

**IT IS NOT WHAT YOU WANT 'TO DO' BUT WHAT YOU WANT 'TO BECOME:'**

It is a blessing to celebrate another New Year in our life. During this time you are likely to hear people speak ill of the previous year especially if they met with difficulties. Well I look at it differently; a year that sees me through and ushers me into a new one is very good indeed no matter what might have happened it. That is why when I come to the end of the year I have a feeling of thankfulness to God for a year that made me to experience life.

The beginning of a New Year is much like a fresh snow where everything is covered under a blanket but we do not know what exactly they are. The real truth is discovered and appreciated as the snow slowly melts away. As children we used to play in the sand or snow making images that fascinated our imagination. We didn't worry that our masterpieces would melt or be blown away by the wind and disappear. The conditions didn't have to be perfect; we did not worry about how much time we had. Whatever we built or whatever fun we had was fulfilling.

I was listening to the radio few days to Christmas and I heard that many people in this country are lonely. This is hard to understand considering the fact how passionate the society is when it comes to family matters. Only a few will restrain from seeking compensation when their rights are infringed upon. How obsessed too are those who spend a fortune to find their family trees! It is hard to understand how an affluent society like ours, people are less happy, they feel isolated and a good number are lonely. Adult life can be pretty boring.

Many people look at the New Year as a good time to reflect, to plan and to decide what they are are going to do but there is a question more important rarely asked: "who would you like to be this year!" I encourage you to think about this point. Remember that the New Year is not so much about doing but becoming. What we want to become has great influence over what we do. Choosing a theme can help you stay anchored in being who you want to become.

Choose to incorporate more balance in your life, physically socially or spirituality. Grow in patience, plant seeds of love and you will make a harvest of peace.

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**LIFE IS LIKE THAT; TAKE IT SERIOUSLY IT IS NOT A REHEARSAL**

Life is like taking a journey by train. At birth we boarded the train and met our parents. They were glad to see us, they told us the date of our birth, and shaped our being members of the family. We thought they would always travel on our side. However, at some station our parents will step down from the train, leaving us on this journey alone. It is a tearful departure always; no one can claim mastery in handling the situation. Most of the time shortly before stepping off the train they ask us to remain strong and united, to love and respect other people and to take care of each other.

As we travel on, other people board the train; and they become significant in our own life; we call them siblings, friends, children, and even the love of your life. The train continues to speed on passing through valleys, plains and mountain ranges. At different stations some of our known friends step down and leave a permanent vacuum; others go so unnoticed that we don't realize they vacated their seats. The train journey is full of joy, sorrow, fantasy, expectations, hellos, goodbyes, and farewells. Unfortunately success is not in one's power and the real end unknown. Therefore having a good relationship with all passengers on board is important by giving the best of ourselves and making positive contribution in their life.

The mystery to everyone is: '*we do not know at which station we ourselves will step down!*' Could it be that I'm stepping off the train at the next station or I have several stations to go through? The answer is I don't know. Therefore we must live positive life; love everyone on the train, forgive those who behave badly along the way and offer the best of who we are to others. It is important to do this because when the time comes to step down and leave your seat empty; you should leave behind beautiful memories for those who will continue to travel on the train of life.

One famous American singer Jim Reeves (God rest his soul) once sang "*This world is not my home I'm just passing through*" Yes he knew that this life was not a rehearsal, he took it seriously and he left us those beautiful melodies that bring peace in our nerves. It is a New Year 2015, I wish you a joyful journey on the train of life. Win success and give lots of love. More importantly, thank God for the journey each day.

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## **SAUL THE FANATIC WHO BECAME PAUL**

Hard-headed people convert when they meet with a crashing defeat. It comes to them as a surprise even to the disbelief of many. Try to think of waking up one morning to read headline in the papers that a renowned dictator is championing democracy and freedom! I'm sure few of us will take it seriously. If you have ever read the story of the Conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus, then you truly understand what crashing defeat can do.

To gain the full measure of the man, we must examine his dark side and what he symbolized before becoming "the Apostle of Grace." Saul was born in a pious Jewish family, moderate in its observance of the Law of Moses. At the age of thirteen Saul was sent to Palestine to learn from a rabbi named Gamaliel, under whom he mastered Jewish history, the Psalms and the works of the prophets. His education would continue for five or six years. Christian tradition speaks of Gamaliel as a celebrated Pharisee, a doctor of Jewish Law. The Acts 5:34 speaks of Gamaliel as a man of great respect who spoke in favor of the arrested and the Jewish law teacher of Saul who became St. Paul Acts 22:3.

Saul's early life was marked by religious zeal, brutal violence, and the relentless persecution of Christians. Was he radicalized? No, he was simply taught to have a living love for God and his Law. Gamaliel was not a fanatical teacher or a fanatical preacher he was as the Bible says a respectable teacher of the Law.

Religion must be practiced with moderation and with a sober mind, once a believer of any faith starts to "fight for God" be sure that something is getting out of hand. God is not so weak to be fought for therefore when you set yourself on the path of fighting for God, you do no less than killing and destroying those he asks you to love and *"to forgive not seven times but seventy seven times."*

At one point Saul set out to fight for God with uncompromising zeal that led him to religious extremism. Unlike the religious radicals and fanatics of our time there is much we can learn from the life of Paul. He was given the opportunity to do great things for the Kingdom of God. The story of Paul is a story of redemption in Jesus Christ and a testimony that no one is beyond the saving grace of the Lord.

Is any parishioner sick or in hospital Please inform the Parish Priest or one of the Sisters. It is important that Catholics on admission to hospital tell their religion to be recorded and request a visit from the Catholic Chaplain.

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## **IT TAKES ME SIX DAYS**

We had good sunshine last Thursday this week despite the cold wind. I took my bicycle and cycled around the parish streets. I had an amazing experience. I came across three houses the first one had a cat and the other two had dogs seated by the window looking outside. They seemed to be waiting for someone to return. Whenever people walked by, they were curious as if to make sure whether that was the person whose return they were waiting for. One home owner returned and you cannot imagine the joy that was expressed inside the house even before the door was opened! Tails wagged from side to side and they ran to the door. It was as if to say: *'yes my best friend and master is finally back my loneliness is ended!'*

Just last Sunday someone who found me standing in the foyer waiting to welcome and to greet you my parishioners as you came to Sunday Mass was very sympathetic indeed: *Father he said, why stand here in the cold, you would better get back into your house and make yourself a cup of tea.'* Well I'm waiting for you I replied, you see it takes me six days to see you, to greet you and to talk to you; that is why I come out 30minutes before Mass, and it is for the same reason that I will stand here at the end of the Mass to see you go into the world to put into action what the Lord will have asked you to go to do.'

The dogs and cat described above taught me a good lesson and gave me a good example, namely to long for someone's return. Fr. Jimmy your parish priest stands at the back of the church NOT to do parish office business but to welcome you and your family as you come for our Sunday Mass. I don't expect someone to engage me in office matters such as booking for baptisms or arranging for marriages. Leave those issues instead call office number 02476258901 or my mobile 07906124756 to book an appointment.

Did you know that Fr. Jimmy likes talking to everybody and to shake hands with you after Mass? You might not believe it, but a handshake between a parish priest and his people is probably the most important one-to-one touch that any priest has in six days. Because of its importance please avoid inquiring about issues that may need discussion. Give Fr. Jimmy a chance to say 'hallo', 'welcome', 'nice to see you', 'thanks for being here', 'see you next Sunday'. This is what takes him at the back of the church in freezing cold! Unlike the dogs and cats which wait for few minutes, it takes me six days peeping through the window waiting when you will return.

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### **THOSE ARMS PRESENTED YOU TO JESUS:**

By the time my mother passed on her hands had become feeble and wrinkled. She complained of the loss of power in her arms to grasp things. Above all she was upset that she could not take up in her arms her grandchildren as she took up her children during those good olden days. In spite of this, my mother was so proud of her arms she felt greatly fulfilled just by looking at them. The reason for her being so proud of her arms was that *by them she presented all her children to the Lord in Baptism!* One by one as God blessed her with another member of her family, she asked the priest to have them christened; it was by the two- now -feeble and wrinkled arms that she bore them as they received new birth in baptism.

Tomorrow Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> February, the church celebrates the feast of the Presentation of the Child Jesus in the temple. It is by no means a day of obligation but it is a day that should be related to those moments that we ourselves have been presented to God. The very first time we were presented was at our christening, from that event other presentations have been made namely at Confirmation, First Holy Communion, at marriage and at the profession of religious vows or at ordination.

When Jesus was forty days old, Mary and Joseph bore him in their arms and took Him to the Temple in Jerusalem. They were not wealthy, so they took two turtle doves with them to offer as a sacrifice required by Mosaic Law. They were met by a temple priest Simeon. He was a holy man who spent much time in prayer and penance praying for the Messiah to come and liberate them from their enemies. Finally, while Simeon was praying he heard the voice of God. God promised Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah, when he saw the baby Jesus; he took him in his arms and blessed God:

*Now Master let Your servant go in peace according to Your promise, because my eyes have seen Your salvation which you have prepared before for all peoples, a light to bring salvation to the Gentiles, and the glory to your people Israel."*

I'm sure Simeon's arms were feeble and wrinkled; probably more than my mom's but they received the Lord. If your hands have ever presented someone to God be glad and rejoice for your eyes like Simeon's have seen God's salvation realized there and then. Thank God that you too like Jesus were presented to God. You belong to Him.

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### **8<sup>th</sup> FEB. FIRST INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

On 3rd Feb 2015 a press conference was held in the Holy See Press Office to launch the first International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking. This weekend Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> on the feast of a Sudanese slave Josephine Bakhita a slave and victim of human trafficking, the church calls upon us to realize the evil of human trafficking. It is not difficult to find someone who was taken into a country with false promise of a better life; only to find that money and passports are taken away leaving the victims virtually stateless and in slavery! The Day is promoted by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants, the Pontifical Council "Justice and Peace" and the International Union of Superiors General (UISG).

The launch was attended by Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz, prefect of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life; Cardinal Antonio Maria Veglio, president of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace.

If you thought slave trade and bonded labor is a thing of the past, think again, millions of people today are deprived of freedom and are forced to live in slavery. The Mediterranean Sea and Pacific Ocean have become grave yards for victims of human trafficking. The Holy Father invites us all to recognize that we are facing a global phenomenon which exceeds the competence of any one community or country. Our awareness must expand and extend to the very depths of this evil; from awareness to prayer ... from prayer to solidarity ... and from solidarity to concerted action, until slavery and trafficking are no more". Human trafficking is a modern form of slavery, some people are brainwashed and trafficked to go and commit crime in foreign countries. Let us reflect and pray in order to cast light on this crime.

"O God, when we hear of children and adults deceived and taken to unknown places for purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labor, and organ 'harvesting', our hearts are saddened and our spirits angry that their dignity and rights are ignored through threats, lies, and force. We cry out against the evil practice of this modern slavery, and pray with St. Bakhita for it to end. Give us wisdom and courage to reach out and stand with those whose bodies, hearts and spirits have been so wounded, so that together we may make real your promises to fill these sisters and brothers with a love that is tender and good. Send the exploiters away empty-handed to be converted from this wickedness, and help us all to claim the freedom that is your gift to your children. Amen".

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**DO NOT BE TAKEN UP BY THE GIFT TO FORGET**  
**THE GIVER:**

Not long ago, I came across someone deeply in prayer in our church. From the gestures made I noticed that there was something special that was being asked for. I came to learn later that the person was praying to God for a job. We all know how life can be stressful and boring if there is nothing to look forward to for the day. Jesus told us, "ask and you will receive" he kept his promise the prayer was heard on high and the job was given with a good salary to crown it all. Once the job was acquired that was also the end of that person coming to church! A weekly program was set: working Monday to Friday, Saturday was set aside for shopping and Sunday morning was set for the fitness center (gym) and the afternoon was for lying in bed to relax the mind and to pamper oneself!

Missing the person with whom we had prayed to God for a job left me wondering what had happened; was the job offered, had the person moved away; was he sick? These and many other questions crossed over my mind. Later we bumped into each other's way outside Sainsbury. 'It is a long time I saw you' I said. "Ooh Father I have a good job now, it is busy, busy, busy all the time. I work Monday to Friday, I do shopping on Saturday and lie in on Sunday to relax the mind; by the way I go to the gym on Sunday to keep fit you know!"

It is common to meet people who behave like this these days who turn to a certain god to ask for something but dump him as soon as they have received what they asked for. In the Bible many people asked Jesus for favors; Jews and Gentiles, 'Lord help me' they would say. There is not a single incident where Jesus denied answering a plea; he was however grieved by those who received his gifts and failed to recognize him as the giver. While he was angry with the town of Capernaum and Bethsaida where many of his miracles were performed but refused to believe in him, he was keen to appreciate the few who remembered to thank him such as the Samaritan leper, and the Roman centurion.

It is true that we live a busy life but it is important never to forget to give thanks to Him who has given us the opportunity to be busy. Idleness can kill. I understand that Sunday wages are much higher than weekdays, but I think such attractive wages are but a test of our fidelity. You should never spend your energy to enjoy the gift and totally lose sight or recognition of the giver.

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**"LET THEM BOTH GROW" IT WAS A SURPRISING**  
**ANSWER**

What a sad world we are living in these days, may be you have listened and watched with dismay on the horrors that are taking place in the world; you cannot resist wondering what has become of "*man created in the image and likeness of God*" as the Bible says (Gen. 1:27).. "*Twenty one Christians beheaded in Libya,*" "*Churches burnt to ashes in.....,*" "*Hundreds of thousands of Christians driven out of their countries*" are the more likely news making headlines these days! I'm quite sure that what we see on the television is a tiny piece of the iceberg of what exactly is taking place on the ground to the common man. Some events are reported simply because high profile people are involved otherwise they could go unreported.

In the course of the week I was talking with a parishioner who was deeply disturbed by the evil in the world. "*Father she said, why should the good God not strike down the perpetrators of these vile acts of Satan?*" Well I was immediately reminded of the parable of the deadly weed (darnel) which the laborers found in their master's field; "*do you want us to go and weed it out*" they asked. *No* he replied *because when you weed out the darnel, you might pull up the wheat with it. Let them both grow till harvest time. At harvest time I shall say to the reapers first collect the darnel and burn it then gather the wheat into my barn*" Matt.13:24-30. It must have been embarrassing for the laborers to see the deadly weed choking the wheat just because the landowner is patient.

The mind of God like that always willing to give an opportunity to everyone to reform and do the right thing. He plays a blind eye such that we think as if he has forgotten the plight of his people. Don't you feel let down when you see perpetrators of wickedness thriving while those who love God live as though chasing the wind? Doesn't it look as if God has turned a blind eye? In the mind of Jesus, evil and good were to live side by side but at the end of time they will not co-exist for all eternity.

On Wednesday this week we came forth to receive the ashes on our faces as we called upon the mercy of God. The human face is our mark of identity. As we received 'dirt' on our beautiful faces, it was to say that when we let sin dominate our life, it disfigures God's image in us. Lent is a happy and joyful time when we are engaged in a polishing exercise of our lives to make God's image shine through.

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### FOCUS ON DEATH IT IS PART OF LENT TOO

During the course of the week, I attended a funeral of one of my best friend's brother and parishioner which took place at Christ the King Parish -Coundon. The words that were spoken about him were not mere flattery, the man loved God, he loved the Church and supported it; he loved the people. What a wonderful thing to see so many Christians turning up to bid farewell to someone in whose faith they shared? Sometimes people speaking at funerals tend to canonize the deceased just to make them appear good in death while in life they were not what is spoken of them. However, when you hear a priest speaking of the involvement of somebody in doing good to others and to the church in a historical manner, then you realize that the deceased was not a Christian in name but in reality and that there is a great lesson to learn from him/her as he/she lies in state.

One thing we have to face sooner or later is death; we are better prepared if we give some thought to it in advance. When death comes 'prematurely we need not feel that injustice has been done such that the deceased has been unfairly deprived of extra time as though the extra time of life is a reward for good behavior. It is the way we use the time God has given to us that is important. Our bodies are lent us during our earthly existence to assist us while we are here. What a wretched world this would be without the prospect of death, if we were for example to live on this earth "*ad infinitum*" with all our ailments and physical handicaps. We would not want to carry on forever with our youthful immaturity nor would we wish to bear forever the infirmities of old age. Death is a merciful means of perfecting the physical body which has housed our spirit on earth. When it comes, it may be compared to the discarding of the shell when the chicken is about to enter a new world.

Jesus never spoke of death as a frightening experience but as a state from which someone wakes up; thus Lazarus was not dead but "*asleep*" (Jn 11:11-14), and Jairus' twelve years old daughter seemed to have needed a little more encouragement to "*wake up*" than to call her dead (Mtt 9:24), while the son of the widow of Nain seemed to be like a lazy teenager who forgot to wake up early for school such that he needed to be *shaken up a bit* (Lk. 7:14). In all these events Jesus simplifies the way someone who believes in him should look at death. Lent focuses so much on the death of Jesus but it would be the most sadistic time in the Christian calendar if there was no assurance of his resurrection and for that matter our own.

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### LENT WITHOUT FORGIVING IS A MISSED OPPORTUNITY

Repentance and forgiveness are key demands of Lent, one cannot exist without the other, but they are not an end in themselves, they aim at bringing about reconciliation with God, with others and within oneself; the result of which is peace of the soul.

A true story is told of an incident that took place during the reconciliation process in Rwanda after the genocide. One evening some men came to the door and asked for Katale a 19 year old boy the only child of a widow, they told her that they wanted to ask him some questions. Minutes later she heard gunshots and her son was no more.

When reconciliation process started, some men came to the widow's house without invitation; at once she recognized the man who took away her son. The man introduced himself, he confessed killing the boy for fear that he might report him to the police for the crime he had committed and he asked for forgiveness. "*Would you forgive me? If not report me to the court, I'm ready to die for my sin*" he said. Dumbfounded as she considered her response, the widow saw that forgiving this man could be part of Rwanda's step to reconciliation and healing!

*"Yes I'm prepared to forgive you, this is my gift to you; this is my gift to my country Rwanda. In the church the priest read in the book about Jesus who forgave sinners and if you have sinned in the eyes of God by killing my son, may God forgive you also."*

The widow later described how a great burden was lifted from her heart and from the murderer soul even though it was difficult. She became a happy woman and he went away a reconciled man.

Lenten season demands that we make every effort to forgive and to be reconciled. If you haven't got any feeling in your heart to forgive or to be forgiven, you have the worst of heart trouble. Forgiving is not something you do for someone, it is something you do for yourself. An unforgiven injury like a spider web binds and holds you trapped in feelings of unhappiness all the time.

Jesus spoke of the unconditional mercy of the Father but he also spoke of his conditional forgiveness when he said "*This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart*" (Mtt 18:35).

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**VISITATION REPORT COVENTRY DEANERY 11<sup>TH</sup>  
MARCH 2015 PART ONE**

*Coventry visitations were concluded on Wednesday by the Arch. B. Longley. In the next few weeks, I will bring to you the report that Bp. William gave about those parishes he visited including St. Marys'.*

One of the delights of being an Auxiliary Bishop in this diocese is that each winter you carry out visitations of various parishes. It is tiring but highly enjoyable, as you discover the many different ways in which people live out their faith. The Archbishop carried out two visitations: at St. Thomas More and Our Lady of the Assumption; the Vicar General at St. Elisabeth's, St. Joseph the Worker, and St. Patrick's. I should have carried out the visitations in all of the rest of the parishes. A sudden journey to hospital meant, however that Mgr. Browne carried out the visitations at St. Osburg's and St. John Vianney. What follows concerns the eight parishes which I visited.

The situation of the parishes is very good indeed. There is a good standard of liturgy in every parish and there is the opportunity for various devotions as well. I will return to this when I speak of vocations. There are vibrant groups of altar servers in every parish: these need to be encouraged, so that girls and boys may have that experience of being part of the liturgy and in that way near to the central sacred acts of our faith. There is also a good level of music in many parishes and this is an example of what can be done with, at time, limited resources. I would particularly like to encourage the engagement of young people in providing music for the parish liturgies.

**Youth Ministry**

In almost every parish the situation of young people was mentioned. This is a question which in my experience is taken up at almost every parish visitation. At the same time much can be done within the parishes, not least for teenagers. I have already mentioned the role of altar servers, but other suitable liturgical ministries can be entrusted to young people, after proper training, such as lector or welcoming people as they come to church, and even as ministers of the Eucharist. Parishes should be places where young people can gather and feel welcome. That is not always that easy but we need to remember that we have all been young and even Socrates wrote a famous letter complaining about the table manners of young people!

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**VISITATION REPORT COVENTRY DEANERY 11<sup>TH</sup>  
MARCH 2015 PART TWO**

*Continuation of the report Bp. W. Kenny gave about parish visitation including St. Mary's.*

**Clergy**

“With so many priests and as in so many cities there can be differing practices in the pastoral methods of administering the sacraments. This is not always good, and at its worst means that people play one priest off against another. I would encourage priests therefore, when approached for baptism, first communion, confirmation or marriage by people not from their own parish, always to contact the parish priest of the person's home parish.

**Sacramental Preparation**

The matter of preparation for First Communion and Confirmation was brought up in a number of parishes. There seems to be two concerns. The first is the cooperation between the school and the parish in these matters. They, with other institutions, are part of the one parish community. This means that there is need of close cooperation. It is true that quite a number of people who make up the school community do not always take part in the parish life. This is not ideal but should not mean that they are excluded from the activities of the community which take place in the parish. In one or two places there seems to be the idea that all preparation for sacraments should happen under the aegis of the parish. Schools are an enormous resource for catechetical education and sacramental preparation. I think that this needs to be reflected upon.

The second point that has been raised with me in several places is the so called “passports for faith”. These require that the person preparing for First Communion or Confirmation gets an acknowledgment that they have attended Sunday Mass. That can definitely have a place as part of a complete package of sacramental preparation but cannot be the point on which any decision is made as to whether the person should receive the sacrament or not. I have met during the visitation a number of parents who obviously did not understand what this was about; I have also met parents who cannot read English and would have possibly needed explanations in other languages.

I have already said that the ‘passport’ might be a useful part of emphasising the importance of Sunday Mass, and some parishes may wish to pursue this matter. I would suggest, however, that should it be discovered that a person, preparing for the reception of sacraments, is not attending Mass somewhat regularly, then the least that happens is that the priest, deacon or lay catechist makes at least one and preferably several home visits to find out why and what the attitude of the parents or guardians is to the reception of the sacraments. This would give the opportunity to discover if there is a misunderstanding, and also possibly an opportunity for proper catechesis of the adults involved.” *To be continued.....*

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VISITATION REPORT COVENTRY DEANERY 11<sup>TH</sup>  
MARCH 2015 PART TWO

*Continuation of the report Bp. W. Kenny gave about parish visitation including St. Mary's.*

**Mass Times**

There has been a certain amount of discussion about Mass times in Coventry. This seems to be something which worries the clergy in particular. Only in one parish was this matter taken up with me by lay people. The new times do not seem, from what I can gather, to have caused any drop in Mass attendance across the city, although some are saying that there is a drop in collections, without a corresponding rise in other places. Some people would be looking for some type of Deanery Pastoral Council or some similar body. I think that we must explore together how lay people can really have a role in leadership within the Church at all levels. We need to move away from anything which smacks of tokenism, to real influence and therefore also to real responsibility as well.

**The sick and housebound:** In every parish I have visited some of those who are sick or unable to get to Church. These sisters and brothers lie at the centre of any Parish community. They have time to pray and reflect. They also show to the rest of us the person of the suffering Christ in our midst. We live, unfortunately, in a society which tries to ignore those who are handicapped or who are suffering or which at best believes that all pain and suffering of whatever type can be cured. This often means that people who are chronically sick are marginalised. This must never happen in a Christian community. They must be seen, instead, as being at the centre of the community. The extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist are often carrying out heroic work. We need to see that there are sufficient ministers and also to give them proper support and training; again perhaps something which could be done at a deanery level.

**Conclusion** I said at the beginning, and meant, that this is a very good deanery. The essential spiritual things are in place. I have met many holy people during these months of visitation, and people utterly dedicated to the life of the Church. I have met sick and handicapped people who are in the heart of the Church's life and spiritual life of your parishes. I have met young people not least altar servers filled with enthusiasm for the things of God.

If there is a danger, and I am not saying that this is so, it is that things will stagnate. We always need to move on, and to be trying to get to the top of the next mountain. We are a pilgrim people. We should be learning from what has gone before, but we must look forward. We are not historical museums. I sat a few weeks ago in the quad of one of the Oxford colleges. I sat and watched the tourists overawed by the architecture and history, but I imagine that their way of life is not changed by those visits, even if it is good in itself that people are aware of history. We are not sitting in the quads of Oxford colleges, we are living.

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IF NIGERIA CAN DO THIS WE CAN DO IT  
TOO:

I welcome you again to this column where you can know what is going on in the head of your parish priest. Two weeks before Easter, this column carried the report that Bishop William Kenny gave at the conclusion of deanery visitations.

As Easter was fast approaching so too were the General elections in Nigeria. I remember urging my brothers and sisters from Nigeria to use their mobile phones as instruments for national peace building for Nigeria. I asked you to send as many text messages as possible to encourage the people at home to go out to vote and to accept the outcome of the vote as the true will of the nation. I wish to thank and to congratulate our parishioners from Nigeria who sent as many text messages as possible to encourage their friends back home to go to vote and to accept the results.

The Swahili people of East Africa have a saying "*Vyaelea vimeundwa*" which means "When you see things sparkling in beauty, it is because someone has spent time and energy to make them shine. Well there are many people who coming into the peace and comfort of Europe, instigate violence anarchy and hate among the people back at home such that there is unending suffering among the people. They do this simply because they are not directly affected; after all they are far away in Europe enjoying peace created by others.

The coming of technology in terms of mobile phones, twitter and facebook can be of great benefit in bringing about peace especially in Africa. That text message which you send back home can do much to influence the mentality of the person on the ground. When you send a message calling for peace it makes the recipient to see a fellow countryman in the face of his neighbour who comes from the other part of the country but when you send a message calling for war, it makes him to see a beast in the face of his fellow country man. We all know what happens after that.

I was deeply delighted that President Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian acted "heroically" by peacefully conceding the presidency to his rival, Muhammadu Buhari, a Muslim even before votes were all counted. Could it be perhaps due to his Christian teaching which calls upon us as Christians to be humble in humiliation and to be peacemakers? Looking at all these, I now know what I will do when elections come around. If Nigerians can do it, we can do it too in our country.

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## IT REVEALS THE MYSTERY OF OUR RESURRECTION:

The long days are here again. I walked through the city centre the other day and I noticed that many people have thrown away those long thick jumpers which characterised them during the cold winter. The good news is that the sun is coming closer to us each day that goes by.

As autumn approached last year we were sad to lose the beautiful flowers and greenery that had delighted our eyes. In the eyes of those who do not entertain hope, the trees faced imminent death as they were being reduced to skeletons of bare branches. Now life is back again, barren branches have come back to life, what seemed to be the end of life seems to be its beginning instead. Now, we can hear the song of bird in our land, bumble bees and butterflies will soon come to our gardens and the African swallows are on the way to be with us this summer. Surely apart from the hay fever which many of us suffer from due to much pollen in the air; this is one of the best seasons of the year.

The book of the Song of Songs 2: 10-15 talks about the cheer and excitement that spring brings:

*“See winter is past, the rains are over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the season of glad songs has come and the cooing of the turtledove is heard in our land, the fig tree is forming its first figs and the blossoming vines give out their fragrance. Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that make havoc of the vineyards, for our vineyards are in flower... ”*

For us Christians the changes of seasons reflect the mystery of death and resurrection. Life itself has its season of spring, summer, autumn and winter. It can never be fully lived as a single season. Anyone who thinks that his/her current situation is going to be permanent is deceived. For this reason we must constantly live in hope for something better. It is a mistake to think that when difficulties in life come, that is the end of life, the consequence of this is falling into anxiety and depression. It is not good also to look down on others and boast around when life is at its best for you. Christianity teaches us to be thankful in success and to be humble in humiliation.

Jesus Christ through his resurrection has showed us that death has no power over him. *“Therefore do not let your hearts be troubled trust in God still and trust in me ” Jn. 14: 1* he said.

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## OUR PARISH PRIEST TOLD US WHY HE IS NOT HAPPY

Every priest you see is somebody's son, someone's brother. Every Nun you see is somebody's beloved daughter. Priests and religious come from families and from homes like your own. They are chosen by God from children just like your own. When they felt the desire to become religious, they were not dissuaded by their friends and families instead they were cheered on and supported to follow the calling. It is unimaginable that even pious Catholics do forget that the men and women who are at their service daily as priests and religious come from families, they miss them and miss family gatherings and events like birthdays, funerals etc. I have heard of some people who treat priests and speak about them as if they were the filth of the earth! Some so called good Catholics are also good at this; but there is not a single incident in the history of salvation where God chose a perfect man or woman to fulfil his plan. Not even Jesus made a perfect choice of his apostles even after spending the whole night in prayer (Lk. 6:12-16); Judas the man who betrayed him was among them!

Many people expect to have a 'perfect priest', but I don't think that I will live long enough to see one. What I know is that I have lived long enough to meet priests and religious who needed my prayers and support. Priesthood is a vocation which no one embraces unless he is called by God himself. The dwindling number of priests in England and Wales is being felt in all dioceses. Some priests have to look after a number of parishes and it is not always possible to have Mass in every church every Sunday. The average age of priests in England & Wales is rising alarmingly. There are not enough new priests to replace those who die, retire or leave the active ministry. This situation speaks volumes of what is going on inside the walls of catholic families, just as what is going on in the street reflects on what goes on inside the walls of families in our country.

What do you think about this? How will society survive without the prophetic priestly voice of a priest in our midst? As your priest, some people do ask me whether I'm happy. My answer is always NO I'm not happy the reason is simple; *No one has expressed an interest to take over my office as a priest.* I would feel much happier if there was someone from your family or from this parish who is training for priesthood or religious life because that would assure the continuity of the Lord's ministry given to me. You can become a missionary without leaving your home by supporting a student to train for the priesthood. Yes you can do it, ask me how and I will show you.

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## HE WHO IS NOT DISCIPLINED BY HIS MOTHER WILL BE DISCIPLINED BY THE WORLD

This statement comes from the wisdom of the African people. It is based on real life experience. It is a warning and a wake-up call to parents and guardians to take charge of the discipline of their children. I was in the supermarket the other day and there was this nursery age child who was on a shopping extravaganza. The boy thought that all that was on display was free; whatever he wanted to have he threw it into the shopping trolley. There was commotion and embarrassment at the exit counter, the parents did not have money to pay for the gadgets the boy had picked up for his shopping neither would he accept to leave behind what he considered as his right to take home! The parents were at a loss, they gave back some of the necessary provisions such as foodstuff in order to pay for the boy's gadgets.

Reflecting on this I ask myself who is responsible between the child and parents when it comes to making choices and taking final decisions on what to do and on what is not to be done? When I was growing up my parents used to **deny** me what I **wanted** but they always **gave** me what I **needed**. They took decisions it was my duty as a child to listen and to obey them. What they decided was not a matter of debate whether we the children would accept it or not. But things have changed and in my view they have changed for the worst. It is the children who tell parents what they have to do! In the past children ate whatever food mum put at the table, these days children are asked what they want to eat. The consequences are that parents have to spend money beyond their means to satisfy the demands of children who are not properly trained to live within the limits of their needs and not of their wants. How much have you prepared your children to live within their means and how are you teaching them to live within their needs not their wants?

Some older persons like me notice with horror how crime is becoming younger and younger. These days children commit crimes which people of my generation would not think of! There must be something wrong somewhere in the fabric of our families and in the society. Fortunately no child is born a criminal or with criminal attitude; these are inclinations which they acquire as they interact with their parents, peers and the media. How are you preparing your children to resist radicalization? It is sad to say that when the world catches up with someone who was not well disciplined by his parents, it is not so sympathetic. Mob justice and imprisonment of juveniles are very common. Remember, a person who is not disciplined by the mother will be disciplined by the world and it will be very painful for both.

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## 'STEAL' THIS BEHAVIOUR AND TAKE IT HOME:

During the elections of 2004 I spent the whole day seated in the compound where polling exercise was taking place. I was looking for something to "steal" from British political process; I was convinced that a polling day would give me an opportunity. I wanted to see British democratic exercise in practice. In many developing countries especially in Africa, election process and the Election Day is the curse for the people; the whole process is noisy and often violent. It may not be a surprise that even as you proceed to cast your ballot, a candidate might be nearby to ask you to give him/her that vote! The counting of the ballots is a tug of war and when the results are declared no candidate will concede defeat. Why should any competitor enter into contest if he/she does not believe that there must be winners and losers? What the Western culture takes as democracy, has in many countries around the world proved to be the curse for the people.

Western democracy is good, as it gives opportunity to different people to inject new ideas into the running of the country. It gives power to the people to choose the leader whose policies they are happy with to govern them, if they are not; they have the power to bring him down next time. It is based on policy not on a person.

Last Thursday we had polling exercise in this country. I understand that 50 million people registered to vote. During the campaigns not a single violent incident was reported. On polling day the longest time you could spend casting your vote was no more than 7 minutes. When the results were announced winners and losers hugged and congratulated each other. No one died or lost property because of elections. Schools were open; in fact children were in classes as polling took place next door! The voters never voted for the person but for the policies that the leader promised to implement. The country is back to business!

In our parish here a good number of us come from countries where democracy is non-existent. Some of you are in this country because you tried to initiate democratic values in your countries but were persecuted; some people also live in this country yet they continue to fuel violence and animosity at home such that every effort to build democratic structures are frustrated. That is how they survive. If you really love your country of birth I urge you to **steal the electoral process** from the British; take it home, teach it to the people, it will give them power.

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## IT IS THE QUALIFICATION OF BEING A TRUE CHRISTIAN:

Have you ever heard someone saying in protest "I'm out of it"? If not, then probably you have come across Christians who either walk out of the parish or even choose to leave the Church because they could either not agree with the priest or with someone in the Church. Such people are 'seasonal Christians' who feel truly Christians as long as nothing has pricked them.

The community of Jesus had a lot of problems. Jesus knew for example that someone among the twelve men he had chosen would betray him; Peter would deny him and the rest would flee in fear leaving him alone! The best he could do was to ask them to remain united, he personally prayed for this.

This week we celebrated the Feast of Mathias the man who was chosen by the Apostles to take over the office of apostle which Judas Iscariot abandoned. The criterion was simple and straight forward:

*"We must choose someone who has been **with us** the whole time that the Lord Jesus was travelling round **with us**, someone who was **with us** right from the time when John was baptising until the day when he was taken up **from us** and he can act **with us** as a witness to his resurrection"(Acts 1:21)*

Take note of how many times the words '**with us**' are emphasised. The apostles were not looking for someone who had been on and off in his being a disciple. They were not looking for someone who followed Jesus as when it was convenient, or when the time suited him/her. Instead they were looking for someone who had remained united with Jesus and with the community in all circumstances.

This criterion should lead us to examine ourselves. Do we believe in God and in Jesus because things are going on well? Do we stand by the Church at all times or we abandon her when life gets difficult? Many people have downgraded their active participation in the Church to Christmas, weddings and funerals; apart from that they are literally dormant and non-existent! The answer is simple; 'seasonal Christians' cannot make good witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Let us do our best to follow Him and to be members of the church at all times, then we shall qualify to be witnesses to the resurrection.

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## IF IT MAKES SENSE LET US SUPPORT IT:

Last Monday Mr Tony Smith and I spent the day packing and sealing boxes containing spiritual and academic books which were purchased for the Apostles of Jesus Seminary in Nairobi for the training of priests. The money came from the Crib donations you gave during Christmas time. It was a very joyful moment to see twelve boxes full of books being dispatched to Ipswich from where they will be placed in a large container heading for the Kenyan port of Mombasa. I wish to thank all of you who visited the Crib at Christmas and for the donations there given.

In my talks I have often encouraged you to support seminaries. Well, a good priest can only come from a good seminary with solid formation. I had the chance to teach in the seminaries when I was in Africa. First in 1988 I taught in a Seminary of our Order at Uruthuru in the Diocese of Meru in Kenya. In 1993, I was sent to teach in the Seminary in Uganda in the Diocese of Moroto and in 1995 I was posted to teach in the Major Seminary of the Institute at Langata in Nairobi Kenya. I taught there for 10 years. As a trainer of men called to the priesthood I came to realise how important a book is to a man training to become a priest. A priest ought not to have some knowledge **but** a wide knowledge about everything. No one would wish to have a mediocre formed professional. This applies to our priests too.

As Catholics when we place a book on the shelves of a seminary library we equip our future priests for their future ministry.

Do not be deceived to think that a Catholic priest is '*second hand*' in the community. What I know is that the catholic priest is one of the most reliable men you can find around. I know for example of many people who were baptised in the Catholic Church but they go to '*pub-based evangelical churches*' because they are physically entertaining and less demanding; it all depends on the pastor. When such people come to real issues that need an authoritative endorsement: (immigration papers, certification of identity etc.), they don't go to their pastors, instead they go to the Catholic priest. Catholic priesthood is not a matter of choice; it is a calling from God. We should be proud that our Church has men in whom society has invested so much trust.

At present our parish is served by a missionary priest, this should remind us that we do not know where from our next priest will come. Therefore let us support such a good cause in the church, for the good of the expansion of God's reign among us.

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**"IT DOES NOT BECOME RIGHT BECAUSE THE MAJORITY LIKE OR DO IT."**

There is an old Latin saying "*Vox Populi Vox Dei*" (the voice of the people is a voice of God). In some cases this can be true but it will be a mistake to think that this is always the case.

Some two thousand years ago, two prisoners stood on the balcony before a large crowd of people. The governor asked the angry crowd to make choice of the man they wanted to walk free and the other condemned to death. One prisoner was a confessed terrorist, a notorious robber with a lot of blood on his hands. The other one was a good man, his message was love and peace he had fed the hungry, forgiven and reconciled sinners. He had healed the sick and raised the dead some of whom were among the crowd. "Who would you like me to set free for you?" the governor asked. The majority shouted back, free the robber, we want the terrorist go free!

The governor was puzzled, but why, what has the man you want hanged done; I certainly find no case against him! But the crowd was not impressed. Following democratic principles, the majority had spoken, the majority had it. The man of terror was set free and the man who preached love and peace was hanged!

The story might sound familiar it is talking about Jesus and Barabbas. It invites us Christians to have a second thought when it comes to making serious decisions. 'Rushed decisions' and 'protest voting' will have adverse effects on our life and on Christian teaching; but it will already be too late to change the outcome. It is good to keep this carefully in mind that our faith is not based on whether the majority believe it or not. Something does not become good because the majority like it. Therefore in any voting simply insisting on numbers and percentages does not mean that something is right even when it is wrong. It is in such cases that we Catholics are called to be reliable, dependable and faithful.

Just the other day St. Paul addressing the elders of Ephesus warned them: "*Even from your own ranks there will be men coming forward with a mockery of the truth on their lips to induce the disciples to follow them. So be on your guard*" Acts 20:30. Do not be surprised when evil becomes a fashion. A million people may vote overwhelmingly for something but that does not make it right when it is wrong. Be on your guard against the so called majority opinion.

**KNOW THAT I'M WITH YOU ALWAYS**

The liturgical year of the church ends with these words of Jesus "*Know that I'm with you always, yes even to the end of time.*" Presence can be assuring but it can also be frightening. If you have a terminally sick patient, the presence of someone with you is very assuring; it does not matter whether the person is rich or poor, great or small, young or old, all that matters is that someone is with you. But there are cases where the presence of someone can be frightening indeed. Try to think of the burglar downstairs in the middle of the night, an armed opponent laying an ambush or a stalker trailing you; the presence of such a person is dreadful.

When Jesus promised that he would be with us his followers, he did not tell us in which form his presence would be felt, but his presence to us in the Eucharist is reassuring indeed. The three cardinal virtues of Faith Hope and Love help us to understand this. When something takes place there is something or someone behind it. Whatever happens has a cause and nothing occurs except for a reason. Everything has a purpose and nothing happens to us without meaning no matter how good or painful it may be.

Persons whose minds are less inclined to believe in God see good things coming their way as a result of their hard work and they see bad things as blind destiny. The Christian mind does not look at things that way, whatever we are or have are due to God's providence and holy will. Our intimacy with Jesus in the Eucharist should help us as Christians to grow in knowing how to read the language of God.

The other week some of our children from Polish catholic tradition received their First Holy Communion. The demanding preparation and the all-engaging celebration of the event reminded me of the greatness of being a Christian and a member of the Catholic Church. For me the event was God sent to remind me (and you too) never to take lightly what seem to the unbeliever as accidents.

Surely it was not necessary that Jesus should save us through the incarnation, his dreadful death on the cross and through his resurrection which bore no eye witnesses. Jesus knew that our mind would never contain God's doing in our life that is why He just told us: "*know that I'm with you always, yes even to the end of time*" Mt: 28:20. All we need is never to despair because someone is with us all the time, his name is Jesus.

## THE HUGE CRUCIFIX IN THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY'S

I can remember the words of Cardinal Vincent Nichols when he appointed me your priest; *"the parish where I'm sending you, he said; has a big crucifix above the altar, as you celebrate the Mass look at it and meditate on its implication in your ministry."* There is no doubt that upon entering our parish church the image of the crucifix captures the eye. This crucifix came from Spain. Since it was donated to this church many eyes have looked at it in petition, supplication and in veneration. The crucifix conveys a message written in large letters namely God's love.

Almost all Christian churches use the cross as a symbol of salvation but some churches have taken away the image of the crucified Christ leaving the cross empty. They argue that Jesus is risen he is no longer the crucified.

The Catholic Church has without doubt the image of the crucified Christ on the cross. The reason is simple; we were not saved by the wood of the cross but by the one who hang on it. Justification of an empty cross is ridiculous and the theological explanations given to defend it are devoid of the true events on Calvary more than 2000 years ago.

St. Paul writing to the Corinthians said: *As for me brothers, when I came to you, it was not with any show of oratory or philosophy....During my stay with you the only knowledge I claimed to have was about Jesus and only about him as the crucified Christ" 1Cor.2:12. And so while the Jews demand miracles and the Greeks look for wisdom here we are preaching a crucified Christ; to the Jews an obstacle that they cannot get over, to the Greeks madness but to those who have been called a Christ who is the power and wisdom of God" 1Cor. 22-24.*

The first Christians knew Jesus was risen yet they continued to address him as "crucified." The Catholic Church has no plan to put icing on Christian beliefs in order to make it acceptable, the thorn crowned head of Jesus, the sacred five wounds, the precious blood are retained on catholic crucifix. The crucifix is not jewellery; it is a symbol of salvation. Unless it is dear to us we are in the presence of a danger signal every time we approach it. Something is wrong with our religion if an empty cross occupies our life. But our faith is greatly strengthened and our religion is made credible if the crucifix (cross and him who hang on it- Jesus) have a definite place in our daily life and devotion. Do not water down your faith for the convenience of the unbelievers.

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## THE NIGHT I SPENT IN PRISON

Not long ago I met someone who was afraid because many events taking place in his life. *"I don't want things to happen in my life"* he said. Well when things happen to us, they become part of our history; it is from such events that we form a character. This coming Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June will be my ordination anniversary to the priesthood. By God's grace I will soon start to see my silver jubilee of ordination on the horizon. Forming a man to become a Catholic priest takes many years, in my case **6** years O' and A' Level, **1** year of Orientation, **3** years of first degree in Philosophy, **2** years of Novitiate, **4** years of first degree in Theology, **1** year of pastoral work. These years are just preliminaries to ordination before a candidate embarks on specialised areas of study. Why should the formation of a Catholic priest take so long? It is because Catholic priesthood is not a matter of memorising few verses of the bible but it involves a full understanding of the mystery of salvation, communicating it and living it.

If you are afraid of things happening in your life, then you are afraid of history and if you are afraid of history, you are afraid of existence. Just listen to this, having received an admission to the seminary a small boy of 13 proudly left his bedridden mother and travelled from the South of Uganda to the North where the seminary was situated in Karamoja. I was 13; it was the first time that I had put on a pair of trousers!

The war of Idi Amin had just ended, the country infrastructure was gone. We reached Soroti a town in Eastern Uganda about 11:00pm in the night; by then I was the only passenger still on the bus. Soroti town was the final destination for the bus but I was 115 miles away from my destination. The whole town was in darkness. The bus driver took me to Soroti Police Station since to him I looked like an unaccompanied child.

At the Police station the officers on duty that night were using a candle; they asked me where I was coming from and where I was going. *'I come from Masaka Diocese and I'm going to Moroto Seminary to train and become a priest'*, I replied. As I spoke these words, a big moth crash-landed over the candle and the flame went out. We were engulfed in darkness! One police officer picked me up by the hand and led me into a Police cell where I was locked up for the night. In the morning I noticed that it was an empty cell that night since I could see prisoners locked up beside and opposite my cell. The officers examined me again and they were kind to let me continue my 115 miles. Looking back at this I feel so proud because it is part of my history to the priesthood. **If you don't want things to happen in your life, think twice.**

## CATCH UP BEFORE YOU ARE SHELVED OFF

Did you know that Fr. Jimmy your parish priest is on *WhatsApp*? Well many of you might not know what animal I'm talking about. Just few days ago during choir practice on Friday the choirmaster was talking about *WhatsApp*. He told us that he was going to send different tunes to us via *WhatsApp*; it was the duty of each member to master their tune so that by Sunday the choir would be in action. Young people were comfortable with the language but Fr. Jimmy was lost; so I asked the choir master 'what is *WhatsApp*'? Everybody was surprised at my backwardness, how can you be a parish priest of the 21<sup>st</sup> century without knowing what '*WhatsApp* is' one asked! 'Where did you pass to come into the country' asked another!

*WhatsApp* is an instant messaging application for smartphones that operates under a subscription business model. It uses the internet to send text messages, images, video and audio media messages. In Jan 2015, *WhatsApp* was the most globally popular messaging application with more than 600 million active users. In April 2015, *WhatsApp* reached 800 million users. It was acquired by Facebook on Feb. 19, 2014, for approx. US\$22 billion. Its base is in Mountain View, California.

Instant communication has become so advanced that young people have literally 'pushed' people of my generation and above to museums. If you do not know how to use the computer, smart phones, Facebook *WhatsApp* and so many gadgets brought about by our digital age, you are good for nothing they say! To avoid this try to catch up. It is no longer enough to sit back and talk about those good old days when people knew their neighbours opposite the street. People still know their neighbours and communicate with them but through new and advanced means. Neighbourhood is no longer proximity but sharing of interest.

St. Mary's parish is prepared for the digital transformation. It is amazing to know that many people around the world join us live for Holy Mass every Sunday through the internet. Technology has made them to become part of our congregation at Mass without being here. It is good to catch up with every tool which can promote the proclamation of the gospel. Once the parish priest realised that young people had put him in one of the museum shelves since he did not know what "*WhatsApp* is, he went and got connected. Be sure no gossip in the parish goes by unnoticed.

## ST. OSBURG'S PARISH

The following Statement has appeared in the Parish newsletter of St. Osburgs this weekend which I would request you to place in your prayers.

*The Archbishop has appointed the Apostles of Jesus Missionaries to the Parish of St Osburgs. They already serve at SS Mary & Benedict and St Elizabeth. They have requested their superiors to send three more priests to our Diocese. Once more there will be a Religious Community looking after St Osburgs Parish. The Benedictine Monks ministered here from 1807 until 1991. After the War the house was built as a Priory for the Religious Community. Father Jimmy Lutwama, who is the superior of the Apostles of Jesus Missionaries in England and Wales will be responsible for the parish. He will be assisted by Fr Moses Pitya, his assistant zone superior. They intend to retain and build on the good traditions in the parish. Father Michael Stack will be moving to live in the Presbytery at St Anne's, which is nearer to the Hospital. He will continue with his full time, and much appreciated, ministry as Catholic Chaplain to The University Hospital."*

This announcement has taken me by surprise but it reminds us of the reasons why we need to support the promotion of vocations and the formation of priests. Being a priest and a missionary myself, I have some wider knowledge of what is going on in the world as far as evangelization is concerned. I'm pleased that many of you are making some initiatives (*making and buying cakes, organising charity dance, making charity walk, support the formation of a missionary priest box*) to support the formation of a missionary priest program. We need to wake up to the reality of life, we need to avoid the catastrophe of famine, the devastation of hunger; hunger not of bread, thirst not of water but of hearing the word of God (Amos 8:11).

The new responsibilities entrusted to me and to Fr. Moses will call for some changes in the parishes we are already ministering to. As missionaries we know the cost of establishing a parish but we know the painful consequences of closing a parish on the souls of the faithful. We shall endeavour to avoid that. It is our desire that each parish under our pastoral care retains its identity and that the rich traditions of each parish are preserved. I turn to you my parishioners to support me in the upkeep of St. Osburgs until that parish gets its own resident priests.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF A NAME:

Candidates to the Sacrament of Confirmation are busy trying to find a name for their Confirmation which will take place on 1<sup>st</sup> October. A child returning home to break the news last week to her parents that she has been enrolled for the Sacrament asked them if they could help her to find a suitable name of a saint whose life virtues she could try to practice in her own life. The child was surprised at the names that the parents were suggesting: *Tescos*, *Fish and Chips*, *Sunday Roast* among others. The reason why her parents were choosing these names was because they used to shop at Tescos, every Friday the family had fish and chips from the chippy down the street and every Sunday granddad prepared the Sunday roast. The child was not convinced that such could be suitable names to choose for confirmation so she decided to talk to me about it. This reminded me of a certain place where I was conducting a baptism when I asked the parents and godparents the name they had given the child, the mother replied "*Blue Band!*" Well *Blue Band* in that country was a kind of butter spread. She was choosing the name because it sounded nice.

In our Christian life names are significant and they have a variety of functions. In the Bible a name could record some aspects of a person's birth. Moses was given his name because his mother drew him out of a river (Ex. 2:10). Moses literally means "to draw out." Biblical names sometimes expressed the parents' reaction to the birth of their child: Isaac (Gen. 21:6) which means "laughter", and Abimelech (Judg. 8:31) means "my father is king." Biblical names were sometimes used to secure family ties. When John the Baptist was born, he was nearly given the name of his dad Zachariah (Lk 1:59). Names were used to indicate a person's purpose in the world, and the greatest example of this type of naming is Jesus.

Try to think over the name that you choose for your child because a name bears the summary of someone's life program. It will enormously influence behavior too. Some children who attend our Catholic school come from non-practicing Christian families, no wonder they get upset when they turn to their parents for guidance only to discover that they are of no help! If you as a parent are to command authority in the heart of your child, try to be knowledgeable of some key elements of your faith. As our candidates to Confirmation prepare for the sacrament, I'm grateful to our RE teachers who are assisting them to choose meaningful and relevant names to their Christian profession of faith.

### IF ONLY YOU KNEW YOUR DUTY:

These days it is hard to listen to the radio or to watch the TV without hearing the word "**rights**" mentioned. We have "*civil rights*", "*equal rights*", "*women's rights*", "*human rights*", and even "*animal rights*". Everyone is demanding to have his or her rights. This is a good idea after all we are born to be free. Demanding for one's rights is not new; thanks to civil and human rights activists down the ages for the freedom we enjoy. I wonder how we would be today if slavery and colonialism were not defeated!

It is unfortunate that when people demand for their rights, they hardly think or speak of their duties and responsibility. Speaking with someone recently, he reminded me of *his right* to obtain vacancies for his three children in our Catholic School at the beginning of next term. I told him that the school is sponsored by the Catholic Church specifically by the parish of St. Mary's; was there any way he could support the church or the parish in its work? "*I'm lapsed from the church, I hate the church, I don't go to Church on Sunday, why should I go for church fundraising events?*" he grumbled. It was his right, but NOT his duty! Next time when you speak to someone about your rights speak to him or to her about your duties first, you will get your rights first hand.

Coming a bit closer home we all feel that we have the right to have a clean church, to have running water in the bathrooms and to pray in an environment that promotes personal reflection and conversation with God. But few of us know that it is their duty to turn off the taps, to collect their tissues from the church or to maintain silence for others who are in prayer. Your rights go hand in hand with your duties; there can be no separation of the two. Every baptized has rights in the church, how many understand and do their duties! Maybe we look at the priest or to the bishops. Try to ask yourself what is my responsibility in the church as a baptized and in the parish as a member? Do you feel the duty to contribute to the work of the church or of the parish? I don't mean just giving money but being involved. Our duty in the church might be compared to a clock: in order for a clock to keep good time each part, however small, must do its work and do it well. If one part stops working, it will slow the clock down or stop it altogether. Each part must do its work properly. This illustrates why each member of the parish ought to be active and to get involved in something. It is not good to expect others to provide services and we call it **our right** even without the willingness to do our duty. Just as faith without good works is dead, so demand for Rights without recognizing and doing ones' duty is dead too.

IF THEY DON'T FEAR ANYTHING IT IS  
BECAUSE.....

One of the parents of the children from our school was telling me how stressful it is to keep children during holiday time. Why? I asked then she went on to lament how children of these days have no fear or self-restraint; it is better the children in Africa, they listen and they respect their parents.

When I returned home, I reflected on my own childhood and I asked myself 'how did our parents put in us the morality and behavior that makes us respectable persons today'?

Children are the most trustful people you will ever come across, they believe almost everything that their parents tell them. There are some interesting lessons that African parents tell their children in order to help them to maintain a certain behavior, to keep away from danger or to make them develop a character. Here are some examples:

In order to make children listen to their parents it was said that a child who notoriously did not listen to the parents will have the ears grow so big like of a rabbit and sag like the ears of sheep.

Africans used three stones to cook their food. They were to be kept clean. Not knowing whether a stone was hot or not, sitting on one could be dangerous; to prevent children doing so it was said that a mothers breasts would immediately disappear and the baby being breastfed die!

Children were taught to preserve the environment and to protect nature; for example to frighten them from destroying bird nests, breaking bird eggs or eating them it was said that a child who did so will have feathers grow inside his/her stomach.

In all African cultures it is forbidden for a father in law to have sexual relationship with the daughter in law the same applied to the mother in law with son in law. If someone went against that principle it was said that the body would get crippled and shake. People with Parkinson disease would be suspected of violating their in-laws. It was ignorance of course. Taboos protected our society and preserved the natural world that many tourists rush to enjoy. Taboos too defined the consequences of every behavior. It is amazing that people whose cultures we watch on the television as less educated, they have greater respect of persons and solidarity than you can imagine. If you think that your children are not afraid of anything may be you as a parent has never warned them of the consequences of their bad behavior. He who is not taught by his mother will be taught by the world.

I WISH I WAS A MOTHER:

When I was a novice the first 30 minutes of class everyday were spent reading the lives of saints. At the end of the week, novices took turns to narrate to the others the life of the saint they have read about. I enjoyed the story of St. John Vianney, patron of Parish Priests (1786-1859) whose memory of sanctity will be celebrated on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> Aug.

John Vianney was a religious personality of unusual force. From this man there emanated an influence which cannot be overlooked and the results of which cannot be contested. Where did the man get all this? It was from **his mother** who was a woman of great piety that she led him into the way of religion at an early age. He was a good-natured boy. He once said:

*"I owe a debt to my mother! Virtues go easily from mothers into the hearts of their children, who willingly do what they see a mother doing. When I was young, I did not know evil. I was first acquainted with it in the confessional, from the mouths of sinners."*

Try to look back and see, none of us here learned the art of self-discipline, respect of self and of others from the classrooms and lecture halls. It all started with the humble lessons of a mother either as we sat on her laps or as we saw her devotedly preparing meals in the kitchen. A mother is the most influential teacher in the life of a child, therefore when St. John Vianney says that he owes a debt to his mother, it is so great a challenge to every mother to examine herself to see whether their children could speak the same about them.

This weekend Fr. David Burke is with us to celebrate his Mass of thanksgiving to God for the gift of his ordination. I'm sure that his parents played a great part in his vocation especially as they encouraged him to serve Mass here and made sure that he was on time to carry out that ministry. A vocation cannot grow where good example is lacking.

Going back to Fr. John Vianney he achieved as parish priest of Ars, something which many priests would like to have but which is scarcely granted to any. He brought sanctity in the life of his people. When a priest attacks chronic spiritual disorders and popular vices, he attracts opposition. But if he is determined not to lose his soul, as soon as any disorder arises in the parish, he must trample underfoot all human considerations, or any fear of contempt and hatred.

God has given unimaginable authority to a mother; she is the only teacher who without pen and paper wields teaching authority unparalleled on earth. How I wish I was a mother.

WILL RAZOR MOUNTED BARBED FENCES  
SOLVE THE CRISIS?

I was following the refugee crisis at Calais and listening to the stories as they were being developed by the media. It is disturbing to see what is going on. It is difficult to know what has triggered such massive movement of people! The solution to this is not in building greater razor mounted barbed wire defenses along our borders but in solving the root causes of what makes people to painfully leave their homeland for unknown destinations!

Experience has taught me that whatever we do no matter how small; can become the reason why people have to immigrate. Take an example in Zimbabwe recently a famous and well-studied lion named Cecil was killed by a rich American trophy hunter. He wanted to have a mummified head of the famous lion hanged on the wall in his visitors lounge. I'm sure many people in Zimbabwe loved their lion and protected it. As scientists and zoologists visited Zimbabwe to study the pride, Cecil was a source of income that sustained the local community. Now that Cecil has been killed, don't be surprised if the people who depended on him turn up on our borders in search of survival.

It is summer time millions of rich people travel all over the globe to enjoy holidays. Their behavior on beaches, in animal parks or in the cities they visit can eventually make people either to stay or to immigrate. Just try to imagine how many plastic bottles or shopping bags are carried abroad by holiday makers? How many are disposed of keeping the environment in mind and how many are brought back? Most of them are dumped there. If holiday makers do not take care of the environment and destroy it by pollution, the poor people whose environment is destroyed will move to find new places for survival!

Whatever you do in life is like throwing a stone in a pond of stagnant water; ripples (waves) develop and the more they expand the more the whole pond is disturbed. Sometimes world leaders and powerful nations create unjust economic and political structures to serve their selfish motives without keeping in mind how such behavior will affect the people on the receiving end. Jesus Christ demands from us that we do not do to others what we would not want others to do to us (Lk 6:31). We should always be sensitive to the impact that our words and actions will bring in the life of others first (Sir. 31:15) If a farmer is offered good price for his produce he will think of

producing more other than going to Europe. But if he is given almost nothing for his produce he will think that by making risky journeys to Europe he might make ends meet. That is how Calais is formed and indeed it is here to stay.

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WHEN YOU MEET A PRIEST TAKE HIM AS  
GOD'S GIFT TO YOU:

Sometime back I mentioned to you how embarrassed I was in the company of young people. They were talking about something that sounded new to me but they seemed to be readily at home with it. It was "**WhatsApp**". I know that many of us still do not know what it is. Well, I tried to know what it is and I made sure that I got connected. Through that internet facility, someone sent to me an interesting message about a priest. It was interesting and reflecting on the lives of many priests I have come to know, I came to discover that the Catholic priest is the only person who does not possess his own life or its activities it is all meant **for others**. This is what she wrote:

*"You the priests are the image and the likeness of God. With you the morning awakens with the call to rise, **not for you but always for others***

*God handpicked you from a myriad of souls; moulded you since you were conceived to prepare you for a journey, **not for you but always for others.***

*God blessed you with wisdom to use, to give form to his plans and to love to carry them out, **not for you but always for others.***

*Mary the Mother of Jesus walks with you, guiding and loving you. For her you are a Christ **not for you but always for others.***

*You hold the body of Christ, you embrace his name and by your mouth you proclaim it **not for you but always for others.***

*By sacred ordination you are consecrated you are a father and a counsellor, **not for you but always for others.***

*What value has the life and sacrifices of a Catholic priest if it is **not meant for others** and indeed what does a catholic priest possess which is **not for him but always for others?***

When I read this I felt I should share it with you too. Please pray for all the priests. I also pray that as a Christian you may learn to dedicate your life in service of others. What profit does a man get to possess the whole world in service of his ego?

AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE!

This Sunday at St. Mary's parish Vincent and Anne Lane are celebrating 60 years of their marriage. They got married at St. Marys in 1955. It will be an emotional experience not for the couple but for myself as the celebrant of the Mass because of the challenges it puts before us all. Wow how did they do it?

Every journey starts with the first step but not all journeys are completed by those who set to walk them! When someone walks steadily we are not only filled with admiration but with a desire that we too can make it.

These days many of us are struggling in our vocations. Thanks to God that we have to struggle otherwise how could we prove that what we stand for is worth the effort? If something does not cost you anything, it has no value. I thank God for those who passionately work for perseverance. Looking at Vincent and Anne after 60 years of marriage I'm encouraged that I as a priest can also remain faithful in my vocation. What about you?

In the past, our forefathers were always very careful to behave in a way that would edify the young; whatever would not meet that criteria was seen as scandal. These days it is not the case, many bad behaviours, including swearing, lack of respect by children are learned more from home than from peers. In certain cases good examples from the elders are not forth coming as in the past, but you and I must be careful never to leave a bad name or a bad example when we are gone. The Bible tells a story of Eleazar a teacher of the Law and a man already advanced in years who was advised that he would escape being martyred if he only "pretended" to break the Law of God. He refused because such pretence would lead astray the young who would suppose that Eleazar at the age of ninety had conformed to the pagan way of life and be led astray on his account. (2Macc 6:18-31).

I don't know how careful you are to behave in a way that does not lead the young astray. Are you not afraid to scandalise your children, your workmates, or your fellow parishioners?

The 60 years of marriage between Vincent and Anne give the young that feeling of confidence that marriage works, that fidelity is possible and above all they teach us the way of truth and love will always win.

If Vincent and Anne can persevere in marriage for 60 years, I too can be a priest even for a longer time. We have been given an example, a good example. One candle is enough for us not to stumble in the darkness. Congratulations Anne and Vincent Lane.

### DO SUCH EVENTS SAY ANYTHING TO ME?

There are events which take place that leave us wondering and to which we cannot have explanation. Whenever such things happen people react in different ways. I remember one man who to justify his atheism said: "If God was there, where was he when 9/11 happened? Where was he when the Asian tsunami took place"? Well if you believe in God and you come across such people you will find yourself at a loss because we are such tiny creatures to know the mind of the creator.

When a tragic event takes place or when chance strikes our balances, it is not enough to count ourselves lucky, instead we should realise how God is protecting and taking care of every moment of our life. God has a plan for each one; we depend on Him no matter how great and powerful we might feel; it is all God's plan. To realise that we need God is God's gift. It gives us the anchor to base on our patience and to wait in hope.

The other day a vintage aircraft fell from the sky during an air show at Shoreham killing 11 people on the ground. The victims had nothing to do with the aircraft or with the show; they were just motorists going on their travels just to find themselves in a ball of fire that robbed them of their life. Were they unlucky? Were they not wise? Were they in a wrong place at a wrong time? Was it the pilot's fault or the organisers of the show? Had they taken a wrong road against warning by some friends? No one can really have a definite answer to this tragedy!

Our Lord Jesus Christ told us to be on the stand-by because the Master comes at an hour we do not expect. If the victims of this disaster knew that they were going to be engulfed in a fireball from the sky, may be they would not have taken that road. Therefore when our Christian faith tells us to be prepared at all time, it is speaking of something whose practical examples we have.

"*Cleverness*" is not one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit but "*Wisdom*" is. For the '*clever*' people of this world, good or bad events which take place are blind chances leading to nowhere. For those who believe in God and in Jesus these events invite and educate us to be wise by constant fidelity to God. Every step you make is a step into eternity and the final step will bring you into the presence of God. It taught me some good lesson.

### I'M SURE EITHER YOU OR YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO CAN HELP

Many years ago my mother set off to teach us her children the reasons for each part of our bodies. Her lesson was prompted by her observation that either we were not using those parts to make the best of ourselves or we were using them for wrong reasons. She explained for example why we have two ears, two eyes, two legs and hands. She also told us why we have one mouth. She used to say that whatever we have and whatever we are, is loaned to us by God who will demand an account of how well we have used these gifts.

As a priest, I have been privileged to stand in front of people and look into their faces. What a great resource that the Church has for the building up of the kingdom of God! If Christians were to put their natural and acquired gifts to do some service in the Church! But we have to admit that the church in general and our parish in particular is in great need of people who can use the gifts 'loaned to them' by God (to use the language of my mother) for the building up of his kingdom. Each parish has people with particular experience such that if that expertise was put to the community, it could literally change the welfare of the parish in so many ways.

We Missionaries of the Apostles of Jesus our training impels us to rely heavily on the goodwill of our people. Therefore whatever little someone can do is what makes a mission fruitful. Let us ask ourselves "what natural gift or what acquired abilities do I have that I'm not putting to use to build up the Church?"

The other day I was looking at the gutters and running down pipes of St Osburgs presbytery; they are blocked and burst. A friend told me that scaffolding alone to fix the gutter will cost no less than £7000.00. I almost collapsed to the ground. But I know that some of you my people are in the scaffolding trade or you know a friend who can help us to fix the gutters. Being in scaffolding trade or knowing someone who can help us are all gifts God has given to you to benefit the church. Let us be practical we have a large family we belong to, that family is our parish family.

DO NOT BASE YOUR FAITH ON PUBLIC OPINION:

In the course of the week I made a pilgrimage to Harvington Hall in Worcester where I spent an hour or so in prayer. Harvington Hall is one of the famous places where Catholic families hid their catholic priests at the time of the persecution of Catholics in this country. I'm sure some of us have been to Harvington for diocesan annual pilgrimage but only few have entered the hall itself. If you have never entered the building itself where priests hid, you might not get the true picture of the faith of Catholics in this country which led them to take such great risks to save a priest from being hanged drawn and quartered! The crime was being a catholic priest!

Every time I go to Harvington, I get more converted to Catholicism, my vocation becomes clearer. Each generation of Christians lives in a particular time to respond to a particular need in the Church. When you think about this, then you come to realise that there is a mission we are here to fulfil given to us by God. We cannot assign our mission to the generations to come.

The here and now were important in the life of Jesus. When he taught his disciples the prayer the Our Father he did not teach them to ask for tomorrow's bread but today's (Matt 6:11) and when he sent out the 72 disciples he told them to **start off now** Lk10:3. Further more when a potential recruit asked him to go and say goodbye to his parents, he told him "let the dead bury their dead, your work is to go now" (Lk. 9:60)

It is important to have a sense of urgency in our conduct in order to fulfil our duty as Christians and members of a parish community. People who work on a "*business as usual*" principle are likely to accomplish very little. Each member of the parish should realise that not much can take place no matter how good and worthwhile it may be unless everybody becomes part of it.

To be a Christian involves taking risks and not to be afraid of what others will say. Those people whose actions are based on public opinion cannot spontaneously do the right thing. Public opinion is not always right. In our own time, public opinion seems to have little regard of Christ's teaching and Christian behaviour. The catholic families which hid priests during persecutions acted against public mentality and they were right. The people who demanded the crucifixion of Jesus followed the public opinion and they were wrong. That is why I would say do not base your faith on public opinion.

THIS BEHAVIOUR IN CHURCH IS NOT GOOD:

Few years ago, I made a pilgrimage to the Holy land with priests and seminarians of the diocese. One of the prayerful moments we had, was to walk the Way of the Cross the Via Dolorosa as it is commonly known. Some thoughts came to my mind as I reflected on what must have happened to Jesus as he walked to his death on Calvary. The Sixth Station of the Cross speaks about Veronica a woman who wiped the face of Jesus. She saw the beautiful face of an innocent man condemned to death that she risked being pushed over by the soldiers to clean his face. Yes the face of the Lord was dirty.

The church this building where we have gathered to pray can be compared to the face of Jesus. There are somethings which we should not do here. It is not right that for whatever reason someone after using tissues either for self or for the baby should leave them in the pews or on the floor. It is not right that gum is chewed during Mass. How unfortunate that chewing gum is found spat on the carpets, or under the pews or on the floor of our church recently restored! Yes this is how the face of the Lord is treated these days.

There are some parents who come to church with packets of crisps, cakes and biscuits to feed the children during Mass. By the time the Mass finishes the whole area is soiled by crumbs of crisps. This is not right. No one is convinced except those parents that within that one hour of Mass, a child will die of starvation. I'm not convinced either that feeding children on crisps and biscuits in the church during Mass is the best way to show good parenting.

The appearance of the church reveals what is going on in the hearts of the parishioners. I have great admiration of the people who like Veronica spend their time and energy to come and clean the church. Brothers and sisters the countenance of Jesus' face remains with you in your life just as his face remained on Veronica's towel. If we truly understood what the church as a building stands for in our midst each one of us would feel obliged and proud to render one service or the other. If the church reflects the face of Jesus, each one of us should be a Veronica at the hour of need.

I exhort you to appreciate and to be sympathetic with the people who clean the church. God has given you so many gifts including the gift of time. It is good that you too spend part of that time doing God's work. When time will come for time to be taken from us our consolation will be in those things we did in time for God.

## THE CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

It is that time of the year when we again come together as a parish to celebrate the Christmas bazaar. This event is very important because it is the only time that members of the parish are accompanied by their friends to support them by raising some money to help them to meet those expenses which they incur during the year. It is also the only time that the parish raises money for its projects without levy on it.

The Catholic church is the biggest charity organization in the world. There is no organization that, for so long, has done so much good for the world feeding the hungry, building hospitals, and educating people like the Catholic Church. This is just one sign that Jesus Christ continues to live within it for *'by your love they'll know that you are my disciples.*

The success of the bazaar depends heavily on the good will of the people especially on their love for God and of his church. The Bazaar is not for the members of the parish, it is not even for Catholics but for every person who uses the services offered by the Catholic church. Our school has a great number of non catholic families who send their children to it. The other day as I passed by the school I met people who defected from the catholic church taking children into our catholic school. They told me that they love the school but they fail to see the connection between the church and the school which they feel so proud of.

We ought to wake up to the reality that the parish as a institution lives in the world, it makes transactions, it pays for the services it receives, it pays its workers and needs to maintain its infrastructures. It would be wrong for anyone to think that the parish as a part of the church does not need money. The truth is that it does! Some of our parishes are heavily in debt, the worry this situation causes is not to the priest alone but to the people of God as well. The parish bazaar comes as an opportunity to appeal to other people for their support. If we organise ourselves properly we can benefit through the support of others.

I ask you to kindly make sacrifices by bringing in stuff such as bottles of wine and tinned foodstuff that can make up food humpers. Donations of prizes are very welcome. Think of what you can do for your church or for the parish whose institutions you use.

The bottom line is this: let us remember that whatever we do is for the love of God, the spread of his kingdom through the church and for the salvation of our souls. If we are guided by love, everything will be possible for us.

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## IMPORTANT COMMUNICATION FROM HIS GRACE BERNARD LONGLEY ARCHBISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM:

9th October 2015

Dear Fr. Jimmy Lutwama AJ

I'm pleased to write and formally confirm your appointment as Parochial Vicar of St. Osburgs Coventry in addition to your responsibilities as Parish Priest of St. Mary and St. Benedict, Coventry.

I should be grateful if you would contact the diocesan Treasurer, Deacon David Palmer regarding any financial matters concerning the parish, and Mrs. Jane Jones regarding Child protection and safe guarding matters. And also whenever you need it please turn for advice to your Dean. Where there is any hospital chaplaincy provision in the deanery, you are asked to be generous in assisting the chaplain with on-call help.

Please be assured of my prayers for you as you take on this new and important additional apostolate. With every kind wish.

Yours devotedly in Christ,

✚ Bernard Longley

Archbishop of Birmingham.

*CC. Rt. Rev. Mgr Canon Timothy Menezes VG*

*The Rev. Deacon David Palmer  
Diocesan Treasurer*

*The Rt. Rev Bishop William Kenney  
CP*

*Mrs. Jane Jones, Safeguarding Officer  
The Very Rev. Canon Tom Farrell—  
Dean.*

## CHRISTMAS BAZAAR IS A COLLECTIVE EFFORT

### ROME WAS NOT BUILT IN A DAY:

Many of us are familiar with that saying. In the ancient time, Rome was a great city with great buildings and great works of art. It was the See of emperors and tyrants too. We know for instance that Roman engineers built roads some of which are still in use. A visitor to Rome that time and today would wonder how they put all these things together.

The Catholic Church has survived the storms of persecution, the wrath of unbelievers and the pride of the self-righteous through the humility of her members. Jesus forbade his followers to attract attention or to seek praise for what they do. Instead he advised them thus: *"when you pray shut your door first"* (Matt. 6:6) *when you give alms your left hand must not know what the right hand has done* (Matt. 6:4) and if people notice what you have done just tell them; *'we are mere servants; we have only done our duty.'* Which means that Jesus wants his followers to do good things anonymously because God knows what they are doing.

The spiritual maturity of the parish is marked by the spontaneity of the parishioners to do things without attracting attention to themselves. I have great admiration for people who volunteer their time and energy to do some work in the church. It is not because they don't have work to do or because they are free of family commitments or other demands of life, instead the humility to serve God creates their availability at every occasion.

When we give some of our time to God, he dedicates his time to us. If you are doing something for the church, God will also give you either some good health, strong will power, friends to support you etc. in order to do that work because he wants you to do it. But when we have no time for God for his work, God also takes away that feeling of satisfaction or of happiness with what we have. Again as I said some time back in this column, no one in the church is a spectator, instead we are all key players.

We are entering into the Christmas bazaar season, it is hard work to organise this event, I pray that it is not again the same people but that those same people are joined by new ones to organise the bazaar. Do not worry about how much contribution you make after all *"Rome was not built in a day"* as the saying goes. It is that little contribution and humble involvement that brings about a real difference.

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Last week we had a meeting in preparation for our annual Christmas bazaar. It was very encouraging to see people present to discuss how to carry on this annual fundraising activity for the church. I was especially encouraged to hear some names of people mentioned from time to time. Some of these people were not present but having your names suggested showed me how much the community values your contribution and how much they truly believe in your ability. If you thought that you are a *'no-body'* you would get surprised to hear those present at the meeting recalling the good work you have done in the past whenever such occasions arose. Do not despise your self or underestimate your abilities.

The parish bazaar differs from other fundraising activities that we know of for the simple reason that it is inspired by the three cardinal virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity. Because of Faith we know that the sacrifices we make are seen by God and he blesses them. Because we have Hope we know that we are not labouring in vain God will one day reward our sacrifices. Because we are giving out of Charity or Love of God, we try to choose the best.

You must have heard me speak to you about the truth that every baptised is necessary; he/she is important and is someone we cannot do without. There is no "less Christian" or a "more Christian" all of us belong to the Church, we are members of the family of God. We are not observers we are called to act. We should never leave the work of the Church to individual few after all the work of evangelization is given to us all. Christmas bazaar is another way of supporting the evangelization program.

I wish to request you to start bringing in stuff that you wish to donate for the bazaar. The best gift to God and to the church is NOT that which is useless to you or that one that you dislike but it is that thing which you consider useful and likable to yourself but all the same you decide to give it to someone else, for God loves a cheerful giver.

We need bottles of wine, spirits, soft drinks, prizes for tombola stall, tinned foods (make sure they are not out of date) & donations of cash for the raffle. We have come a long way, I know that each one of us is doing his/her best. Above all remember to turn up on the bazaar day with your family and friends.

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## IF YOU WISH YOU CAN GIVE ME A WINDOW

Our parish news bulletin bears the pictures of the three parishes that are entrusted to the pastoral care of the Apostles of Jesus missionaries. The first time I heard about the plan to cut down on the number of Masses and to close parishes was in 2003. Cardinal Vincent Nichols, then our bishop spoke frankly about the shortage of priests which eventually called for the possible closing of some parishes. In the course of the discussions I took to the floor and I told the priests how horrified I was to hear that some parishes were going to be closed! I know that a parish does not grow overnight, generations of Christians make sacrifices and some spend their entire life time to build up their parish. A parish church is too precious to be closed, I said. That was in 2003.

At the time when the shortage of priests is evident, our parish of St. Osburgs has been given the assurance that it is here to stay by being entrusted to a Religious Missionary Order. The Order will provide it with priests so that the parish will not suffer the pressure that other parishes are likely to face. Anybody who understands the meaning of a priest in a parish will greatly appreciate the providential plan of God who has not left his people without shepherds.

Many people ask me from time to time: "when are the priests coming"? Well before the priests come I would like you to do some work on the house. The presbytery looks solid but there are many things that need doing, the major one is double-glazing the 53 windows.

I tendered the job and companies brought in their quotations. With the advice of the parish financial committee we have agreed on one. Each window will cost £386.13 including purchasing and fitting. I wish to appeal to your generosity not because you are rich but because you know what a good cause it is for the parish. You can join with someone to donate a window for the health and safety of the priests who will come to occupy St. Osburgs to minister to us. That window will continue to serve the priest who will proclaim the gospel to others after we have finished our work and gone. I'm pleased that three persons have donated three windows already. I'm very grateful to them.

If you wish to make a contribution to that

please speak to me or to Fr. Moses. I'm asking you to support this cause because of the spiritual implication it has on our parish. Double-glazing the house will not only keep the place warm but also save on the heating costs.

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### A LETTER FROM APOSTLES OF JESUS MISSIONARIES NAIROBI

*(Written on Nov 4th 2015 in appreciation of your financial support).*

Dear parishioners of SS. Mary and Benedict; I send you greetings from the members of the Religious Missionary Order of the Apostles of Jesus. I would like to thank you for the support you give to our Institute for the training of candidates to missionary priesthood. Fr. Jimmy your parish priest has spoken to us about the sacrifices you make to raise funds for the training of priests in our Institute. We understand that this money is raised through your own initiative by organising parish dances, cake sales, individual donations and even of late by generously supporting a sponsored charity walk! The annual Christmas crib donation has always been used to buy books for our Major Seminary in Nairobi. This week I picked up 15 boxes of books purchased and sent to us by your parish. We thank you so much for supporting the missionary cause of the Order through these sacrifices.

The training of a missionary priest takes many years. We are pleased that our members Fr. Moses Pitya at St. Elizabeth and Fr. Jimmy Lutwama your parish priest are ministering you. Recently His Grace the Archbishop of Birmingham Bernard Longley entrusted the parish of St. Osburgs to the care of the Apostles of Jesus Missionaries. We are so pleased that you are already involved in our mission. Your support is graciously received and greatly appreciated.

During our General Assembly (Chapter) last year the members resolved to reopen our novitiate in Moroto Diocese Uganda which was destroyed and had been abandoned due to war. We would like to use the money you sent to us through Fr. Jimmy to go to the training of seminarians who are doing novitiate in Moroto. Fr. Jimmy has demanded that a specific need be identified and clear expenditure be submitted to him. This we shall do.

Please accept our gratitude to you for supporting us. We thank those who organise the events from which financial support is raised. We promise you our community prayers and fidelity in the service of God's holy people.

Fr. Frederick Otieno AJ  
Vicar General.

## THE HOLY YEAR OF MERCY

In the bull of Indiction *Misericordiae Vultus* (MV), Pope Francis decreed that the Holy Year will begin on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Dec. 8th, 2015, with the opening of the Holy Door in the Basilica of St. Peter Rome. On the following Sunday, Dec 13th, the Third Sunday of Advent, the Door of Mercy will be opened at The Pope's own Cathedral as Bishop of Rome St. John Lateran. On that day Holy Doors of the other Cathedrals and papal designated Churches will be opened.

The Jubilee Year will be inaugurated in the cathedral of each diocese and in the Churches designated by the Bishop with the opening of the Door of Mercy at a single celebration of the Holy Mass. Furthermore, Holy Mass will be celebrated in other churches and shrines in which the diocesan Bishop has designated a Door of Mercy. In Coventry the Church designated as A Shrine for the Door of Mercy is St. Mary's and Benedict on Raglan Street.

Churches designated as Jubilee Churches which will have the Door of Mercy in the Archdiocese are:

**Birmingham:** St Chad's Cathedral Erdington  
Abbey St Mary's, Harborne

**Evesham:** Our Lady and St Anne

**Coventry:** St Mary and St Benedict

**Harvington:** St Mary's Leamington Spa: St Peter's

**Lichfield:** Holy Cross

**Newcastle –under Lyme:** Holy Trinity

**Oxford:** Oxford Oratory (St. Aloysius) **Rugby:** St Marie's

**Stafford:** St Austin's **Solihull:** St Augustine's

**Walsall:** St Mary's, The Mount

**Wolverhampton:** St Peter and St Paul's

**Worcester:** St George's.

The elements that make up the rite of the opening of the Door of Mercy reflect its character and meaning namely

- the mystery of God, rich in mercy and compassion, (Eph 2:4 and Jas 5:11).
- Christ as the only door through which we enter for salvation (cf. Jn 10:9).
- the Church's pilgrimage toward "Jesus Christ (who) is the same yesterday, today, and forever" Heb 13:8.

On 13th December 2015 there will be Holy Mass to Open the Jubilee Year and door of Mercy at St. Mary's Church Raglan Street CV1 5QF at 3:00pm. Please remember that St. Mary's is the only designated Shrine in Coventry with the Door of Mercy in Coventry.

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## WHEN YOU SEE THESE THINGS HAPPEN:

The end of the Church's liturgical year brings about the need to focus on the end of time. In his teaching Jesus predicted that times of trial will come with some frightening events especially to those whose knowledge and love of God is lacking. For those who love God, they should not be afraid but instead raise their heads high because their liberation would be near at hand. (Lk 21: 28)

The events that took place in France are a reminder and wake –up call for all of us the baptized to return to our Christian life, to practice Christian faith and to live by the Ten Commandments. If Christians knew the greatness of their faith in Jesus and his teaching, there would be no empty places in many churches. I recall a big church in the city where I used to live many years ago which was turned into a Sainsbury supermarket and the church not far away from the city where I live these days which was turned into residential flats! Where will people find a prophetic voice when that voice is engrossed in world affairs like the rest of mankind?

In the Sermon on the Mountain Jesus gave a teaching which is never found in any other religion: "***You have learned how it was said eye for eye, tooth for tooth but I say to you offer the wicked man no resistance.... You have learned 'you must love your neighbour and hate your enemy, but I say this to you: 'love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you in this way you will be sons of your Father in Heaven Mt. 5:38– 44.*** Only Christ teaches this. Now let each one of us should ask himself/herself "what would the world become if we practiced the Christian faith as taught by Jesus?

God uses funny ways to bring us to our senses or to attract our attention. For Moses in the desert he created the burning bush, to create a nation of his own made them get lost in the desert and starved all of them nearly to death and to convert a stiff-necked Saul he created a serious accident.

When you see evil on our streets may be it is because you have not become a good Christian yet or it might be because you have not put into practice the teaching of Jesus. What goes into a man's soul influences his behaviour and makes him who he is. Ignorance of the teaching of Jesus and lack of practicing our Christian faith will not make us live in a better world instead it makes evil prevail. So when you see such things happen remember that there is still much work to do.

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## OPENING THE DOOR OF MERCY

On Tuesday December 8th the Solemnity of the immaculate conception, the Holy Father Pope Francis will open the Holy Year of Mercy by symbolically opening the "Door of Mercy in the Vatican. As a vicar of Jesus Christ, Fount of Love and Mercy, Pope Francis had ordered that on Sunday December 13th 2015, a Door of Mercy is opened through out the world to invite all those who believe in God to come together and embrace the Mercy of God. Here in Coventry the door of Mercy and Shrine of Pilgrimage for Christ's faithful is at St. Mary's and Benedict Church Raglan Street. The ceremony to open the door of Mercy will be led by all the priests of the denary on Sunday 13th starting at 3:00O,Clock.. All are invited to attend.

**Mercy:** the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity.

**Mercy:** the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us.

**Mercy:** the fundamental Law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sister son the path of life.

**Mercy:** the bridge that connects God and mankind opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.

**Mercy** is a concept woven throughout the message of the Christian gospel.

During his recent visit to Africa, Pope Francis officially opened the Year of Mercy at the Cathedral of Bangui the capital of Central African Republic, one of the poorest countries on earth and one that has problems with ethnic and religious violence. While most press coverage of the trip focussed on hot political and social issues, since that is the lens through which most media view him, the opening of the Door of Mercy was actually the most momentous part of the trip.

If you are looking for Mercy, this is the time to give and to receive it..

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## THERE IS A HOLY DOOR OF MERCY AT ST. MARY'S

It sounds incredible but that is the truth. The Door of Mercy will open at St. Mary's this afternoon. The Year of mercy is a general amnesty given to us by God through the Vicar of Christ on earth the Roman Pontiff. It sounds incredible but remember the saying of Jesus to Peter, *'I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, whatever you bound on earth shall be considered bound in Heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in Heaven'*.

The Holy Father has declared an indulgence to be received by all who will observe and live a life founded on mercy. He wishes that the Jubilee indulgence reaches each one as a genuine experience of God's mercy, which comes to meet each person in the face of the Father who welcomes and forgives, the sins committed. In practice to experience and to obtain the indulgence the faithful are called to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Door, open in every Cathedral or churches designated by the Diocesan Bishop as a sign of the deep desire for true conversion. It is important that this moment is linked first and foremost to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the celebration of the Holy Mass with a reflection on Mercy.

Let us rediscover the deep meaning of God's mercy by doing spiritual and corporal works of mercy to others ourselves.

When we are merciful our hearts are transformed to become like the heart of Jesus full of mercy and compassion bruised for our offences, obedient unto death.

Throughout the Jubilee year of mercy, St. Mary's Church will be our Shrine through whose door we shall pass to call on the mercy of God for our sins and for the sins of the whole world. This Jubilee year excludes no one. We are all invited and welcomed to the throne of mercy. *'This is the favourable time; this is the day of Salvation'* (2Cor. 6: 2).

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## THIS PAINTING OVER OUR HEADS : THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON

In the church of Ss. Mary and Benedict, the Jubilee Shrine for the Year of Mercy in Coventry, hangs a huge painting of the picture of the Return of the prodigal Son by a 17th Century Dutch artist Rembrandt. For us who are looking at this painting now and for those who will visit this Shrine of Mercy I want to use this column to serialise the reflections of Henri Nouwen from his book *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. The original painting was acquired by Catherine the Great for a hermitage in St. Peterburg Russia, where it remains today. The painting is based on the parable of Jesus given by Luke. Henri Nouwen spent hours in front of this painting.

The painting represents the spiritual home-coming of all mankind. The sinful child is being welcomed by his/her father. Lift your eyes and look at the painting: to one side the elder brother looks on and in the background are other unknown people who, like ourselves contemplate the scene. This painting is about mercy, as you pray here consider which person you identify with most. Are you the Father receiving an errant son, or the elder brother indignant because his brother has returned? How do you feel about each character? Which one most resembles your own feelings at this time? Just in one word what do you see as you look at the prodigal son, ...as you look at the father what touches your attitude?

Let us focus on the father. This is a painting of a man in a great red cloak tenderly touching the shoulders of a dirty untidy boy kneeling before him. What we see in the painting is the father and a son, God and humanity, compassion and misery, in one circle of love.... The mystery of death and life, reconciliation, forgiveness and inner healing. The Year of Mercy gives us an amnesty to seek reconciliation, to grant forgiveness, to find peace. ***"I have come to set fire on earth,"*** Jesus said, ***'and how I wish it was blazing already!'"***

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***You have learned 'you must love your neighbour and hate your enemy, but I say this to you: 'love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you in this way you will be sons of your Father in Heaven***

***Mt. 5:38– 44.*** Only Christ teaches this. Now let each one of us should ask himself/herself "what would the world become if we practiced the Christian faith as taught by Jesus?

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