

Holy Trinity and St. George Parish Magazine

Advent and Christmas 2023



**“If we could condense all the truths of Christmas
into only three words,
these would be the words:
‘God with us.’”**

John MacArthur

Suggested Donation: £1

Tears for a Turkey

Dear Friends:

The enormity of the sorrow in the world, from Ukraine to the Middle East to the Democratic Republic of Congo, can be so overwhelming that we can all be in danger of becoming numb, desensitized to it all. It feels as if we are awash in desperately bad news fit to break our hearts over and over again. Some tune out in self-preservation. Others feel beholden to watch and feel powerless to act. There is no doubt that we need a balance of responsible engagement and self-care. As I write this, Thanksgiving has just passed here in the US, and it is an act of faith to give voice to gratitude no matter how dire the headlines.

The one place I have no choice but to keep the needs of others in crystal-clear focus is at our parish thrift shop, about which I frequently write in these pages. Last issue I submitted a short item on “Glimpses of Glory at the Parish Thrift Shop.” One customer whom I did not mention was Maribel, a woman awash in grief from the loss of her husband to cancer and her son to an overdose. I want to introduce you to her here.

Each week we have a raffle of three items. Tickets are free and the weekend before Thanksgiving we had 14 customers vying for three prizes: a dancing Snoopy dog, a lovely seasonal gift basket and the turkey I had earned by spending \$400 at my local market. Maribel won the turkey and immediately burst into tears. She quickly purchased her other items and headed for the door where I gave her a hug. She told me that she had not known how she would scrape together the money for a Thanksgiving turkey and that now she would be able to invite the surviving members of her family for a festive meal. “God with us”? Oh, yes, and we are so very grateful to be his agents in our poor little neighborhood.

Can you believe that we have had two dozen issues of this magazine since the reboot? I can't! We have some items which we weren't able to include in the last one. Thanks for your patience, **Marian Kearney, Barbara Shaw** and **Anne Brown**! We have a lovely little piece from **Jenny Davies**. We welcome **Sr. Julie** back and thanks as always to **Fr. Hugh, Raymond Daley, Pamela Boyes, Elizabeth Cartmell** and **Brian Stabler**. We hope it will give you a good read as you prepare for the new liturgical year with the beautiful Advent and Christmas seasons. My dear Michael Doyle used to despair, as do many of us, of how early everyone seems to be to decorate and sell, sell, sell. He used to say, “When they put Christmas down, we pick it up.” I hope you keep the season straight through the Baptism of the Lord to fortify yourselves for the long winter ahead!

Speaking of winter, remember, our upcoming winter issue needs your contributions! Send them any time! Thank you for reading and have a beautiful Advent and Christmas. I would ask you to please keep my family in your prayers. They have been plagued by health problems from broken bones to cardiac stents to upcoming surgery and we are all hoping for a healthier New Year. Many thanks.

Celeste



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A Word from Fr. Hugh



By the time you read this, the memory of Kendal being cut off by snow will be fading but it was so thick and so sudden that I think we were all caught by surprise. Needless to say, attendance was thin last weekend, perhaps everyone was escaping yet another second collection which, I am afraid, come thick and fast at this time of year. A bit like the snow. Now, of course, we have reverted to Kendal's usual weather of rain and more rain.

With such a short Advent, the shortest possible, Christmas seems to be arriving very quickly and as it is on a Monday the Mass times are crazy this year over that weekend. I was impressed by Sedbergh, who knew that I thought we had too many Masses last year, and they have found their own supply in Mgr. Peter Verity who they have come to know well, and who supplied in Kendal too while I was in Bolivia. At this point I should pause to thank you all for being so patient with me when I was away again this year presiding at my nephew's wedding in La Paz. Great fun, except for the altitude sickness which was definitely not.

I noticed that many of the schools and parishes in Bolivia were run by the Salesians, which we still miss here in the parish, but they have left their mark even now. I get to see Sr. Ella when I am down in London, as she lives in their Battersea parish these days. One of the impressive things about them is the number of young men they have there from all over Europe training for the priesthood.

That is a question we should all be keeping in our prayers. With my current job with the Bishop, I can see in even more detail, his difficulties in covering the whole of the diocese, and what is clear is that we will have to re-think our whole idea about parishes and how priests supply the sacraments and what role the parishioners have. The discussion on synodality that is going on at the moment will have some influence on this, but we will have to readjust our expectations, which is possibly no bad thing. We have great help, of course, from priests from overseas, but the newer priests will be facing a whole different 'ballgame' in the future. This is something we need to keep in our prayers and be open to new ideas.

The year seems to have gone by very quickly but possibly it will be remembered by many for the wars in Russia and Ukraine, and more recently Israel and Gaza. (There are many others too we hear little of, such as in Darfur, Sudan.) I have just finished a memoir that Anthony Fitzherbert lent me, 'It Is Easier to Get to Heaven Than the End of the Street,' by Emma Williams, on the Holy Land in the early 2000's, and what is happening is clearly part of what was bound to happen, with the situation as it is. As we reflect on Bethlehem and the manger and Jesus being born into a place under repression and among the most vulnerable, it should focus our minds on the current position. What stokes it all is fear on all sides. If only we could all trust in those words so often repeated in the Bible, 'Do not be afraid,' just as the angel Gabriel said to Mary.

God Bless.

Fr. Hugh

It's when we face for a moment the worst our kind can do,
and shudder to know the taint in our own selves,
that awe cracks the mind's shell and enters the heart.

Denise Levertov

The SVP is the most pragmatic arm of the parish when it comes to meeting the basic needs of those in the community who are hurting or need support. It is clear that these needs have come into sharper and sharper focus during these trying times. Here, Raymond Daley shares a...

St. Vincent DePaul Society Update *by Raymond Daley, Kendal SVP President*



The festive season is just around the corner, yet the daily pressures on people's lives have continued unabated this year due to the ongoing Cost of Living Crisis. Across SVP England & Wales, our Parish Conferences, Support Centres, Community Shops and Special Projects have all seen a dramatic increase in demand for support, even compared to last year's increases. **Calls to our SVP National Request for Help Team on 0207 703 3030 are up 150% from last year**, and it's not even the end of the year yet.

As SVP members, we meet the face of Christ in the poor. This year, in addition to our familiar work of befriending, **we have served food to over 8,000 people, provided approximately 4,000 items of clothing and 3,000 items of furniture, and set up places of warmth and welcome, often in Parish Halls**, offering comfort and support wherever we can. For the people we support, this feels 'more than kind,' beyond what they could ever have expected. This feeling is the focus of our campaign this Christmas.

What would happen to all those people if we weren't here to help them?

We are all aware there is need out there. It is not always obvious and certainly does not go away. But what can be done about it? The SVP makes a huge difference to those in need, providing face-to-face support to those who are housebound, isolated, ill, in debt, unemployed, struggling to make ends meet, marginalised, in crisis or just lonely. This help extends to all faiths and none. It doesn't matter who the person is. The SVP, with its resources and organization, will always offer support.

Here, the beating heart of the SVP is its Kendal group. We are asking for your support here in this parish by joining us. That would be a wonderful Christmas present!

This is not an appeal for money. It is about asking for just some of your time.

All are welcome to join the Vincentian family. It provides personal and spiritual development, friendship, plus the opportunity to work for and with your community.

The key commitment is your time, along with the gifts and talents you possess. Even if it is just an hour a week, that would be fantastic. It would be great to think the SVP could do even more in this parish.

The SVP is:

- An international society with a soul
- A society that befriends
- A society that puts people at the heart of what it does
- A society that helps people have a better life
- A society that would love to welcome you to the team

If you would like to find out more about the SVP, you are cordially invited to get in touch with me with no obligation.

Wishing you all the very best for Christmas and the New Year.

Raymond Daley

Email: RaymondD@svp.org.uk.

Mobile: 07462 014088.

I love the Holy Trinity and St. George Prayer Ministry! I have been very comforted by the chance to pray with others after Mass for special intentions. Here Anne Brown gives us a brief overview of the ministry as well as an invitation to give it a try.

A Look at the Prayer Ministry

by Anne Brown

It is many years since Prayer Ministry was first offered in this parish after the 10:00 AM Sunday Mass, so it could be helpful to describe again what is involved.

In Prayer Ministry, Christians pray not just “for” one another but “with” one another, and each week two members of the congregation who are familiar with this way of praying are available to minister to others.

You may have come to church with a particular need or concern for yourself or someone else. As you bring this to Jesus in prayer, it could be helpful to speak it out loud to the two people offering prayer. They will not counsel you or try to resolve anything, but will simply ask Jesus to be specifically present in your life today, trusting that the prayer is heard and answered in some way.

Just come forward to the Sanctuary straight after Mass, take a seat and let the minister know your name and what you are bringing to prayer ~ if you feel able to say. It is confidential and can be quite brief. Only God knows what blessings may flow from the prayer.



It is always fascinating to hear about Christmas in other lands, and here we have a front-row seat to traditions in Nigeria care of our own dear Sr. Julie (to whom we send congratulations on the birth of her great-nephew and namesake, Alexander Ambrose Robinson-Zeki!). I learned a lot about cashews here, and you will, too!

Christmas with the Sisters in Nigeria

by Sr. Julie Ambrose

Christmas weather is very different here in Nigeria from what you experience in Kendal. I know there are few (or in fact no) white Christmases anymore, although I do remember at least one in in Kendal in the 1940's! The Salvation Army band were playing Christmas carols outside my grandparents' house on Christmas morning. Snow lay on the ground.

Here in Nigeria, Christmas occurs during the dry season. At this time of the year, the harmattan wind blows from the Sahara Desert. It brings sand which covers everything. We do not live or work in air-conditioned buildings, so our windows are always open to allow fresh air to enter. As soon as you clean a surface and turn round ~ it is already covered with a layer of fine sand. Our windows are covered with mosquito-proof netting, but the sand penetrates everywhere.

Visibility is much reduced. People complain of "harmattan throats" as we breath in the sand-filled air. The wind is cold during the night. These dry conditions help crops to grow. In 2022, the harmattan came very late and was very short. Because of this, our cashew crop did very badly. The fruit never filled out but died, shriveled and with little or no juice. Perhaps, when you think of "cashews", you are thinking of the nuts. There would be no nuts without the fruit. Each of these bright, yellow fruits has a nut attached to it. We have quite a number of large cashew trees in our compound. Once the season starts in late December, I spend at least one hour each morning picking up fallen fruit. The best ones, I bring into the house for eating or squeezing for juice. Damaged ones are piled up so that the nuts can be removed. The nuts are also removed from the good ones after eating. The nuts are sold to traders who sell them on. They are processed and exported from Nigeria. Those are the cashew nuts you see to buy. The season lasts until April, so the work of collecting the fruit is a time-consuming occupation.



On Christmas Day it has become the tradition in our community here for the sisters to invite all the children living along our road to a party. This occurs around 3:00. About 100 children arrive. They play games, receive prizes and eat ice lollies and biscuits. They really enjoy the occasion.

We, the sisters, have a special meal. I make Christmas pudding, which is always much appreciated. We enjoy gifts and time to relax together. In our congregation, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, we have a tradition of spending the last three days of the year as a special triduum. This triduum was introduced by our foundress, Saint Julie Billiard, at the beginning of our congregation in 1804. Saint Julie's constant theme was "God is very good". The theme for the first day is thanking God for all the blessings we have received during the



year. The second is asking pardon of God and one another. The third is looking at the future, making resolutions, and asking God’s blessing on the new year. Each evening, we come together in our chapel and have a special para-liturgy. Then after that, on New Year’s Eve, it is off to the parish to let the new year in at Mass. I used to enjoy the singing and dancing at the Mass. However, at 83 years old – I find it a bit too long. I retire to bed and rise in the morning for the morning Mass. In the Church’s calendar the 1st of January is a Feast of Our Lady, Patron of Nigeria. The Mass is similar to a Sunday Mass. We ask God’s Blessing and Protection on the year ahead. I wish you all in Kendal a Happy Christmas, and God’s love and blessings in 2024!

*As Pamela Boyes is such a faithful contributor, I hereby christen this recurring feature **Pamela’s Pages!***

The Lighter Side!



A good Samaritan was walking home late one night when he came upon an inebriated man slumped in the doorway of an apartment block. Wanting to help, he asked the man “Do you live here?”

“Yep.”

“Would you like me to help you upstairs?”

“Yep.”

When they got up on the second floor, the good person asked, “Is this your floor?”

“Yep.”

Then the Good Samaritan got to thinking that maybe he didn’t want to face the man’s irate and tired wife because she may think he was the one who got the man drunk. So he opened the first door he came to and shoved him through it and then went back downstairs.

However, when he went back outside, there was another inebriated man there. So he asked him: “Do you live here?”

“Yep.”

“Would you like me to help you upstairs?”

“Yep.”

So he did, and put him in the same door with the first man. Then he went back downstairs where, to his surprise, there was another inebriated man. So he started over to him.

But before he got to him, the man staggered over to a policeman and cried, “Please officer, protect me from this man. He’s been doing nothing all night long but taking me upstairs and throwing me down the elevator shaft!”

Teacher: If I gave you two cats and another two cats and another two, how many would you have?
Johnny: Seven.
Teacher: No, listen carefully...If I gave you two cats, and another two cats and another two, how many would you have?
Johnny: Seven.
Teacher: Let me put it to you differently. If I gave you two apples and another two apples and another two, how many would you have?
Johnny: Six.
Teacher: Good. Now if I gave you two cats, and another two cats and another two, how many would you have?
Johnny: Seven!
Teacher: Johnny, where in the name of God do you get seven from?!
Johnny: The six you give me and the one I have at home!

Poetry for the Soul

The author of the following poems is a writer, visual artist, and nature enthusiast from a small town in rural Mississippi. He is a member of Facebook and when he first started the page **Poetry for the Soul**, he really just wanted a fresh place to share his poetry and never expected to get much feedback. In truth, he said in a letter of thanks to his followers, the initial purpose of the page was just to make it easier for his friends and family to read his poetry, but little did he know the page would grow exponentially...

Fast forward a few years, and his poems are reaching millions of people every month from all over the world. He says he has met many people since sharing his poetry and been told by some people that his poems made them fall in love with poetry for the first time, by others that his poetry helped them through a deep depression, or helped them to heal from some kind of trauma. People have told him that they have his poems framed in their home and that they read them every day.

He says he has been using writing as a form of self-therapy for years; saying that he struggles with anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. He never thought his words could have such an incredible impact on others and says it is a truly humbling experience.

It was through a friend and our mutual love of poetry that I came upon this page, and although Jimmy himself finds it difficult to see the value in himself and his writing, he has nevertheless got a wonderful gift, appreciated by so many people across the world (including me) and I hope you enjoy reading these two poems, and if you do and would like to read more, you can find his poems on Facebook under **Poetry for the Soul**.





Who Am I?

By Jimmy Osbourne

I am more than merely *me*:
I'm the hearts I touch, the air I breathe,
The thoughts I think, the things I see,
And the footprints that I leave.

You can find me in the ones I love,
In the thunder, rumbling high above,
In a goodnight kiss, or a friendly hug,
In butterflies and lightning bugs.

I am more than meets the eye—
From the smiles I give, to the tears I cry;
Between the laughter and the sighs,
I'm a compliment to a passerby.

And when I've reached the afterlife,
Somewhere down the tattered line;
I ask that you remember me,
As a memory inside your mind.



Milk and Honey

By Jimmy Osbourne

I still look for you
In the little things,
Like the morning dew
And the bird that sings...

...outside my window.
There's an empty chair
Where you liked to sit.
I still see you there

...with your cup of tea
And your favourite book,
I can still remember
The way you looked

...into my soul,
So bittersweet
I was your *milk and honey*

And you're *still* my cup of tea.

Summer is now a distant memory and Advent and Christmas will soon be upon us. School nativities and carol concerts have been organised and, in my case, Christmas cakes baked; as well as Christmas Snowflake Muffins batched, baked and frozen ready for the holiday!

This recipe is an old family favourite which I bake not only at Christmastime but through the year if I have managed to stock a few jars of mincemeat before it disappears from the shelves after Christmas!

Christmas Snowflake Muffins

Ingredients:

280 g./10 oz. plain flour
1 Tbs. baking powder
1 tsp. allspice
1/8 tsp. salt
115g./4 oz. soft dark brown sugar
2 medium eggs
100 ml./3^{1/2} oz. milk
6 Tbs. sunflower oil or 85 g./3 oz. butter, melted and cooled
200 g./7 oz. luxury mincemeat with cherries and nuts
450 g./1 lb. fondant icing



icing sugar, for dusting
2 ^{1/2} tsp. apricot conserve
Silver dragees

Method:

Preheat the oven to 200 C/400 F/gas mark 6.

Grease a 12-cup muffin tin or line with 12 paper cases.

Sift together the flour, baking powder, allspice and salt into a large bowl.

Stir in the brown sugar.

Lightly beat the eggs in a large jug or bowl then beat in the milk and oil.

Make a well in the centre of the dry ingredients and pour in the beaten liquid ingredients and mincemeat.

Stir gently until just combined; do not over-mix.

Spoon the mixture into the prepared muffin tin.

Bake for about 20 minutes until well-risen, golden brown and firm to the touch.

Leave the muffins in the tin for 5 minutes then transfer to a wire rack and leave to cool.

Knead the fondant icing until pliable.

On a surface dusted with icing sugar, roll out the fondant icing to a thickness of 5 mm./1/4 inch.

Using a 7 cm./2 ¾-inch fluted cutter, cut out 12

snowflakes (I have found a small scone cutter a good size to use).

Heat the apricot conserve until runny and then brush over the tops of the muffins.

Place a snowflake on top of each one, then decorate with the dragees.

I know some of you have become familiar with the minister and poet Steve Garnass-Holmes, both in this magazine and elsewhere. I always enjoy his work and want to share some of it with you here.

What God Has Begun

Grace and Peace to you.

*The angel Gabriel was sent
to a young woman...*

—Luke 1.26



*I am confident of this,
that the one who began a good work among you
will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.*

—Philippians 1.6

You don't know it
but you have that glow
of a young woman
who is pregnant
and has only just now found out
or maybe hasn't yet
but somehow you know
God is in you, growing,
something started you can't stop
which will flow out from you,
escape you, transcend you.
All you have to do is say Yes
and let heaven slowly blossom
in you.

The calming of a single heart,
or justice for the oppressed—
the life has already begun.
All of you, look around,
ask each other,
What has God begun in us?
How shall we attend
as God brings it to completion?



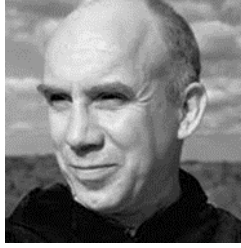
Our true home is the present moment.

The miracle is not to walk on water.

The miracle is to walk on the green earth in the present moment.

Thich Nhat Hahn

Merton Corner



God enters into His creation.
Through her wise answer, through her obedient understanding,
Through the sweet yielding consent of Sophia,
God enters without publicity into the city of rapacious men.

She crowns Him not with what is glorious,
But with what is greater than glory:
The one thing greater than glory is weakness, nothingness, poverty.

She sends the infinitely Rich and Powerful One forth as poor and helpless,
In His mission of inexpressible mercy,
To die for us on the Cross.

“Canticle for the Blessed Virgin Mary”

Thanks to Barbara Shaw for submitting this story, which resonates with me as I interact with children in the classroom. As a sign in our school reminds us, “Sometimes the thing your pupils need most has nothing to do with your lesson plan.”

The 70-Second Hug

I had a middle school student who was just coming unravelled in every way today. He walked up to me and said, “Today isn’t so good.”

I sighed, looked him in the eye and said, “Can I give you a one-minute hug?”

He shrugged and said, “I guess.”

I said “You have to commit for the whole minute. Can you do that?”

He said, “I guess.”

So the hug began.

At 20 seconds (I always watch the clock), he whispered, “Why one minute?”

I whispered back, “So my heart can talk to yours.”

By 30 seconds, his squeeze tightened, and by 45 seconds, his head was on my shoulder.

At 60 seconds I said “You made it.”

He didn’t move.... 10 more seconds passed. I said, “It’s time.”

He said, "Thanks for talking to my heart."

He looked me in the eye and half-smiled.

Who knows what tomorrow will bring...? But today, that child was loved.... If only for 70 seconds.

Love them all. Period.

Anonymous



Here is another reflection from African-American Servant of God Thea Bowman.

It is included in We Are Beloved: 30 Days with Thea Bowman [part of the Great Spiritual Teachers Series]. Part 1 was originally included in Sr. Thea: Songs of My People (Boston: St. Paul Books and Media, 1989). Part 2 is a related reflection by editor Karianna Frey.



"Let the words and music speak to your whole soul, to your feelings, passions and emotions. Feel what it means to have walked dry-shod through the Red Sea, to have placed your firstborn child in a manger, to have sat with Jesus by a well of Samaria, to have watched Jesus nailed upon a cross.

"Pray with the song. Feel God's presence. Contemplate His goodness. Celebrate the Biblical theme in relationship to the daily mystery of God's working in your own life. Celebrate your own faith and hope and love. Pray in your own way. Move peacefully and gently as you feel drawn to discursive meditation or affective prayer or the contemplative prayer of simple resting in union with God."

"Father, sometimes prayer is hard, and everyone has their own opinion on prayer. There are a lot of 'shoulds' out there when it comes to prayer: Prayer should only be done in Latin. Prayer should only be done in your native language. Prayer should only be done kneeling or sitting or standing. Prayer should only be done when you have enough time to do it right.

“It is hard to know how I can talk to you. What should I call you, as you have so many names? When I pray, do you really hear me, or is someone more important praying at the same time? I sometimes wonder if I am praying wrong.... Is there a right way to pray?

“When you feel far from me, are you really gone?

“But maybe you have so many names so that I always know what to call you. You are my *Mighty Father, Everlasting God, Wonderful, Counselor, Prince of Peace, Emmanuel, Jesus.*

“Your word reminds me that you will never leave my side as you are my Shepherd and I am part of your flock. Give me the confidence to know that no matter what others may think, the right way to pray is the prayer that brings me closer to you and that you delight in my reaching out to just say, ‘Hi, Abba!’ or ‘Help me, Jesus!’ or just ‘Thank you!’”

2023: A Soul’s Reflection

“Why is the scene so bare?” I asked.
A gentle voice whispered in my heart,
“It contains only the most important elements:
The **Stable** is your heart, my desired ‘home’ and ‘gathering place’;
The **Ox** is your everyday burdens/cares;
The **Ass**, because he carried Mary and me, is the spiritual part of your life carried in your heart;
The **Straw** was my original bed ~
It’s empty until I receive your invitation to enter.”

inspired by St. Francis’s Vision 1223



What is God?

God is the breath inside the breath.

Kabir

As with PAMELA'S PAGES, I hereby christen this feature BRIAN'S BIT! Thanks so much to Brian Stabler for the following items and the ever-popular "Castaway!" Boy, did I struggle with mine!

POETRY TIME

**Many of us have a favourite poem or two, some from our school days.
Here are some of my favourites.**

Christmas Poem

Christmas by John Betjamen

The bells of waiting Advent ring,
The Tortoise stove is lit again
And lamp-oil light across the night
Has caught the streaks of winter rain
In many a stained-glass window sheen
From Crimson Lake to Hookers Green.

The holly in the windy hedge
And round the Manor House the yew
Will soon be stripped to deck the ledge,
The altar, font and arch and pew,
So that the villagers can say
'The church looks nice' on Christmas Day.

Provincial Public Houses blaze,
Corporation tramcars clang,
On lighted tenements I gaze,
Where paper decorations hang,
And bunting in the red Town Hall
Says 'Merry Christmas to you all'.

And London shops on Christmas Eve
Are strung with silver bells and flowers
As hurrying clerks the City leave
To pigeon-haunted classic towers,
And marbled clouds go scudding by
The many-steepled London sky.

And girls in slacks remember Dad,
And oafish louts remember Mum,
And sleepless children's hearts are glad.
And Christmas-morning bells say 'Come!'
Even to shining ones who dwell
Safe in the Dorchester Hotel.

And is it true? And is it true,
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall ?
The Maker of the stars and sea
Become a Child on earth for me ?

And is it true? For if it is,
No loving fingers tying strings
Around those tissueed fripperies,
The sweet and silly Christmas things,
Bath salts and inexpensive scent
And hideous tie so kindly meant,

No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare -
That God was man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.



A LECTON REFLECTION



Here, people reveal their love for the Bible through their favourite readings and give a short reflection on them. With their favourite reading (or Lection) this time is: **Raymond Daley**.

Philippians 4: 13 & Isaiah 40: 28-31.

Many years ago I read a book by Norman Vincent Peale entitled “The Power of Positive Thinking.” He was an American Protestant clergyman, and an author best known for popularizing the concept of positive thinking. President Ronald Reagan awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, which is the highest civilian honour in the United States, on March 26, 1984, for his contributions to the field of Theology.

Early in the book he describes how he helped a travelling salesman who was down on his luck and apprehensive about what the future might hold for him. He felt that his next deal with a client was make or break (probably “break” followed by the sack.) Peale asked him to put his faith in God and wrote a short verse of scripture on a card for him to keep in his wallet and read from time to time. It was easy to memorise:

“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” Philippians 4: 13.

The salesman went to his meeting and was successful in clinching the deal. It is a verse I have always remembered and one which has helped me to retain my faith and trust in God when things get tough.



It was a verse to cling onto during my 4 nights in the Acute Stroke Unit in Lancaster Infirmary in July 2022 hooked up to machines 24/7 and being anointed. Upon discharge I had very little energy and slept most days, functioning at a very basic level. It was during this time that I had begun to wonder if that was going to be it for the rest of my days, having seen how strokes had affected other people during my SVP visits. Now people were visiting me. Who would have thought it?

I was advised by those who knew better that it would take a long time to recover to a point nearer my normal self. Progress was slow and seemed to be taking ages. Outwardly I looked OK but inwardly I was tired and washed out most of the time. I just had to be patient and go with the flow, taking one day at a time.

“Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.

He gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless.

Even youths will faint and be weary and the young will fall exhausted;

But those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

These powerful verses from Isaiah 40: 28-31 spoke volumes to me during this period which I eventually got through after almost a year. I had to smile at “Even youths will faint and be weary and the young will fall exhausted.”

Good to know that God excludes nobody. Thanks be to God for my recovery. Amen.

Raymond Daley – Acting SVP President

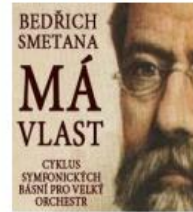


CASTAWAY



This article is based upon the famous Radio 4 show, 'Desert Island Discs' created by the legendary Roy Plomley. After being imaginarily shipwrecked, it shows how our chosen guest will keep themselves busy by remembering some of their favourite things. Our Castaway this time is: **Debbie Aitchison**

Favourite Music 1 - From five favourite pieces of music, what is your first choice. I find it really difficult to decide on a favourite anything, so ask me this question at different times and you'll get different answers. But for now, I'm going to go with Vltava from *Má Vlast* by Smetana. It's a wonderfully relaxing piece of music. It's one of many pieces of music that Dad introduced me to that made a big impression.



Your Favourite Place to Visit:



I really love Switzerland and Austria. We had our honeymoon in Switzerland and we used to go to Austria on holiday when Ben was a baby. We haven't been able to go on holiday for a while now as it is hard to take Ben anywhere, but I would like to return to both of those countries at some point. Really, I like places with trees, mountains and water in close proximity, so I feel really blessed to live on the doorstep of the Lake District!

Music 2:

I really like the drama and passion of Tchaikowsky's *Romeo and Juliet* fantasy overture. I could listen to it over and over. Some of the harmonies are just pillow-clutchingly scrunchy (not sure that that's legit music terminology, but I hope you get the gist!).



Favourite Food - Your food on the island might be just fruit and nuts, so what other of your favourite foods would you prefer?



Another difficult question! I think that variety is the spice of life. Even the most delicious dish might lose its appeal if it were the only dish available. At the moment, I think I might go with mushroom stroganoff or mushroom risotto (I really like mushrooms!).

Music 3:

I'm going to go for a change of style here and go with "She's in love with the boy" by John Ims and recorded by Trisha Yearwood. It was one of the songs I used to sing when I did karaoke regularly in my single days and the last verse tends to make me cry!



Your 'Man' or 'Woman Friday' - Someone, alive or dead who you would love to meet and spend a little time with?



At last, an easy question!! I would love to spend some time chatting with the late Cardinal Basil Hume, erstwhile Abbot of Ampleforth Abbey and Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. I've read several (all?) of his books and he seems like such a deeply spiritual man. I was received into the Church many years ago at the Easter Vigil at Ampleforth Abbey so that place also holds a special place in my heart, and I refer to it as my spiritual home from home. Back in the day, before I was married, I used to visit a lot. I would love the chance to compare memories of Ampleforth, and also to discuss some of the difficult issues of the day with such a thoughtful and prayerful man.

Your Favourite Book - Apart from the Bible:

Without a doubt, that has to be "The keys of the Kingdom" by A. J. Cronin. I have bought multiple copies of this book over the years and lent or given it to several people. There's a line in it about Francis, the main character in the book, questioning the sectarian violence that took the lives of his parents in which he wonders how it is that men can hate each other for worshiping the same God with different words. In fact, thanks for asking, I think it's time I read it again!



Music 4 - Your Favourite Hymn and your Favourite Carol:

OK, we're back to difficult questions. There are so many great hymns and carols to choose from. For the hymn, I think I may go with Bernadette Farrell's "O God, you search me and you know me" which is based on Psalm 138. I love her way with words, as well as her music.



For example, that phrase in verse 2: "And with love everlasting you besiege me" evokes such an intensity of God's love for us, even as the melody rises to its highest point in the hymn. Just beautiful. Although I love a carol with a good descant, I think John Rutter's "Jesus Child" might be my favourite. We sang it when I was in primary school (which is going back a bit now!)

Your favourite memory of Christmas:

Tricky one. Possibly going carol singing with some of my secondary school friends. We would sing the carols in 4-part harmony (plus descants where applicable), just for the joy of it. People would sometimes try to give us money, but we weren't collecting. We would sometimes accept mince pies, though!



Finally, One Special Item - If you could save one thing from the wreck, or one thing from your imagination to help you while away the time, what would it be?

This may be cheating, but I'd have to choose my iPhone (and a WiFi network to connect me to the internet!) as I use it all the time. I'm currently using it to learn German, primarily with Duolingo (and I don't want to lose my streak!). It helps me stay in touch with people and keep my brain sharp(ish) doing puzzles. I'm wondering how I ever managed without a smartphone!



...and our second Castaway this issue is...

Celeste Bonfanti

Favourite Music 1 - From five favourite pieces of music, what is your first choice.

"Let It Be" by the Beatles. The music was by far the hardest part of this exercise for me, but I chose this song for several reasons. For the first five years of my life, I shared a bedroom with my sister Clare who passed her love of the Beatles on to me. I have vivid memories of standing on my swing, soaring back and forth and belting this song out while it was still in the charts. Then several years ago, Clare her husband Ron and I saw Paul McCartney in Philadelphia, and during "Let It Be" the arena was full of swaying, twinkling lights ~ a religious experience!



Your Favourite Place to Visit:



The Yorkshire Dales. As a Ricardian, Middleham in Wensleydale is a particular favourite destination, but the landscape of the Dales does something to my soul. I think it is the sweep of them, so different from the topography of the Lakes (which I also love with all my heart).

Music 2:

"Doctor, My Eyes" by Jackson Browne. Having seen Browne many times in concert, it was difficult to pick just one of his catalogue, but the message here encapsulates my experience of working in the poor neighbourhood of Waterfront South in Camden, New Jersey. We thank God for the vision to see the needs of the world, but it is at times an overwhelming experience.



Favourite Food - Your food on the island might be just fruit and nuts, so what other of your favourite foods would you prefer



Cheese Ravioli. As a proud Sicilian-American, it was a guarantee that the favourite food would be Italian!

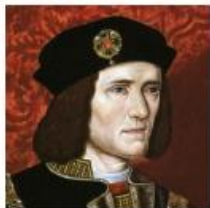


Music 3:

"Let It Be Me" by the Indigo Girls. This is NOT the Everly Brothers song but a call to action by the same name. I love the positive, empowering message of it and it is a great sing-along song, which I would need on a desert island! I love to sing in parts, and my US parish doesn't have a choir.



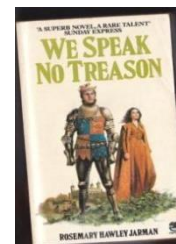
Your 'Man' or 'Woman Friday' - Someone, alive or dead who you would love to meet and spend a little time with?



Richard III. I joined the Richard III Society at 17 and have much to thank him for, including my first trip to England with the Society when I was 22. The rest, as they say, is history (har har)!

Your Favourite Book - Apart from the Bible:

We Speak No Treason by Rosemary Hawley Jarman, the Ricardian book which started it all for me. I wrote to Rosemary, who became a lifelong friend until her passing in 2015. This best-seller is a great first read for those wanting to know more about Richard, meticulously researched and beautifully written (if you haven't already found The Daughter of Time by Josephine Tey!).



Music 4 - Your Favourite Hymn:

"Be Thou my Vision" The first time I heard this hymn was at my friend Kim's wedding in Durham, a few months after I had moved to Kendal, so of course it has happy associations. But I love the structure of it, the trust, the imagery and the call to be transparent and to let God take the wheel.



And Your Favourite Carol:

This, too, is really tough, as I love so many. I am partial to Advent hymns, but as these are not strictly carols, I will say "The Wexford Carol." The tune is so haunting; there is a sense of longing in it, despite the joyful words, and it frequently stays with me for hours after I hear it.

Your Favourite Memory of Christmas;



I have so many of these I can barely settle on one, but one Christmas we all came down to find new stockings for all the family stuffed with little gifts and hanging on the mantle! What fun! No one confessed for the longest time but finally it was determined that my sister Clare had done it. That is the kind of family I have.

Finally, One Special Item: If you could save one thing from the wreck, or one thing from your imagination to help you while away the time, what would it be? I would love internet access, of course, but this would be a pretty heavy lift on a desert island! I cannot imagine life without writing, so I'll settle for paper and pens to last until I figure out how to make my own!



I have written so many books on God, but after all that, what do I really know?

I think, in the end, God is the person you're talking to, the one right in front of you.

Leon Dufour



Thanks to Marian Kearney for this update on the situation in Malawi. There is good news and bad news, but the parish contributions have made a lasting difference in the lives of so many!

An Update on Chisi Island, Where the *Chimbudzi* Is Still Standing!

by Marian Kearney



Chisi Island, often referred to as the most remote location in Malawi, forms part of Sitima Parish. Almost six years on, the *chimbudzi* (or long drop toilet) at Chisi Church, paid for by Kendal parishioners and built by local craftsmen, is still standing. This is great news, as Storm Freddy caused serious havoc across the island of Chisi, in the middle of Lake Chilwa. Many people saw their houses demolished by the force of the cyclone and those living near the edge of the island saw the lake completely submerge their homes and businesses. But in their normal resilient manner, the islanders have continued life, rebuilding shelters, shops and houses from whatever materials are available.

The chimbudzi paid for by HTSG parishioners



A straw house has been created amidst the ruins of a blown down brick house.



A sturdy village shop has been built.

On Sunday mornings, dressed in their finery, the parishioners make their way from all parts of the island to attend a church service. Mass is only offered here once a month in the dry season (the same for the other seven churches in the parish), and not at all during the rains, as the conditions on the lake are too precarious for one of the priests to travel. Instead, members of the church committee lead a Sunday service for all.

Meanwhile, on the mainland, six months since Cyclone Freddy... the worshippers are travelling by canoe to reach the mosque for Friday prayers.



Chisi has seen more than its fair share of weather variations, as just a couple of years ago the drought was so severe that the parish priest, Fr. Owen, was able to drive across to the island, a journey which normally takes around one hour by boat. Locals were unable to earn a living through fishing and this in turn led to a prolonged period of hunger.

Now the fish in the lake are prolific, meaning food is available, but homes have been lost. The reason behind these weather extremes appears to be climate change, a crisis which severely affects the world's poorest communities, although it's a crisis they didn't cause.

In 2015, the Pope's encyclical *Laudato Si* was published, a document which laid out the scientific case for human-caused climate change and urged that social justice be intertwined with environmental stewardship. It

presented an urgent call to tackle the world’s ecological crisis by making a global shift in our behaviours to allow all human beings to live sustainably and with dignity.

However, in the eight years since its publication, the world has seen an increase in extreme weather events: floods, droughts, wildfires and hurricanes, causing misery, ill health and premature death for many.

Pope Francis has committed to a follow-up to *Laudato Si*, something that is eagerly awaited, but until this comes, maybe we can ponder his words and our own individual actions:

“Listen to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor, who suffer the most.”



“Zechariah and Elizabeth were childless, which in their culture was a great misfortune, even a disgrace (as there would be no heirs to carry on the memory of the family). One can imagine their feelings of failure and inadequacy.

“All of us feel barren in one way or another. I haven’t ‘produced’ in my life what others (or I myself) had hoped I would. My failure to live up to ‘what might have been’ leaves me with a certain empty feeling.

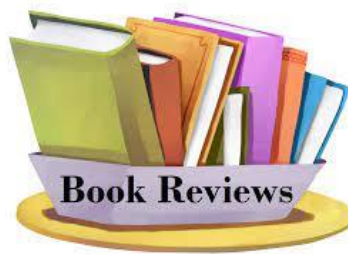
“But God does things through me that I myself cannot do, or even measure. And God does them often in ways I don’t understand.

“That’s the secret. Let God do what God wants to do through me and trust in his plan. That is the path to greatness ~ no matter what my age, no matter what my condition.

“O Lord, let me let *you* do what you want to do through me today.”

The Little Blue Book: Advent and Christmas Seasons 2023 ~ 2024
c/o the Diocese of Saginaw, Michigan, USA

Many thanks to Elizabeth Cartmell for these lovely book reviews. I know many of us are looking forward to a bit of quiet time with a cup of tea and a good book!



**The Vatican Cookbook:
500 Years of Classic Recipes, Papal Tributes
and Exclusive Images of Life and Art at the Vatican**

presented by The Pontifical Swiss Guard

[ISBN 978-1-622823-321 Sophia Institute Press, New Hampshire. www.SophiaInstitute.com \$34.99

Amazon books offers: Hardcover £14.36; 7 Used from £13.74]

This is simply splendid, but rather expensive if new; however, it would make a marvelous present for someone special.

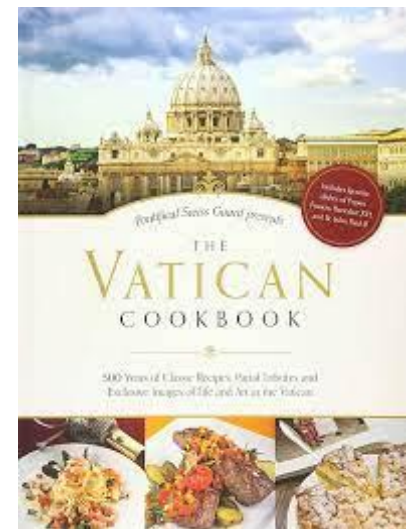
The introduction includes this: “The highlight has to be our (the Pontifical Swiss Guards’) tributes to the three Holy Fathers we have served in the modern era, and the revelation of delicious Vatican secrets – favorite (sic) dishes of Pope Francis, Pope Benedict XVI and Holy Pope John Paul II.”

I don’t know about you, but the concept of reading, preparing, and eating a Saint’s favourite dish is ‘mind-blowing.’ I wonder why Saint Pope John XXIII’s choice is excluded, as he was canonized on the same day as Pope John Paul II.

I can only guess that some of the recurring ingredients in Venetian cooking can be relatively hard to find outside the lagoon. It is remarkable and most welcome that, unlike so many publicised currently, these recipes do not require expensive or hard to find ingredients. For spring mugwort, a rare exception, although grown freely across Europe several substitutes are suggested.

Occasionally, a footnote makes me smile. “At the Vatican, grappa is reserved for special occasions.... On occasion, grappa makes a splash in the recipe, adding a sweet and tangy bite to finish the dish. But beware! Grappa can be deceptively powerful and Pope Francis himself has cautioned against over-indulgence.”

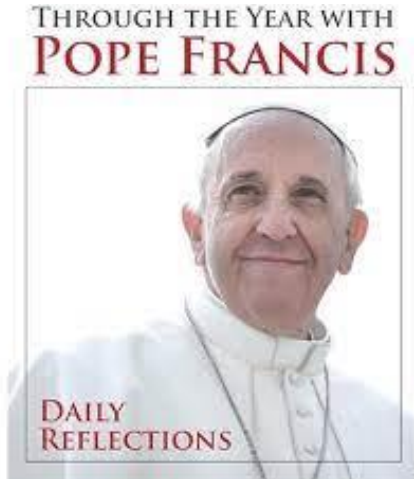
The many photographs throughout the book (not of food) are superb, both beautiful and informative. The book ends with “Table Prayers” following a reminder both to be grateful and remember “...those who are not as blessed”.



Through the Year with Pope Francis: Daily Reflections

edited by Kevin Cotter

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US \$16.95 / Amazon Books offers: Paperback £13.99; 14 Used from £1.00; 4 New from £13.99]



For each day of the year there is a quotation, the Holy Father’s own words taken from homilies given at the Domus Sanctae Marthae, on the Vatican website or from books of collections of his conversations, his homilies and his letters.

Below each quotation, there is a Reflection, often in the form of a question one can, perhaps should, ask oneself. There is space below to add one’s own response or a prayer, prompted – if ‘inspired’ is too important a word – by what one has read.

As an introduction, the six steps to prayers of St Francis de Sales are presented as an approach to using this book. The compiler says the Pope’s words are “...only meant to serve as prompts towards prayer.”

Rather more frivolously, he also suggests we “...think of it as your daily protein shake or energy shot of the Gospel message, according to Pope Francis.”

I’ve found this book a tremendous help; having used it several times, it clearly shows me where I have failed to improve, and reminds me of things for which to be thankful. I’ve run out of space for notes, so I need another copy!

Please allow me a chance to once again offer a glimpse into a remarkable parish with a strong mission of social justice. Involvement here has been a seminal experience.

More Tales from Sacred Heart Church: Camden, New Jersey

by Celeste Bonfanti

It feels as if I have lived my life with a foot in two separate worlds: in Kendal, with its green hills all around, and in New Jersey, the most densely populated state in the US. As regular readers know, I spend a significant portion of each weekend in Camden, one of the US’s poorest cities. On Saturdays, I help to run the parish thrift store, Clothes from the Heart. On Sundays, I attend Mass where I am a lector and cantor.

This weekend (Christ the King) was very powerful, and I wanted to share some reflections with you.

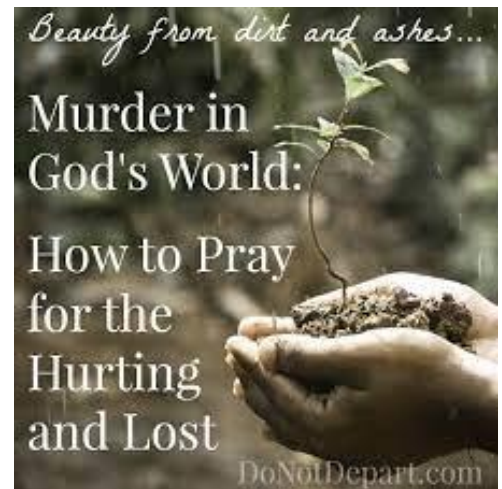
At the shop, it was half-price day on clothes. This meant that shirts were \$1.00, trousers and coats \$1.50, etc. We were pleased that the shop was busy. One of our customers, Patrice, worked at the local hospital. She

came on her lunch hour to buy what she could for a colleague who had been the victim of a house fire and had lost everything. Her \$26 dollars bought a lot on half-price day, but we made sure she left with twice as much.

Then there was John, a young man in a hoodie on a very cold day, who asked if we could help. He is living in a car with his mother. We gave him all that he could carry and he cried in our arms. He told us that he knows people living in storage units. The proprietors turn a blind eye as the people act as unpaid security guards for the facility.

All this... in the richest country in the world. The safety net for such people is so negligible here as to be nearly non-existent.

Today at Mass we had our annual remembrance of the people who were murdered in Camden County (one of 21 counties in our small state) in the past year. They numbered 27. We had invited the families of the deceased, as we always do, and two came. Each name, age and cause of death was read out from the pulpit, and one by one family members or parishioners would come forward to be given a placard and a lit candle. We stood in a line across the sanctuary, holding the lights for the souls lost to violence. I wore the name Duron Williams. He had been 35 when he was stabbed to death. He was one of the few who had not been killed by a firearm. I have written about this service before, but it bears repeating.



After Mass, there was meeting entitled "Gun Violence Prevention for Faith-Based Organisations," run by a group called *Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America*. The mother of a 19-year-old son spoke about her son's murder and how it left his family gutted and galvinised to act to break the grip of the gun lobby in America. The statistics shared were absolutely horrific, among them:

- Guns are the #1 killer of children and teens in the US (in the UK, they are #15).
- Almost 60% of gun deaths in the US are suicides, usually committed by white men aged 55+ with a law enforcement or military background.
- There are 120 guns for every 100 Americans.
- There are 5.6 gun deaths for every 100,000 Americans (in the UK, there are 0.1)

I could go on, but I have written about this before and you get the bleak picture. We went on to meet in small groups to plan how we could engage more of our neighbours, many of whom feel uncomfortable in a church; we hope to hold future gatherings in a nearby community centre.

Experiences like these make my participation in parish life here challenging, at times heartbreaking, but ultimately very fulfilling. There is a tangible presence of God here in this gritty, ground-down neighbourhood where people trust us enough to share their grief. As we did today in church, we are holding up a light in the darkness. And there is no more important work for those committed to peace and justice.

Birth of Beauty

by Jenny Davies

From the far mountains of Africa, a lone bird took flight to the English District of the Lakes.

There it met or re-met fellow ospreys: nested and nurtured nestlings, by diving down, down, down, and bringing up, up, up, fish from lakes and rivers.

The nestlings grew 'til one day feeding ceased, and they dived for themselves, watched over with care, 'til they gathered enough strength to journey back home from the Lakes and continue the gift of creation.

I have never liked the story of the casting out of the Garden of Eden, but watching osprey and animals' regular movements, it is rather a blessing for the continuation of creative life.



A Final Word

The poem, "The Gate of the Year" (also known as "by Minnie Louise Haskins was famously quoted by George VI in his Christmas address of 1939. May this excerpt serve as our warmest wish for you: a Wonderful Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year from the Parish Magazine!

God Knows / The Gate of the Year

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year:
"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied:

*"Go out into the darkness and
put your hand into the Hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light
and safer than a known way."*



CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD

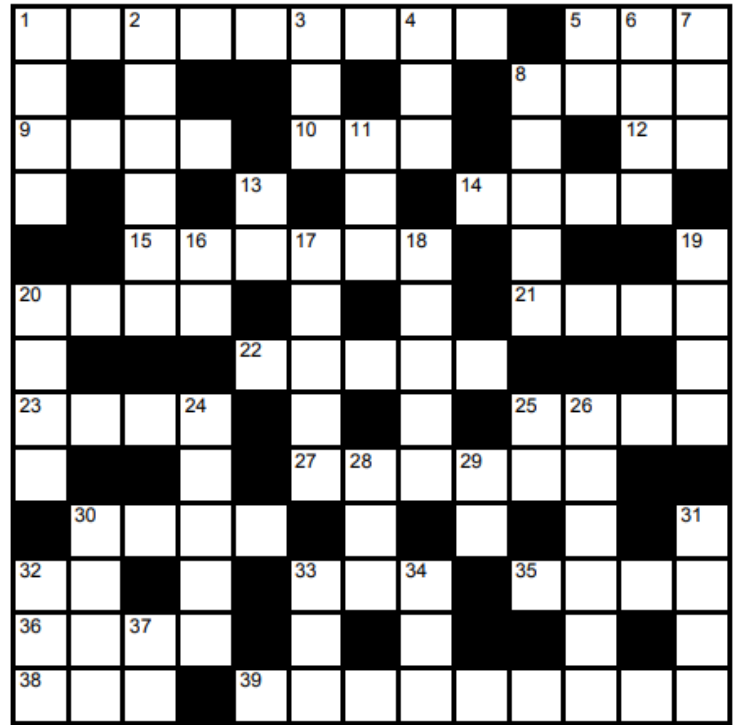
Across

- 1 Jesus' birthplace (9)
 5 Herod slew the children of this age and under (3)
 8 Peter quoted his words on the day of Pentecost (4)
 9 "A ___ shaken with the wind" (4)
 10 "Ye shall find ___ babe wrapped in swaddling clothes" (3)
 12 The year from Jesus' birth (2)
 14 Anna was of this tribe (as recorded in Luke) (4)
 15 "Behold, a ___ shall be with child" (6)
 20 "Fruits ___ for repentance" (4)
 21 The wise men came from here (4)
 22 "He shall reign of the house of ___ for ever" (5)
 23 A female ancestor of Jesus, as recorded in Matthew 1 (4)
 25 The amount of manna to be gathered per person (4)
 27 He multiplied the widow's oil (6)

- 30 "As soon as the voice of thy salvation sounded in mine ___" (4)
 32 An altar meaning witness (Joshua 22) (2)
 33 To increase (3)
 35 Malarial fever (4)
 36 To guide (4)
 38 There was no room here (3)
 39 These men went to see the baby Jesus (9)

Down

- 1 "Mary, of whom was ___ Jesus" (4)
 2 Jesus' age when he was taken to Jerusalem (6)
 3 Jesus did not do this in the wilderness (3)
 4 Adam's wife (3)
 5 "Mary was espoused ___ Joseph" (2)
 6 "They that ___ soft clothing are in kings' houses" (4)
 7 Zacharias said, "I am an ___ man" (3)
 8 Grandson of 23 (5)
 11 A place near Bethel (3)



by Colin

© BiblePuzzles.org.uk

- 13 "A pair of turtledoves ___ two young pigeons" (2)
 16 "That ___ might be fulfilled" (2)
 17 "The ___ of God was upon him" (5)
 18 Mother-in-law of 23 (5)
 19 This went before the wise men (4)
 20 The mother of Jesus (4)
 24 He was king at the time of Jesus' birth (5)
 25 "___ that one would hear me!" (2)
 26 Jesus was laid in this (6)
 28 The spirit did this to Jesus in the wilderness (3)
 29 Thus (2)
 30 The first garden (4)
 31 "Where is he that is born king of the ___?" (4)
 32 A priest in the time of Samuel (3)
 33 A tree of the olive family (3)
 34 To put into water (3)
 37 "___ angel of the Lord appeareth" (2)



Joy to the World

DIRECTIONS: Find and circle the vocabulary words in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.



- | | | |
|--------------|---------|-------------|
| ADVENT | INFANT | MYRRH |
| ANGEL | JESUS | NATIVITY |
| BETHLEHEM | JOSEPH | REJOICE |
| BIRTH | MAGI | STABLE |
| BLESSINGS | MANGER | STAR |
| CAMELS | MARY | THREE KINGS |
| FRANKINCENSE | MIRACLE | WISE MEN |



