his writing.

May the gentle soul of Fr Francis rest in peace and rise in glory.

*Mgr Martin Hayes*

# Friends of the *Venerabile* Report

BEN ROWDEN



St James's, Spanish Place, London was the location for our 2024 Annual Meeting at which many Friends took the opportunity to engage in prayer and fellowship. Before and after formal charity business, we were privileged to receive presentations from Jack Ryan, Senior Student, and Fr Stephen Wang, College Rector. They provided an interesting and engaging update on the College and its activities over the last 12 months. Thank you to them both for coming to London.

Several unsolicited comments were made to me by Friends indicating how much they had enjoyed the Annual Meeting.

We are thankful to Fr Francis Murphy and pray for Michele Jones who

served on the Committee until September. We warmly welcome Robert Westbury as a new Trustee, and ex-officio, our new Chaplain — Fr Alex Balzanella.

Some highlights of the year:

- Ordination attendance: Committee members attended several ordinations for those who attended the College;
- Prayer: The Committee prayed together — for the College, its staff and students.
- Mass: Celebrated with Fr Stephen at the 2024 Annual Meeting;
- Funding: The Friends enabled new vestments and restoration of the

College main entrance door to be funded; and

- Existing website: Cyber security enhancements and securing ownership of the website domain name were completed.

New Improvement Initiatives include:

- Website Redevelopment: The aim of this activity includes aligning our website with current website design standards, providing support for online giving, events management and a new section to support prayer to the College Martyrs;
- Leaflet Redesign: The website redesign will influence the look and focus of a new leaflet. Work on this activity is a collaboration with our new Deputy Chairman, Alice Reeves;

- New charity email and file storage system: An upgrade will enable the charity to store files securely and centrally; and
- Increasing awareness and promotion of the College and Palazzola initially through directories, newsletters and magazines.

Your prayers are an important and valued way you can contribute to supporting the College, staff and students.

Another way to support the College is through our May 2025 visit to Palazzola during a Jubilee Year as a “Pilgrim of Hope”. Please contact Anthony Coles for more information, or contact other Committee members who can put you in touch.

I look forward to seeing as many of the Friends as possible at the 2025 Annual Meeting, which will be held in Cardiff, Wales.

God Bless.



**BEN ROWDEN** is Chairman, Friends of the *Venerabile*.

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# Friends of the Venerable English College



**Join us to support the College and its students  
through prayer, giving and fellowship**

## **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 primarily around England, Wales and Italy.
- Be kept in touch with the College and its students as they progress in their journey towards ordination or completing further higher level studies.

## **What we do**

We fund improvements at the College, such as the purchase of four new sets of vestments (Green, White, Purple and Red) and the renovation of the main College front door. We have enabled Palazzola to continue to offer great services and facilities, and support pilgrimages for students and staff. We attend ordinations of those deacons and priests formed through the College.

## **For further information**

Please visit our website: [www.friendsofenglishcollegerome.org.uk](http://www.friendsofenglishcollegerome.org.uk)

## **Contacts**

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# 2023–24 House List

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Cycle

DE NORTBÉCOURT Fr Simon (Vannes)  
ELLUL Canon Peter (Malta)  
ODUOR Fr Richard (Torit)

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle (Year I)

BENCH Rev. David (Birmingham)  
FINNEGAN Rev. James (Liverpool)  
FYLES Rev. Martin (Liverpool)  
GLOVER Fr Michael (Birmingham)  
O'BRIEN Rev. Joseph  
(Hexham and Newcastle)

## 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle Theology (Year III)

BROWNE Ryan (Portsmouth)  
LEDUM Mathias (Oslo)

## 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle Theology (Year II)

HAWKES Ryan (Portsmouth)  
HENRY Jonathan (Birmingham)  
MCGOVERN Stuart  
(Waterford and Lismore)  
RYAN Jack (Portsmouth)

## 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle Theology (Year I)

HAREIDE Ludvig (Oslo)  
RYAN Xavier (Melbourne)  
THEOBALD Luke (Birmingham)

## 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle Philosophy (Year II)

LORENZ PANLICAN Nico (Oslo)  
MACKO Lukas (Copenhagen)  
MERCER Barnabas  
(Arundel and Brighton)  
WILSON Brian (Down and Connor)

## 1<sup>st</sup> Cycle Philosophy (Year I)

ROSCINS Aleksander (Oslo)  
NGUYEN Andre (Oslo)

## Extended Pastoral Placement

SHARROCK Theo (Salford)  
TORRES AIRAVA Viktor (Helsinki)

## 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



GANGEMI EDITORE<sup>®</sup>  
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PRINTED IN ITALY - NOVEMBER 2024  
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PALAZZOLA

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