

Issue No 11 Summer 2011

THE

WORKSHOP

The Magazine of the Parish of St Joseph's, Birkenhead





Welcome

Every week at St.Joseph's we produce a bulletin which tells people what events are coming up. These days we have two public notice boards so that the public can read this. What the newsletter does not have space do is to report back on events after they have happened.

This is one purpose of St.Joseph's "Workshop", our parish magazine: to record and to celebrate things that have been happening in the life of the local church. Another aim is to keep people in contact with the parish. Any household, for example, that has had a baptism, Holy Communion, Confirmation, wedding or funeral service through St.Joseph's goes on to the parish database. We aim to deliver the magazine to every one on our list, two or three times a year. We hope that, as well as recording events, that there are articles and other snippets that will interest you.

If, for any reason at all, you would rather not receive the magazine, (if, for example, a parishioner has moved and you are the new occupier), please let us know and we will remove you from the list. (It goes, I hope without saying, that our database is subject to the Data Protection Act and that the information is not shared with anyone else!)

May God bless you in all your plans & hopes in the summer holiday period.

Fr Nick Kern

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How can we be so wrong about Thomas?

Deacon Les Arch

This year St Thomas' day falls on a Sunday – July 3rd, We tend to think of Thomas as the doubter. But did he really doubt any more than the other disciples who did not believe Mary when she told them she had seen the Lord? And even when they went to the tomb to check for themselves, did they believe that Jesus had risen? No, only that the tomb was empty. And even when Jesus appeared to them in the locked room and said 'Peace be with you', did they believe that Jesus had risen? No, that did not happen until he had shown them his hands and his side.

Of course we know that Thomas was not present on this occasion and refused to believe Jesus had risen until he had seen Jesus for himself. In fact until he had touched the wounds and put his hand in Jesus side. Then he not only believed that Jesus had risen but he exclaimed 'My Lord and My God'. He fully recognised Jesus as God. It

seems to me he was no more a doubter than the rest and perhaps a good deal more discerning.

What else do we know about Thomas? When Jesus suggested they go to Judea to be with Mary and Martha at the death of their brother Lazarus, the disciples were not at all keen. After all, the last time they were there the Jews had wanted to stone Jesus. Thomas is the only one to say that they should go even if that meant going to die with their master. A brave man.

The only other thing we know about Thomas relates to the time when Jesus told

the disciples that there were many rooms in his father's house, and he was going to prepare a place for them. It was Thomas who said that he did not know where Jesus was going, so how could they know the way? An inquiring man.

It seems to me that Thomas is not such a bad example to follow. We could all do with a bit more searching into the meaning of what we read in the Bible. After all, the theologians are still disagreeing amongst themselves 2,000 years on. Perhaps they still have not got the message quite right. So we should perhaps be a little more doubting and a little more searching and a little more discerning. And as for bravery, we could all do so much more to overcome our own fears of ridicule and spread the Good News of the Kingdom of God beyond our church doors.

Syro Malabar rite pictures archives how the Kerela community celebrate



Mary and gardens

Mary Barton

In the early middle ages monks were the first people to produce sophisticated garden designs. It was the monks who created the designs still typical of many cottage gardens today. The paths were often constructed in the shape of a Cross to emphasise the meditative aspects of the monks work. The Cross was supplemented by a beautiful rose bush in the centre of a circular bed surrounded by a low evergreen hedge. This symbolised Christ overcoming death on the Cross.

The monastery gardeners planted and used a wide range of flowers and plants that had religious associations. These plants were not only used to decorate the church, they were also displayed so that people could always have a reminder of the saviour in whose steps they tried to follow. Provided the legends were interesting and credible the monks would decorate the church on feast days and festivals with the appropriate plants. Chamomile, the herb

of humility, became known as St. Ann's flower. The tiny geranium, herb Robert, was named for St. Robert, founder of the Cistercians, who used the plant to treat victims of the plague. After the Reformation attempts were made to destroy the traditional link between plants and worship. Mary plants, such as 'Our Lady's thimble' and 'herb of the Madonna' returned to their original names of harebell and costmary

As the mother of Christ, Mary was honoured by having a number of plants named after her.

Lavender – Breath of Paradise – It had no scent until Mary, it was said, laid Jesus' swaddling clothes on the bush.

White lily – emblem of majesty and purity. Madonna lily – Mary is visited by Gabriel with a spray of lilies in his hands. The lily is also a sign of resurrection and as such, is the Easter flower.

Lily of the valley – Our Lady's tears – legend says the flowers grew from Our Lady's tears as she stood at the foot of the Cross. It is also called a ladder to heaven, suggested by the arrangement of bell like flowers which always nod on one side of the stalk.

Some other flowers are wild Clematis – Our Lady's bower; violets – Our Lady's modesty; cowslip – Our Lady's keys; foxglove – Our Lady's gloves; woodruff – Our Lady's lace.

The ladybird is named after the Virgin Mary, as she was at one time depicted wearing a red cloak. The seven spots were for the seven dolours – seven sorrows.

Our Lady is central to what Jesus came to achieve. At every stage of his life and death she was near him, uniting herself to his great work. And she is still present to ensure our salvation through her Son. She is our Mother and she not only wishes to form Christ in us, but she also works to bring it about. We need her.

The Lord's Prayer

I cannot say 'Our' if I live only for myself.

I cannot say 'Father' if I do not endeavour each day to act like God's child.

I cannot say 'who art in heaven' if I am not striving for holiness.

I cannot say 'Thy kingdom come' if I am not doing all in my power to hasten that wonderful event.

I cannot say 'on earth as it is in heaven' if I'll not serve God here and now.

I cannot say 'give us this day our daily bread' if I am dishonest or seek things by subterfuge.

I cannot say 'forgive us our trespasses' if I harbour a grudge against anyone.

I cannot say 'lead us not into temptation' if I deliberately place myself in its path.

I cannot say 'deliver us from evil' if I do not put on the whole armour of God.

Let us all pray honestly and humbly before the One who loves us completely.



Caption type stuff

RCIA – A personal journey...

Tony Ireland

RCIA stands for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. It is commonly (but probably incorrectly!) used for the group sessions of all those wishing to become Roman Catholics.

On reflection, I think I may have become a Catholic in spite of the RCIA programme...

I found the very words were a barrier : what had Christian INITIATION to do with me? I had been baptised when I was only four weeks old, in an Anglo-Saxon font in a church dedicated to St Mary the Virgin. Surely that was a good enough initiation ?

And what about “CONVERSION” ? I remember when we were “converted” to Natural Gas – old fashioned Town Gas in the morning, and a new, improved natural variety later the same day. Paul may have been converted in a moment on the road to Damascus, but I didn’t expect anything similar to happen anywhere along

North Road any time soon.

I couldn’t be a convert - I had always been a Christian. Brought up in the traditions of the Anglican church, I went to a school where we celebrated Mass every week (and yes, we did call it Mass). When I was twelve, I was duly confirmed by the Bishop of Johannesburg into the Church of South Africa. I was Church Warden of my parish in Derby when I was only twenty five years old, and even did a stretch as their representative on the Area Synod.

My personal journey probably began when Lynn and I went together for instruction by the University Chaplain before we were married. At that time the ecumenical movement was at its height, and I am sure he was sincere in his belief that within a few years the Churches of England and Rome would be re-united. After our marriage we moved along parallel lines, each attending our own church and waiting for the

tracks to converge.

As time passed, I increasingly felt the Catholic Church was closer to my upbringing than the Church of England, but, more than thirty years later, the tracks were as wide apart as ever. I found myself belonging to a church I did not attend – and attending a church to which I did not belong. Every Sunday I sat in the pews, rather than going forward to be refused Communion. I preferred to take comfort in the prayer “Lord I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word...”

Year after year, the RCIA programme would be announced, and every year there would be some reason not to enrol. In reality my “reasons” were nothing but excuses for continuing the status quo : Surely it wasn’t intended for people like me? What would my mother and my family think? Maybe it would be different if Father Boylan was still here? In any case, I was often away from home and couldn’t

possibly make a commitment to regular meetings. Like Samuel in the Temple, I repeatedly heard the call and failed to respond.

Then I suggested that it may be possible to renovate the external crucifix and, as I was beginning to have a bit more free time, I volunteered to help. For several weeks I found myself confronting the image of Jesus face to face. As I scraped back the rust, sanded, shaped and painted, it gave time for serious thought. Why was I doing this? What did the crucified Christ really mean to me? Maybe my road to Damascus really did run along North Road – and ended in Father Nick's garage !

I still approached my first RCIA meeting with a degree of scepticism. After all the years of waiting, I was still

not certain that I was going to follow the programme to the end. At the risk of causing him a little embarrassment, I have to give thanks that I was joined by Eric as my fellow traveller. Coming from a totally different background he would ask the simplest of questions that I felt completely unable to answer. My old certainties gradually gave way to a new understanding, and a realisation of what I had been missing. As the weeks went by, I discovered a new depth to my old faith, and new meaning in the rituals and traditions that I had either misunderstood or taken for granted.

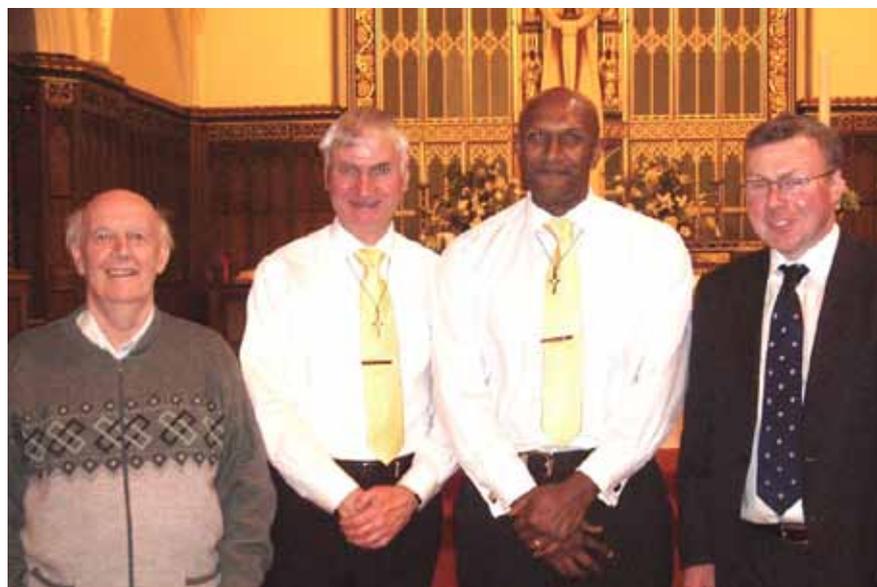
A turning point came in my last real conversation with my mother before she died in March when I told her that I was preparing to be received into the Catholic Church.

A lifetime of ecumenical leanings prompted her question "Why should you have to go through all this?" By then I knew the answer was another question: Why NOT?

I know that the high point of the programme should have been the Easter Vigil, but for me the moment that I treasure came a few weeks earlier – and I was caught entirely off guard.

The 'Rite of Election' is a service when everyone being received into full communion across the diocese comes together at Shrewsbury Cathedral. I expected it to be something of a formality, just one more of those things that had to be done. Again Eric got it right: as we crossed the river walking towards the cathedral he turned and said "So I guess this is the point of no return – no turning back now". After being received by the Bishop, the short walk back to my place up the main aisle of the Cathedral marked the real climax. Like the ride on a roller coaster, I had worked my way up to this point. Now it was a down-hill run to the celebration of Easter, my second confirmation and my first Communion after a fast of more than twenty years.

Tony and Eric with sponsors



Les's Flight of Fancy

Deacon Les Arch

Fr. Michael Hartley from St. Werburgh's last year invited me to accompany him on a visit to Chilonga Parish in Mpika Diocese, Zambia. An offer which I declined! What use would I be going to Chilonga? It would as far as I could see be an unnecessary expense to check up on how funds are spent when the airfare alone could in my opinion be put to far better use. That was last year. Back in January Fr. Michael again approached me, this time telling me of the new church built in Nabwalya in the parish and that perhaps some of my practical skills would be of use in helping to furnish the church. The Spirit moves in mysterious ways. This time I said I would think

about it and talk it over with Mary. Almost before the words had left my lips Fr. Michael was in action and had found ways of funding my ticket there and believe it or not back again. So before I knew it the tickets had been purchased and I was off to the Well Travel Clinic at the School of Tropical for what seemed like a never ending series of injections for just about everything under the sun. I this just about anything can bite me now and come off the worst.

Well where am I bound on July the 6th? Final destination the village of Nabwalya, in the Luanga Valley, Mpika district Zambia. If you look at your map then there is what

looks like a peninsula of the Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire) extending out into the middle of Zambia. From about the midpoint of this peninsular across Zambia due east towards the Tanzanian border, almost in the middle, can be found the Luanga River Valley. Just a mere 9 hours cross country in a Landrover on a good day to the nearest town with an airport, Mfuwe. I am not being put to the discomfort of a Safari Landrover trip, no they have decided that time being so precious I am to experience the pleasure of a light aircraft flight from Mfuwe, three of us with a pilot, plane now full, lasting a mere one and a half hours. Have you ever been airsick Les? No but there can always be a first time. Apparently the pilot likes to fly at tree to height. Perhaps it's because there is less distance to fall or the pilot just doesn't like heights but I'm likely to get a good eye level photo of a giraffe or so I am told.

The village housing is traditional daub and wattle with a grass roof, however



I am to have the luxury of hut built of handmade mud bricks just as the new church has been built. They have a school room and a visiting clinic all provided with help from St. Werburgh's Parish. The parish have also helped to buy grain to distribute when home grown supplies run out along with drugs for TB, Malaria and Aids.

So what am I to do whilst I am there? The priest Fr. Valdamar on hearing that I was coming sent the following email

'The man who comes with you is a gift I have work for him putting tiles in bathroom (1000) I was thinking very hard how I will get this work done quickly someone who can do job'

So that is what I was expecting to do. Since then things have changed and a new email read

'Can man do electric or plumbing. Church needs lights and bathroom has no water'

It appears that I am to bring something of the 21st or was it our 19th century to village life. They have two wells but many still use the river water for everything!!! There is no mains electricity nor piped water so who knows what



I am up against. I intend to write a diary and gather photos and videos whilst I am in Nabwalya and wish on my return to share my

experience with everyone. Thank you to all who have wished me well. See you all in August.

The Pope's Visit still has relevance

Fr Nick Kern

The State Visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Britain last September seems a long time ago now. Was it just a “flash in the pan”?

I think it is well worth remembering what a historic moment it was. Following the Reformation, it was only in 1829 that Catholics were allowed to vote in elections. It was only in 1850 that we were allowed to have our own bishops again. So, to see a Pope meeting Her Majesty the Queen is a real landmark in how the world, thankfully, has changed.

But whether this historic moment was just a “flash in a pan” largely depends on us. The Pope gave a number of sermons & addresses that said a very great deal. I think it is worth revisiting and pondering these.

When Pope Benedict addressed politicians and others in the Houses of Parliament on Friday, 17th September he talked about the importance of having a conversation about the moral values we hold in common. He gave the example of Britain's abolition of the

slave trade in 1807, saying “The campaign that led to this landmark legislation was built upon firm ethical principles...It has made a contribution to civilization of which this nation may be justly proud”. I'm sure he struck a chord with many when he also spoke of the opposite case in referring to the banking crisis. “There is widespread agreement that the lack of a solid ethical foundation for economic activity has contributed to the grave difficulties now being experienced by millions of people throughout the world.”

The Pope's point was not that Christians should impose their moral values on others, but we do have a contribution to make to the “national conversation” about values. He continued by lamenting that in Britain “there are those who argue that the public celebration of festivals such as Christmas should be discouraged, in the questionable belief that it might somehow offend those of other religions or none”. The Daily Mail cottoned on to this one with

a headline the next day: “POPE'S BATTLE TO SAVE CHRISTMAS”! The Pope's point was that, in a country like ours that places “a great emphasis on tolerance” we should answer those who want to shut us out altogether. “Religion, in other words, is not a problem for legislators to solve, but a vital contributor to the national conversation”.

There were voices in the media who said that tax payers' money should not have been spent on the visit, but state visits are part of the fabric of diplomatic life. The Pope has entertained the Queen on a number of occasions, so it was only right that she invited him in return! The fact is, however, that the Catholic Church in this country (& by that I mean the ordinary people) were asked to pay for those parts of the visit that were to do not with the state but with church life. We are still paying the debt I'm afraid – so this is advance warning that there might be a fundraiser or a retiring collection to help meet our quota of the cost of the visit!

North Road Nehemiah?

When the Israelites returned to Jerusalem from exile they found their Temple destroyed and the walls devastated... so Nehemiah got a small army of volunteers to roll up their sleeves and restore the city (and many of them were personally named for their efforts in the Book that bears his name).

We can be thankful that St Joseph's hasn't been burnt to the ground and we don't need to fortify the grounds – but you may have noticed things that need to be done: uneven paving, bits of painting, and of course the badly worn step by the main entrance. The materials are often relatively cheap, but paying contractors may not

be the best use of our limited funds.

Would you be willing to join a "Nehemiah group" to undertake some practical work to maintain and improve the fabric of our church building?

It would be great to have a few experts with construction skills – but for many jobs, enthusiasm and a bit of time are just as important.

If you think you may be able to help, please let us know and we will try and arrange a plan of action. Just have a word with any of the Parish Team.

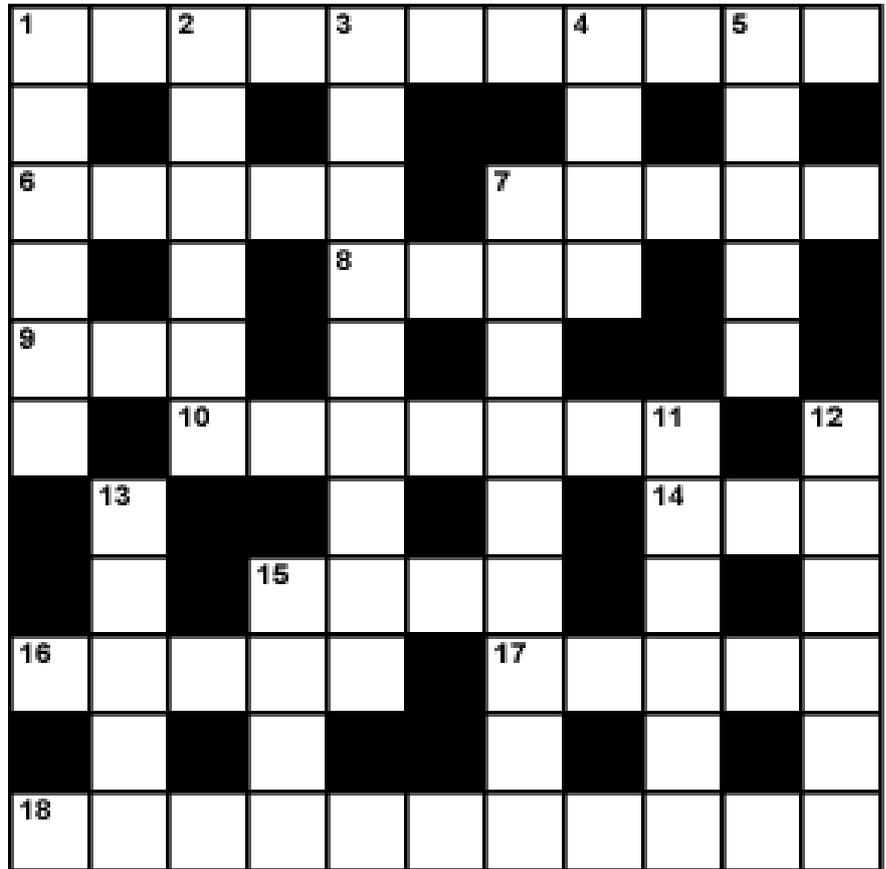
The rockery needs re-laying

Ordinations

The first weekend in July is the anniversary of the Ordination of nearly all the Permanent Deacons in Shrewsbury Diocese. This year three more men were ordained on the 9th July at the cathedral in Shrewsbury, Dave Hill, Mike Daily and Steve McCormick. Dave is in St. John's Parish New Ferry and Steve is in St. Luke's Parish Spital. Please pray for them and their families as they begin a new step on their journey in faith to serve the Lord and his people. Remember our own deacons Gerard Les and Paul as they continue to serve St. Joseph's in their own individual ways.



Cryptic Crossword



ACROSS

1. Maybe bug in shrub, eating nothing initially, was not consumable? (7,4)
6. Meat found in Troas thrown away (5)
7. Quiet peer is a jewel (5)
8. King in rough sea they hear? (4)
9. Woman is envied, oddly (3)
10. Bank excluding Italian editor is forced out (7)
14. Lie disturbed old priest (3)
15. Caught seven dropping off five (4)
16. Praise officer after axe is returned (5)
17. Pick out God's chosen (5)
18. Sunday Devil working in a foolish way (11)

DOWN

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Endlessly bore the German neighbour (6) 2. Primate wearing red gathered crops (6) 3. Make sense of alien going after injured printer (9) 4. Bishop with experience brought back creatures (4) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Asian Republic airways became lost overlooking Washington (5) 7. Prince is one starting to release several hostages (9) 11. Support for champion (6) 12. Unclean partly fulfil thyself (6) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Grown old and pale (5) 15. Second cover moved sideways (4) |
|---|--|---|

Cryptogram Puzzles

Can you crack these messages in code? Start by counting the frequency of each letter. The alphabet strip on the bottom is to record your tally. The most frequent letter in English is "E" followed by T, A, O, N, R, I, S, H, & D – but it may not be so simple: you have to guess!

ODR NPSCC PSUL XD DWPLM EDYN HLTDM L VL. ODR NPSCC XDW VSQ L XDM
 ADMNPBF BYDCN. ODR NPSCC XDW WSQ L WPL XSVL DT WPL CDMY ODRM EDY BX
 USBX. QLLF WPL NSHHSWP YSO PDCO. PDXDM ODRM FSMLXWN. YD XDW QBCC.
 YD XDW IDVVBW SYRCWLMO. YD XDW NWLSC. YD XDW CBL. YD XDW IDULW.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X V Z

ZPY XLDGG LDQV TP PSLVM JPHX OVBPMV IV. ZPY XLDGG TPS IDEV TPM
 UPMXLWN WHPGX. ZPY XLDGG TPS SDEV SLV TDIV PB SLV GPMH ZPYM JPH WT
 QDWT. EVVN SLV XDOODSL HDZ LPGZ. LPTPM ZPYM NDMVTSX. HP TPS EWGG. HP
 TPS KPIIWS DHYGSVMZ. HP TPS XSVDG. HP TPS GWV. HP TPS KPQVS.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X V Z