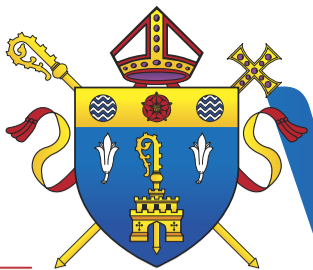


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The Catholic



VOICE

of Lancaster

The Official Newspaper to the Diocese of Lancaster

Issue 356 + February '24

INSIDE:
pg5 Christus Vivit – A Guide for Youth & Youth Leaders
pg15 R.I.P. Fr Billy Bootle



Diocese of Lancaster advances towards 100th Anniversary

To mark this important anniversary Paul Severn has published, through Sacristy Press, a short compilation of the biographical portraits of the seven bishops and one auxiliary bishop who have served our diocese costing £16.99 from: sacristy.co.uk

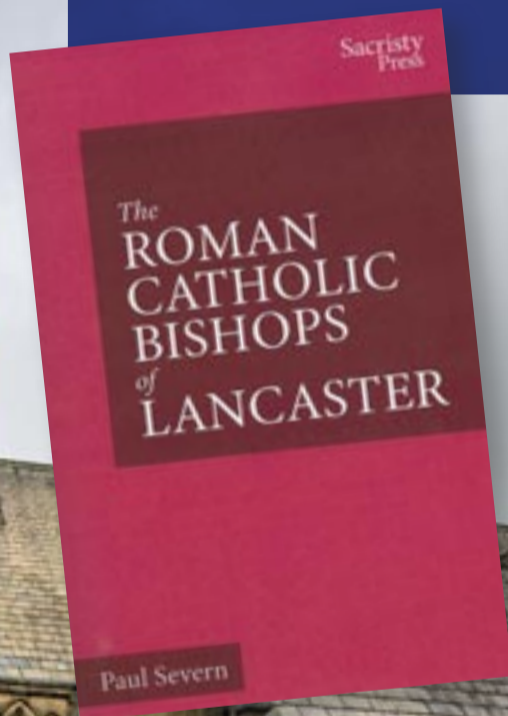
ISBN 978-1-78959-300-6

Later this year, in November, it will be 100 years since the formal announcement of a new Diocese the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lancaster and 12 months from now, February 2025 it will 100 years since Bishop Thomas Wulstan Pearson became the first Bishop of our Diocese.

The *Catholic Voice* would like to mark this momentous anniversary with a series of articles charting the missionary history of the Diocese:

- How early do your memories of our Diocese go back?
- Are there any highlights over the last 100 years that you would like to share?
- Does your Parish, Religious Community, School have any upcoming major jubilee?

Please send your articles and photographs, even black and white/sepia ones to the Editor, details on page 2. It would be helpful to receive articles in word doc format and photographs as separate jpegs. But we can take items by mail and any photographs will be returned.



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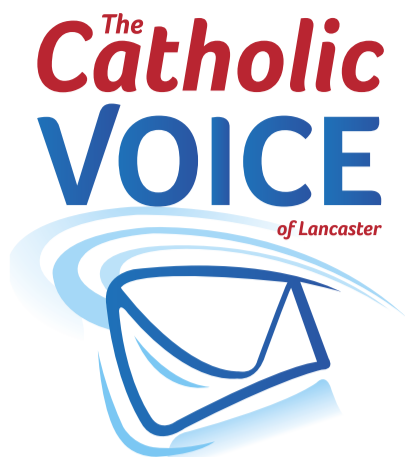
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Robert Hannaford reports on the Parish of Christ the Good Shepherd, Workington. Rome Pilgrimage from 13-17 November, 2023

Early on the morning of the 13th November 32 pilgrims from Workington, Penrith, Carlisle, and other towns on the West Coast of Cumbria - and one lady who joined us from Hastings - began the journey to Rome. We arrived at midday and began a busy schedule of visits, which included five of Rome's major Basilicas, the Catacombs of St Callixtus, the Venerable English College, a General Audience with the Holy Father and a visit to the Benedictine Monastery of Sacro Speco at Subiaco.

We arrived not sure what to expect but returned deeply affected. The pilgrimage pivoted around the Wednesday Audience

with Pope Francis. It was deeply moving to have this direct experience of the Holy Father's ministry as Universal Pastor: a truly Catholic experience, shared with thousands of pilgrims from many nations and cultures. Our visit on the first day to the Basilica of St Clement began our journey into the history and continuity of our faith. Beneath the current beautiful 12th Century Basilica, we entered the earlier 4th Century Basilica, with its medieval frescos. In this place, dedicated to the first century Pope St. Clement, standing in a place where Christians from the earliest days of the faith in Rome met and worshipped, a deep awareness of the communion of saints was palpable. One of our daily masses took place during our

To be a
Pilgrim

visit to the Catacombs of St Callixtus. Sharing in the eucharist where some half a million Christians were buried from the third century AD, and including many martyrs and 16 popes, the sense of our Catholic Eucharistic unity across time was powerful.

On a personal note, at my confirmation I took the names 'Paul' and 'Benedict'. It was a great joy to visit the Holy Cave at Subiaco where St Benedict spent three years in prayer at the beginning of his monastic life and to conclude our pilgrimage at the Basilica of St Paul outside the walls and kneel in veneration at the tomb of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. *Praise be to God!*



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YOUTH MATTERS

As we enter 2024, there is a lot to celebrate and a lot to look forward to. We've been mad busy lately – bookings for this time of year are above what they've been in the past few years.

One recent highlight was a team day out we had in Carlisle. After visiting the Cathedral and the Castle, we went axe throwing. It's a thing – and a thing that our new chaplain, Father Ajish, is suspiciously good at!

Catholic Student Retreat

November marked a milestone for Castlerigg with the hosting of our first-ever Catholic Students Retreat, an event that not only served as a spiritual gathering but also as a vibrant community-building experience. The retreat welcomed 25 participants, a number that exceeded expectations and set a promising precedent for future gatherings.

The retreat featured three main talks.

First was Jasmine de Kretser from the Catholic Student Network, followed by Sister Margaret Atkins, and finally Jack from Castlerigg. The talks were all well received and gave some varied input.

Saturday afternoon was a time for relaxation and exploration. The students were given free time to explore Keswick, which had mercifully good weather for the time of year.

The highlight of the retreat was the celebration of Mass on Saturday evening, followed by a party night!

The retreat's success was clear. The combination of insightful talks, communal activities, and lovely times of prayer created an enriching and memorable experience for the students. It was a time of growth, reflection, and joy, leaving a lasting impact on all who attended.

Encouraged by the positive response and the transformative impact of the retreat,

plans are already underway to hold another gathering in the future.

What Else..?

We are Hiring - Specifically, we are looking for 18-25s for our exciting new Catholic Youth Ministry Internship programme. For details – jack@castleriggmanor.co.uk

ALTAR SERVERS RETREAT // JAN 12-13

– returned by popular demand and was held on 12 -13 January. This one night retreat, ended on Saturday so that the attendees could be back in their parishes, and on the altar, for Sunday Mass!

What's coming up? castleriggmanor.com

EASTER RETREAT // MARCH 28-31

- The Easter Retreat is our oldest open retreat at Castlerigg and literally thousands of people have taken part over the years.

The retreat starts on Holy Thursday

and those taking part journey together through the key liturgies of the Triduum to Easter Sunday. Yes, there is a lot of praying involved, but it's not just about time in the Chapel, important and awesome though that may be! There are socials, talks, trips out and a few other things besides.

Like the Advent Retreat, it's now open to anyone in Year 7 or above whether you're from the diocese, or you've been to Castlerigg before, or not.

SUMMER RETREAT // May 24-26

- The Summer Retreat is the new kid on the block. Our newest general open retreat will hopefully complement the Advent and Easter Retreats by giving people who have been to Castlerigg a chance to come back and take the experience that little bit deeper. Like those retreats though, it's not restricted to those who have been before.

It's in May, and bookings will likely open in the Spring.



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Christus

Vivit



“Christus Vivit” or “Christ is Alive” is an apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis, addressed to young people and the entire People of God. Released in 2019 following the 2018 Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment, it serves as a guiding document that reflects the Church’s renewed focus on youth in the modern world.

For youth leaders, understanding “Christus Vivit” is crucial, as it not only encapsulates the Church’s vision for youth ministry but also offers insights and directives on engaging with the younger generation.

Understanding Christus Vivit

At its heart, “Christus Vivit” is a profound and affectionate letter from Pope Francis to young people, affirming their importance in the Church. It acknowledges the challenges and opportunities that come with living in today’s world and provides guidance and encouragement for young people to live a life of faith and purpose.

Key Themes of Christus Vivit

1. The Reality of Young People Today:

Pope Francis begins by recognising the diverse situations of young people around the world, acknowledging both their enthusiasm and their struggles. He discusses issues like digital environments, migration, violence, and abuse, emphasising the Church’s role in addressing these challenges.

2. Jesus, the Ever-Young Christ:

The exhortation draws youth to Jesus Christ, the eternally young face of God. It encourages young people to look to Jesus as a model of youthfulness, particularly in His ability to renew, inspire, and bring change.

3. The Church’s Vision for Youth:

Pope Francis outlines a vision for the Church where young people are integral, not only as future members but as present-day protagonists. He calls for a Church that listens, one that offers a space for young people to voice their thoughts and concerns.

4. The Significance of Accompaniment:

A significant portion of the document discusses the role of accompaniment in the lives of young people. It emphasises the importance of mentorship and guidance in helping young individuals navigate the path of life and faith.

5. Paths of Youth:

The Pope talks about the various paths that young people walk. He discusses vocational discernment and encourages young people to discover and embrace God’s plan for their lives, be it in marriage, priesthood, or single life.

6. Youth Ministry in Action:

“Christus Vivit” lays out a vision for a renewed and dynamic youth ministry. Pope Francis calls for a ministry that is more inclusive, open to various cultures, and attentive to social issues. He encourages using innovative methods and digital platforms to engage with youth.

7. The Art of Discernment:

The document underscores the importance of discernment – a process of making choices in tune with God’s plan. It teaches that discernment is not just a solitary exercise but involves a community and listening to the Holy Spirit.

Implications for Youth Leaders

For youth leaders, “Christus Vivit” is a valuable resource that provides both direction and inspiration. It calls them to be mentors and guides who can walk with young people, listening to their stories and helping them find their way. Youth leaders are encouraged to create environments where young people can question, explore, and deepen their faith.

The exhortation also challenges leaders to be innovative in their approach to ministry. This involves being open to new methods, utilising digital tools, and being culturally sensitive. Pope Francis encourages a youth ministry that is not just about teaching and leading but also about learning from the youth and acknowledging the unique gifts they bring to the Church.

Moreover, “Christus Vivit” emphasises the importance of fostering vocations. Youth leaders are tasked with helping young people discover their vocation, be it religious, marital, or a commitment to service. This involves providing them with the tools and opportunities to discern their paths in life.

Conclusion

“Christus Vivit” is a heartfelt call to young people and the Church at large, affirming the vibrancy and potential of youth. It invites the Church to view young people not as passive recipients but as active participants in its mission. For youth leaders, this document is not just a set of guidelines but a roadmap for engaging with youth in a deeply meaningful way. It is an invitation to journey with young people, helping them to discover the joy of a life lived in Christ, who is indeed, eternally alive.

A Guide for Youth and Youth Leaders

David Pope dip FD MBIFD

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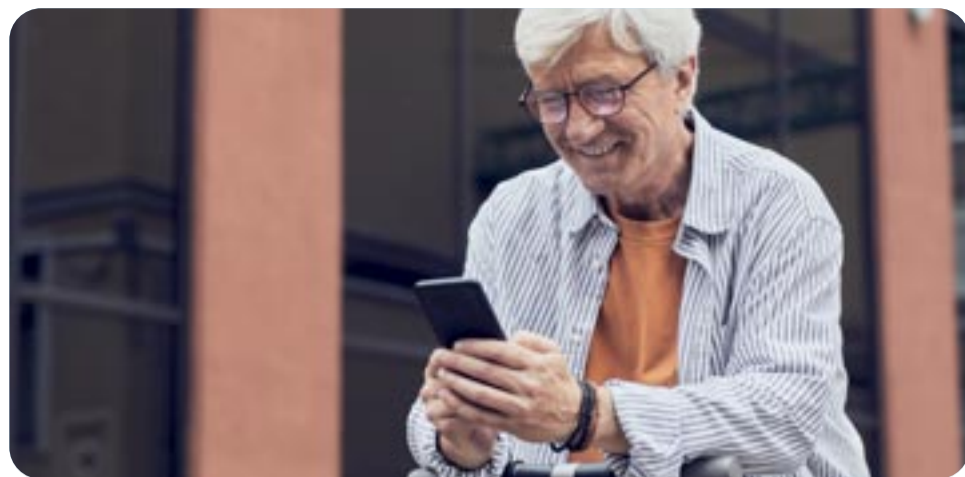


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Send us your letters:

Write to: **The Editor, 99, Commonside, Ansdell, Lytham St. Annes, FY8 4DJ.**
 Email to: voicelatters@hotmail.co.uk

- Please keep your letters concise (max 300 words)
- Include your full name and address
- Letters should not include any personal criticism or attacks
- The editor reserves the right to:
 - Amend or shorten letters or to refuse to publish them (no correspondence to discuss decisions taken will be entered into)
 - Publish a response if deemed appropriate



Dear Editor, ++++++

If I stop worrying - who'll do it instead?

In Matthew's gospel (Ch.5 v25-32) we are told not to worry - God's in charge. However, counting the hairs on my head is less of the demanding job it once was. My wife, Olive, and I had a "foxes have holes" period a couple of years ago when we moved out of our house to let our daughter, her husband, and five children live there. (I won't bore you with why). Thanks to other family and friends we lived a nomadic life for several months but you soon begin to lose your sense of purpose without a proper routine.

One morning, during our 'homeless buy not hungry' period, Olive and I decided to have a coffee in a café in St. Annes. Olive looking at the opening times on the door said, "Oh it's closed it's Monday". "NO - it's OK I replied it's Tuesday". Just then I got a friendly tap on the shoulder and the gentleman behind me also waiting to go in said, "Actually it's Wednesday!!!" My wonderful wife may occasionally not quite know what day it is, but ask her to say her Gratton Catalogue subscription number from the 1970's and there is instant recall!

Technology does not fit well with me but a conversation with a couple of chaps at a Lancashire County cricket match two months or so ago made feel slightly less left behind. One of them was be-moaning the fact that he just had been forced to buy an iphone because if he didn't he could no longer keep his season ticket with Manchester United that he'd had for over 40 years. "I know", said his friend, "I sent you an e-mail but you haven't replied." "I will" was the response. "I just haven't learnt how to do it yet!"

On 26th March 2024 I will have been retired 20 years - how did that happen? To be fair, Psalm 90 v10 does warn you that things might get a bit tricky. Ecclesiastes tells us there is a season for everything, but when did I start to become like Victor Meldrew, and why have things I go to pick up started to throw themselves on the floor? Life now seems to be all about waiting - waiting for appointments, waiting for a Gusto delivery, even having to wait a whole 24 hours for the Amazon van to come. Any organisation you attempt to contact are "experiencing unprecedented high levels of calls!" even though your call is important to them! Offices, Banks, shops, railway booking offices closing down - soon there will no longer be face to face contact with anyone. The past is another world when things were different and even John Milton, nearly 400 years ago, cautioned "They also serve who only stand and wait".

I take great comfort from Psalm 128. My wife really has been a fruitful vine (her maiden name was Vynne). My children literally were like 'Olive' shoots around my table, and I have seen my children's children.

My only worry now is that I don't have an iphone, and I'm sure that it won't be long before you won't be able to get into Heaven if you don't have the App!

Peace be with you. Dave Yates, Ansdell ++++++



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The Rwanda Group Trust is delighted to announce that Bishop Paul has kindly consented to become Patron of the Trust, a Catholic charity based in Preston.

The trustees are very grateful for Bishop Paul's attendance at their recent meeting. Having spent 15 years in Africa himself, he was able to make a very valuable contribution to the discussions. This culminated in his agreement to become Patron of the Trust, which gives

financial assistance to the poorest of the poor via 4 Catholic parishes in Rwanda. The trust is very grateful for his patronage.

The charity is run on a voluntary basis with no overheads and relies on individual donations and fundraising events.

For more information:
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John Armstrong's painting of the Annunciation (right).



Peter, bible at hand, working on a preliminary sketch for a painting.

Introducing the Artist as Evangelist

Painters, stone, wood, and metal sculptors, embroiderers, stained glass makers, a retired architect, potters, a life model, iconographers, photographers, lay people from many kinds of working life and background, priests, religious, you name it and the Society of Catholic Artists has them among its members, making their art in purpose made studios, garages, spare bedrooms, or sheds, (*one member produces beautiful paintings working entirely on her kitchen table*), and all are valued as artist evangelists assisting in the pastoral work of the church. Not all the member's work is specifically of religious subjects, but includes landscape, figurative, and abstract. In fact, it is not necessary to be a full-time artist, just be a Catholic who loves art and supports the aims of the society.

The Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 gave Catholics in England and Wales, freedom of worship, allowed us our own Bishopsrics, and to enter higher education, become MPs, lawyers, teachers and more. Before this time the voice of Catholic artists was virtually silenced. Very few Catholic artists were being commissioned, and after 1829 they still struggled to get work.

To mark the centenary of the Act, in 1929, the Guild of Catholic Artists and Craftsmen was born. Its initial purpose was to promote and assist Catholic artists and craftspeople to gain commissions and have fellowship with other Catholic artists.

In western culture, works of art were commissioned mainly by the church and wealthy patrons until the emergence of the middle classes of the 17th century, since when, art seemed to have become the preserve of the secular world. But the SCA believes that art contributes to the church's call to mission and evangelisation. Art illustrates catechetical works. It makes visible what

is invisible. It makes the sacred scriptures come to life, and enhances sacred spaces. Most importantly it moves us to prayer, and brings visual realisation to faith.

The SCA has always aimed at raising the standard of religious art, and encouraging Christian fellowship amongst artists as well as being available to advise prospective patrons, and to recommend suitable artists for commissions. Members have been responsible for major artistic works for cathedrals and churches throughout Britain. Membership is open to all Catholics interested in the visual arts and to those who support the aims of the society.

Fr. Mel, a priest of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, and a talented artist, was recently invited to be the new Chaplain to the Society. It was the first meeting of the newly formed Northern Star Region of the Society of Catholic Artists, several of whom belong to our own Diocese of Lancaster. Northern Star is one of two regional groups, and more are planned for other areas of Britain.

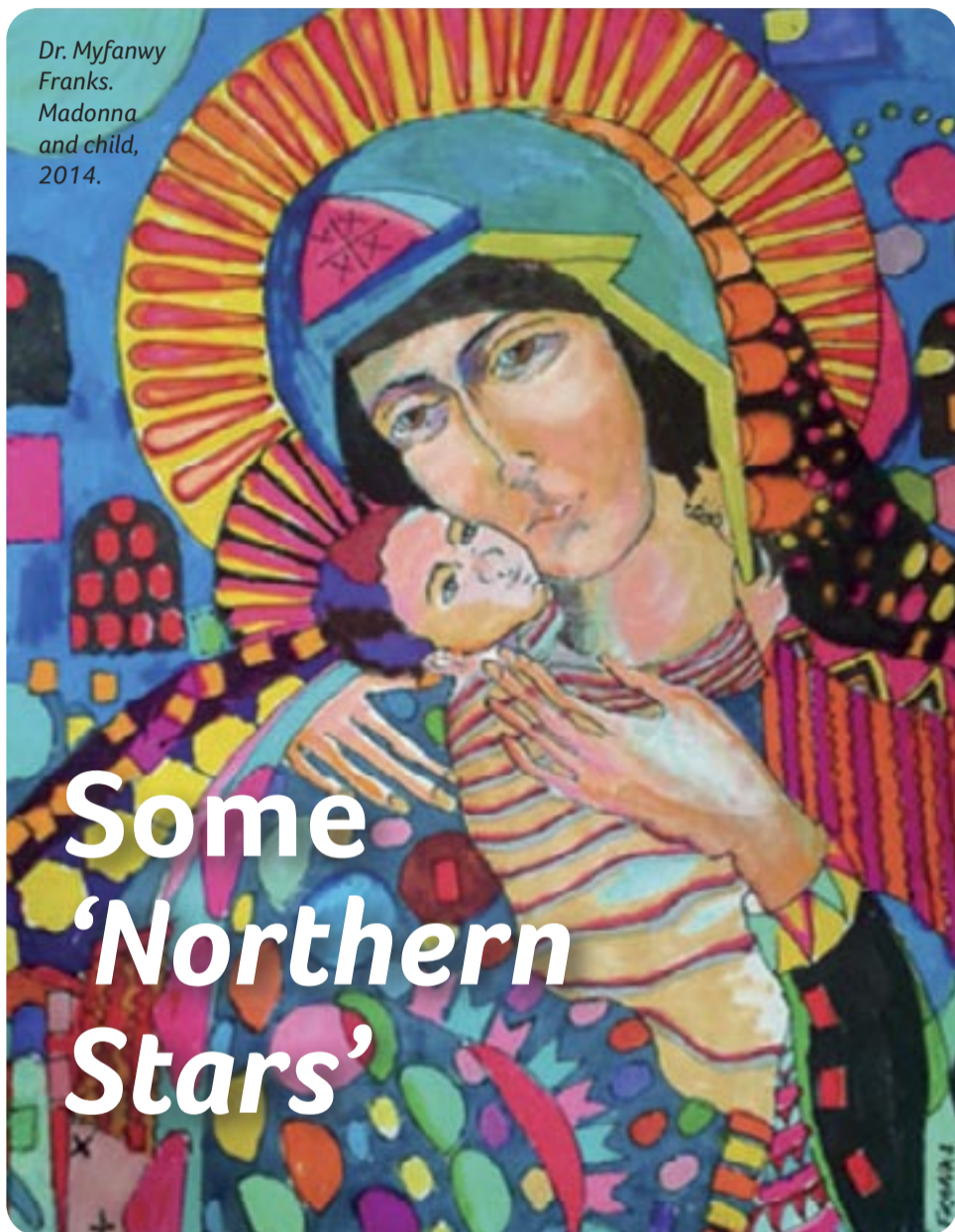


Fr. Mel.

John Armstrong is a painter of abstract, figurative and landscape themes. His work can be found in Royal and international collections, including the V&A and the Tate. A painting, 'Hove Beach', commissioned as Hove's wedding present to Prince Charles, is now in the Royal Collection at Highgrove. John, and his wife Helen, paint abstract and figurative works. John also paints church notice boards.

Peter Koenig's parents left Austria just before the German take-over, and he was born in London in 1939. In 1967 Peter Koenig went to the Visual Arts Academy in Nuremberg to study frescos in particular, but also graffiti, fibre-glass, and engraving. He made full use of such techniques, along with film making with pupils who included Andy Serkis of Lord of the Rings fame. He and his artist wife Tina are life-long members of the Society of Catholic Artists in London and Peter was president from 1973-1980.

Peter says; "One must first have a sense of the mysterious, the holy, before one sets out to be a religious artist."



Dr. Myfanwy Franks. Madonna and child, 2014.

Some 'Northern Stars'

Dr. Myfanwy Franks taught painting part-time at two art schools, and in adult education, and community projects, and since has had a varied career in social and community work, and social research, but has continued to paint throughout. Myfanwy also paints Pascal candles. Her work is vibrant, and rejoices in expressive use of colour.

'The Good Samaritan' by **Sr. Mary Louise Winters** of the daughters of St. Paul is one of many of her artworks that are made into posters and also used in educational publications.

Before lockdown she contributed to the painting of 'The Good Shepherd' to the 'Gallery on the streets' evangelistic outreach at Greyfriars in Oxford. Many of you will remember Br. Loarne OFM, Cap., who was also involved in that project.

Gill Hamilton is a member of the Manchester Academy of Fine Arts. She was born in Lancashire and attended

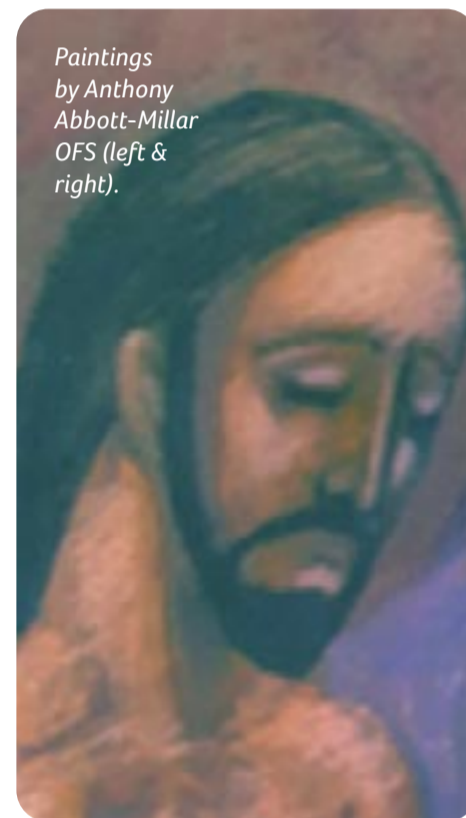
Burnley college of Art and trained as a teacher. She specialises in still life. Like many Catholics who are artists Gill finds a need to express her faith through her work, and is currently working on a long-term project of the stations of the cross.

Pieta (detail) and Duc in Altum by **Anthony Abbott-Millar OFS**, Anthony lives on the south coast of Cumbria, and his abstract work is strongly influenced by the ever-changing light and colour of that coastal area. He has religious works in several churches, schools, and colleges around England. His work includes abstract and figurative, and his Christian work is strongly inspired by stained glass, the lives of Saints, and New Testament themes.

Ceramic artist and Iconographer **Teresa Ann Smith** has had a love of ceramics for most of her life. But, she says, that through prayer, silence and meditation icons have brought her to a new spiritual awareness and a powerful source of knowledge of God in her life. Icons are



Paintings by Gill Hamilton (left & right).



Paintings by Anthony Abbott-Millar OFS (left & right).

windows to heaven, traditionally referred to as written not painted, writing the gospel in colour, light and form.

Teresa became a knight of St Michael in Rome three years ago and was then asked to go to write her first icon of St Michael, in Ireland. This was to become a life changing experience and since then she became part of a group of iconographers at Hying monastery in Carnforth studying under Sister Mary Stella, an iconographer of over 40 years experience. Finally, she feels she is becoming the artist God always destined her to be.

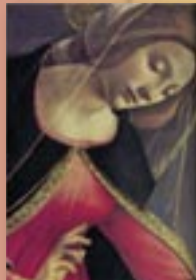
If you wish to purchase, or commission a work, you can do so by contacting the Society, or the artists directly from the information on their profile on the SCA website.

If you are interested in joining the Society, or would like some more information please visit: www.catholicartists.co.uk or email: maryjeandonaghey5@gmail.com



Icon Painting by Teresa Ann Smith.

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The Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes

23rd – 30th July 2024

With just five months to go it is important, for planning purposes for people to book as soon as possible. We will travel on a Tuesday, from Liverpool John Lennon Airport and we hope that the new travel date will allow teachers and young people to come on pilgrimage, that would normally still be in school.

Pastoral Theme 2024

The pastoral theme for 3 years 2022-24 are the word's that Mary, the Mother of God, entrusted to Bernadette Soubirous on 2nd March 1858: "Go tell the priests to build a chapel here and that people should come in procession".

- 2022 – "Go and tell the priests..."
- 2023 – "...to build a chapel here..."
- 2024 – "...and that people should come in procession."

'I want you to come in procession'

Bernadette was the only one to hear this instruction coming from the Lady. She was alone to transmit it. And now, the Church, as it obeys Bernadette, has been organising pilgrimages to Massabielle for a century.

If Bernadette had not been Bernadette, Lourdes would not have become the meeting point of the Christian world.

Bernadette is the only one to have revealed Lourdes to us ... God engages with a soul of choice, but He opens himself only to her. For Him, she is sufficient.

Because of this young, despised girl, an enormous flow of people started moving and hasn't stopped coming from all around the world ever since. This little woman alone has become a trigger for an immense adventure.

Bishop Pierre-Marie Théas, *Bishop of Tarbes end Lourdes (from 1947 to 1970) International Marian Congress of Lourdes – Speech of 15th September 1958.*
Fr Horatio Brito

The pastoral meditation proposed for the 2024 pilgrimages, corresponds to the end of one of the ten spoken words of Our Lady of Lourdes, transmitted to the Church by St Bernadette:

'Go tell the priests to build a chapel here and to come in procession'

In 2022, the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes suggested meditating on the first part of these words: *Go tell the priests ...*

In 2023, the meditation was about the second part: *to build a chapel here ...*

And, finally, in 2024, this triptych will end with the last words of the instruction: *and to come [here] in procession.*

Thus, the 2024 meditation starts naturally with:

- 1) The procession
- 2) The link between the procession and the chapel
- 3) The link between the priests, the chapel and the procession
- 4) But, also with the initial 'Go tell'

What makes the Lourdes 2024 meditation so particular, is to be focused on the word procession which, in this context, means also a pilgrimage.

But why are these two words so close? Because the Immaculate Virgin used this word when she spoke to Bernadette Soubirous and it is a word from the Lourdes patois. However, as there were very few words in this language, the same term can have several meanings. In the present case, this is particularly easy to understand because, as we can notice, a procession is, in a way, nothing else but a pilgrimage, whereas a pilgrimage can be considered as a longer procession over a period of one or several days.

Bishop Paul said I invite you to come in procession with Lancaster Diocese in 2024:



“And that people should come in procession”

“I ask the clergy of the Diocese to please advertise the pilgrimage in your parishes. Please promote and invite parishioners who are less physically able, those who are perhaps housebound or those in need of some companionship, friendship or spiritual enrichment.

I also ask you to encourage young people to come – they will experience an amazing week, giving service to others, socialising, having fun, praying together, spiritually growing together, and ultimately making friendships that will last a lifetime.

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who supported young people to get to Lourdes in 2023. I especially thank a wonderful lady who so generously fully funded 2 of our young people”.

Youth Teams –

The 2024 Pilgrimage Director of Youth will be Katie O Donnell. Katie and her team leaders will ensure the young people have a spiritually uplifting and enjoyable week. We are pleased to announce the Chaplain to the Youth is Fr Ajish. Many young people will know him from their visits to Castlerigg Manor.

We call upon young people in the diocese 15+ to consider coming on pilgrimage. You will be given all the preparation, support and training you need. Many young people make decisions about future careers whilst in Lourdes.

This is a quote received from a young person a few years ago:

“You find time to explore your faith, to learn about yourself and to make friends you will have for life”.

Many often say “you don’t ‘go’ to Lourdes, you are ‘called’”. Please answer the call in 2024!

New for 2024!!!! – A NIGHT BED & BREAKFAST AND A DAY SIGHTSEEING IN PARIS ON THE WAY BACK.

All young people are asked to book as soon as possible. Please see posters distributed throughout parishes and schools.

Medical and Brancardier Teams –

Our care for the sick pilgrims is reliant on our volunteer helpers. Therefore, we appeal for nurses and carers throughout the diocese.

If you or anyone you know are willing to be part of the Medical team please contact: Nikki Wisdom (Chief Nurse) at: chiefnurse@lancasterlourdes.co.uk

If you would like to join our Brancardier Team (male 23+) then please contact Sean McMahon (Chief Brancardier) at: chiefbrancardier@lancasterlourdes.co.uk

Many of you will know what a rewarding, wonderful experience working at the service of the sick pilgrims in Lourdes is.

Sick Pilgrims –

If you would like to come to Lourdes as a pilgrim but you require a helping hand with mobility issues (including wheelchair users) or you need help with personal care – it is entirely possible for you to come on pilgrimage, due to the work of volunteer groups mentioned above.

If you require personal care to be delivered by the Medical Team then you must apply before the 17th March 2024. All registered sick will stay in the Hotel Eliseo where the Medical Team & Youth are based. You should contact Nikki Wisdom (Chief Nurse) at the e-mail above, prior to filling out a booking form.

If you need further information then please feel free to contact Joe Walsh Tours website: www.joewalshstours.co.uk/pilgrimages or call Freephone: **0808 1890468**.

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Over 70,000 Catholics call for World Bank to protect farmers' seed rights



Patrick Gardner of Cafod reports a terrific response from parishioners across Lancaster Diocese (50 churches/parishes) and across England and Wales (762 churches/parishes) to their Fix the Food System – Seeds campaign last summer. Cafod followed up this campaign with the World Bank in London and Morocco.

70,000 parishioners from one third of all Catholic parishes in England and Wales have signed a letter from Salina, a small-scale farmer from Bangladesh, to the World Bank.

Salina wrote a letter to the World Bank calling for the protection of the fundamental rights of small farmers like herself to use their own varieties of seeds – a right that is increasingly under threat as big seed companies have come to dominate the global seed market. “Seeds are at the heart of everything that farmers like myself do,” the letter says. “Without control over our seeds, our work as a farmer is not possible.”

CAFOD’s Fix the Food System campaign is urging the UK government and the World Bank to protect the right of farmers around the world to save, use, exchange and sell their own seeds. In some countries, new seed laws have been insisted on by the World Bank in exchange for financial support, yet these laws have harmed those most in need.

762 parishes in England and Wales signed the letter with CAFOD in support of Salina this summer, with 18 diocesan bishops signing too. Upon hearing this news, Salina said, “I am very happy to know about 70,000 signatures along with mine.”

The letter was delivered to World Bank staff in London and at the annual World Bank meetings in Marrakech, Morocco on the same day. In Morocco, Farida Akhter, who works with Salina’s community in Bangladesh, presented the letter to the Bank’s Global Director for Agriculture and Food.

In London 40 CAFOD campaigners took the letters to the World Bank UK offices, and a small group met with a senior Bank representative inside the building.

“It was a very cordial meeting and we explained how much support our campaign has received across the country from ordinary parishioners,” said Father Rob Esdaile, who handed the letter to World Bank staff. His own parish, St Dunstan’s in Woking, was one of the 762 parishes who supported the campaign.

CAFOD’s Campaigns Engagement Manager, Andrea Speranza, said: “We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who signed Salina’s letter. Her message to the World Bank has been heard loud and clear: unfair rules putting pressure on small farmers to buy commercial seeds aren’t acceptable. This is just the beginning of a long campaign but it is a very good start.”



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Sr Michaela Toulmin of Our Lady of Hying Monastery in Warton, Carnforth has gained a Masters degree in Spirituality and recounts her period of study.

In September 2021 I started studying online for a Masters in Spirituality at the Margaret Beaufort Institute in Cambridge. MBIT is a lay Catholic Institute that offers courses, study days, workshops, seminars and conferences to promote the study of theology in the twenty-first century.

I had previously studied two modules on Christology and Ethics as part of an online Thursday afternoon course aimed at engaging women in theological study and had appreciated the breadth and depth of the material on offer. One of the tutors suggested I look at doing an MA course and with the encouragement of the community, I chose to study

the Spirituality Masters as my option. Some of the courses were compulsory according to the route of study selected and others were chosen from a range of subjects on offer.

The first module was compulsory and focused on the range of studying "The Human Condition". It was an opportunity to develop a strong grounding in disciplinary concepts and methods particular to theology, from which more specialist questions of ethics, spirituality, contemporary belief and pastoral care arise and interact. The support from the tutors was excellent and we were encouraged to interact with the other students who came from a range of

Christian denominations, professions and continents. Over the next year or so I studied a range of topics, the history of Spirituality, Ecology, Celtic and Medieval Spirituality and the Ignatian tradition.

Several of us met informally on Zoom over the two years to encourage each other when it seemed the workload was too much or life was generally very demanding during the time of the pandemic. I found this particularly helpful when I was diagnosed with Stage three cancer during my second term of study. The support of my community, tutors and fellow students enabled me

to continue with study even when facing chemo and major surgery. It became my goal to finish the Masters despite all that seemed to happen to prevent me from doing so!

In November 2023 I attended my graduation at the Corn Exchange in Cambridge as a graduate of the Anglia Ruskin University. It was lovely to be able to share it with my eldest brother Steph, his wife Linda, and Sr. Elizabeth Mary, our Prioress General who came over from France. It was lovely to be able to meet fellow students and some tutors in the 'real world' rather than online via Zoom.

2024 Christian Leadership Formation – Stonyhurst College

Our youths will one day be our leaders, and it is imperative that they have the intellectual and moral tools necessary to help lead a just society. To that end, the Christian Heritage Centre launched its Christian Leadership programme for sixth-form students in 2021, following the inspiration of its founder, the Lord Alton of Liverpool.

Participants were immersed in an intense, community experience of study, prayer, workshops, team-building and socials. They came from very different backgrounds – school-wise, geographically, ethnically and spiritually – but they all had in common the key requirements for an applicant to this programme: a love for God and a desire to build a Christian society.

The introverts found themselves drawn by the holistic community experience; the scientists found their minds broadened by the philosophical and theological principles they engaged with. Together, they learned to work as a team, whether to formulate a speech for a student union debate or to design a bridge with limited materials, to achieve a common goal.

At the heart of each day and of the programme is the pattern of daily liturgy and prayer. Every student noted the impact of the centrality of prayer, whether in terms of a deepening of their relationship with Christ, of being more positively prepared at the start of the day for the work ahead, or of broadening their experience of spiritual practice.

It is only with Christ in focus that the philosophical and theological deep-dives into the concepts underpinning

the Catholic vision of the human person and society make any sense. Notions of human dignity and rights are mainstays in modern language, yet are often used without any understanding of the Christian content that has shaped these concepts. In a secular culture with no reference to higher moral authority, what criteria or standards are there by which to measure the justice of any given civil law?

Christianity presupposes conviction about a truth that is perennially and universally relevant: a truth that can serve as a stable and a good foundation for a society in which humans can flourish. Such a conviction is profoundly antithetical to the post-modern thinking that underpins secular culture; but then what coherent system has modern secular culture offered us that has any credible hope of better results?

The Christian Leadership Formation programme is a bold statement of hope for the future. It is an appeal to those young people who are convinced that God provides the only workable answer. This is an opportunity for those young people to meet like-minded peers, to connect with Catholic professionals and academics, to receive an invaluable skillset and intellectual foundations, and to immerse themselves more deeply in their relationship with Christ.

The 2024 programme is now open to applications from students currently in Lower 6th / Yr12 (S5 in Scotland).

For further info and to apply, visit: christianleadershipformation.com Also follow us on Instagram @christianleadershipformation for all the latest updates.





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R.I.P. Fr Billy Bootle

6 Sep. 1932 – 17 Nov. 2023



As everyone knows, Catholic priests do not get married. In some cases, if a priest has no brothers or sisters, nephews or nieces, then, when it comes to retirement, he has no family of his own to call on. Luckily, there are usually fellow priests or classmates, friends made along the way, or parishioners who have become friends, whom he gets to spend time with every so often. Or, he may decide to live at St Winefride's, our diocesan Home for retired Priests in Bispham, and be spoiled rotten by Eva's loving care.

If he's a good cook, knows how to change a plug, fire up the computer and use the washing machine, he's probably content to live alone in retirement and be self-sufficient. However, if he's none of those things, it's truly a blessing when a lovely person comes into his life and says, "You can come and live with me".

In the 13.5 years of his retirement, Billy lived with Sheila, who very generously opened her home to him. I have no idea how handy around the house or self-sufficient Bill was, but he lost no time in taking up Sheila's offer. Sheila had been the hairdresser for 33 years at Stella Matutina, where she and Bill met, more through Bill's profession than hers, I suspect, he being follicle challenged and lacking the luxuriant locks Sheila was used to working on.

She tells me that he had a lovely retirement. He really enjoyed being Chaplain to Stella Matutina. He loved saying Mass for the Sisters and the elderly residents, and they loved him. Just the Sunday before he died, he remarked to Sheila that, because of the way Christmas falls this year, he had planned to celebrate Mass for them, three days on the trot, and was looking forward to it.

In their domestic life, Bill loved shopping with Sheila and even took up helping her in the garden, while still finding time, of course, to watch football and rugby on the tele.

On their last trip to Scotland they visited St Andrews, the home of golf, very dear to Billy's heart, where he left his St Andrew's baseball cap in a restaurant, from which it was stolen. Little does the thief know that, as this cap was the only one Bill ever wore, he may well be in possession of a 1st Class relic. Sheila, of course, saved the day by ordering him a new one from St Andrew's pro shop.

Sheila and Bill did practically everything together and, over the years, became such firm friends, that Sheila says the bungalow now seems empty without him. We all feel very sorry for your loss Sheila.

My own memories of Bill are nearly all golf related. When I returned from the Army and joined the Lancaster Diocesan Golf Society, Billy was either the Secretary or Treasurer – can't remember which. But

he was the one who made everything happen. At that time there were about 20 priests still playing. We'd meet every Monday in the clubhouse dining room for bacon butties, while from his bag Bill would draw out our names, to decide who played with whom. He also organised all the competitions we played, in various locations around the Diocese, meticulously recorded our scores, got all the trophies engraved with the winners' names, and bought all the prizes for the AGM and dinner, which he also organised. As well as all that, he was also our Rep for the Annual Inter-Diocesan Tournament, over many years.

He was so good at all this, that he kept getting re-elected. Some may think, and there's possibly a grain of truth in it, that the rest of us were too idle to take it on, but in truth, none of us would have been half as good as he was. Besides, he revelled in the responsibility and was 100% reliable. To serve not to be served, was never more true than in Billy's case.

But now to the man himself standing on the first tee, or any tee for that matter. Bill was not a classic golfer. In fact, a Pro watching him tee off at one of our comps in Birmingham, said to Kevin Lowry, God rest him, "I didn't think a swing like that was humanly possible". But, nevertheless he always managed to propel the ball off the tee, which usually stayed low to the ground, rather like an Exocet missile, until it came to rest in one of rarely visited parts of the course. It was a shot that on occasion proved miraculous, as those of us who witnessed his ball skim several times across the Fairhaven pond, like Barnes Wallace's bouncing bomb, can verify, should his cause come up for canonisation.

Billy's favourite golf story was about Alban Cochrane who once had a hole in one on the 17th. Billy told the housekeeper about it when he got back to St Mary's, in Fleetwood, but added that Alban had had a stroke. She was horrified at how casual Bill was about this news, and asked if Alban was in hospital. That cracked him up as he tried to explain to her the golf handicap system. He loved telling that story. Talking about stories, once Bill got on to one, you knew you were in for the long haul. He was the Master of the Subordinate Clause, long before and even more so, than the compilers of those awful translations of the Collect prayers, in the new missal. By the time he got to the end, you'd forgotten the beginning.

But, for all that, he was great company, always cheerful and buzzing around at great speed, something he also did when he played on the wing for the Diocesan football team, where he was known as 'Billy Whizz'. Outside of sport, he was very much a team Player in our shared priesthood. He was, for many years, our Diocesan Rep and Treasurer of The Lancashire Infirm Secular Clergy Fund,

Bishop Paul Swarbrick was the Principal Celebrant at the Requiem Mass for Fr Billy Bootle held at St Joseph's Ansdell where Canon Alf Hayes delivered the following homily.

which has oversight of the welfare of priests in need, from the three Dioceses of Lancaster, Salford and Liverpool, and, as you'd expect, was just as conscientious and meticulous in that Office, as he was looking after our Golf Society.

In his pastoral ministry, especially for the parishioners of St Joseph's, Wesham, whom he served as Curate and Parish Priest for 34 years, he proved a 'Steady Eddie' providing Mass and the Sacraments and visiting the sick in the time-honoured way, a la 'Diary of a Country Priest'. On the Night of the Long knives, he was included in the 33 moves, but managed to persuade Bishop Patrick that any such move away would seriously impede his ability to visit his old and infirm mother in Wigan. It worked. But that part of his life, Part One, so to speak, is history now, and so we look to the future and what our Lord has in store for a good and faithful servant, who has eaten the Flesh of the Son of Man and drank his blood, as real food and real drink, and through his selfless priesthood of 66 years, has made it possible for thousands of others to do likewise, in his firm belief that. "Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life".

In recent years there has been a trend

to call a funeral a 'celebration of the life' of someone. I come from an Irish family, and for us the celebration of someone's life comes in the pub after the funeral, when the person comes alive again in the telling. In our Catholic tradition, the funeral Mass is specifically for the repose of the soul of the person who has died, and always includes prayers for a merciful judgement, recognising, in all humility, that none of us is perfect, and that only God knows us through and through.

But when we pray to God for the forgiveness of the sins, of someone who has stayed faithful to God all his life, we do so with great confidence, because we know Jesus told his Father, "I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they may always see the glory you have given me".

It is our fervent prayer today, that Billy, who, like all priests, did not choose Christ, but was chosen by him, will be a beneficiary of Christ's prayer to his Father. May he rejoice in the Beatific Vision and live forever in peace with the Master he served so faithfully for all those years.

Eternal rest grant unto Fr Billy O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him, may he rest in peace, Amen.



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