

CROSSKEYS



The magazine for the Catholic Parish of St Peter and the Winchester Martyrs

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

Father Mark Hogan explains the importance of the Holy Spirit

We continue to mark and celebrate this very special 'Year of the Holy Spirit'. We are hoping to develop a deeper sense of belonging to our parish community, so that, at Easter and elsewhere, we will more boldly and sincerely be able to proclaim our baptismal promises.

I'd like to focus on what it means to answer "Yes" or "I do" to the question, "Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?" For many of us, it is a question that was asked of us, or of our parents and godparents if we were infants, just before our baptism.

In doing so, I am trying to keep close company with the eminent theologian, Nicholas Lash, and his book, *Believing Three Ways in One God*.

"Believing in..."

When we're asked, "Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?", we're not being asked if we believe that the Holy Spirit exists (because so does Satan), nor if we trust in the Holy Spirit (though hopefully we do).

"I believe" translates the Latin *credo* and the Greek *pisteuo*, but we need to remember that the English word 'believe' has changed its meaning over the centuries. It was originally 'performative'. By this we mean that it was not so much about describing or evaluating how things are but

The 7 Gifts of the Holy Spirit

- 1. WISDOM:** helps us see the world differently and from God's point of view.
- 2. UNDERSTANDING:** enables us to know more clearly the mysteries of faith.
- 3. COUNSEL** [also known as *Right Judgment*]: helps us to discern what is right and what is wrong.
- 4. FORTITUDE** [also known as *Courage*]: strengthens our will so that we can actually accomplish what is true, good and beautiful.
- 5. KNOWLEDGE:** enables us to discover God's will in all things.
- 6. PIETY:** helps us to love God, our merciful Father, and to obey his precepts out of love for him.
- 7. FEAR OF THE LORD** [also known as *Wonder and Awe*]: helps us to understand how we must depend on God for everything. In other words, he is God, we are not.

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rather that it was used to enact what it announced. In other words, as we use it in the Creed or in our baptismal promises, "I believe", is a bit like "I promise" or "I pledge".

Renewing our baptismal promises, then, just like exchanging wedding vows, "entails or presupposes a vast and varied range of opinions held and people trusted, entails (in other words) a complex of 'beliefs'. Moreover, responsibility to make such

promises requires that the beliefs which they entail be tried and tested. Christian faith is no more arbitrary, speculative or irrational than is its particular expression in Christian marriage. (It would be most imprudent to enter into matrimony with someone concerning whose reliability or even whose existence one harboured the gravest doubts!)" (Lash, p.30)

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Pledging to co-operate with God

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Most of us, if we're aware and honest enough, are polytheists and have our hearts set in more than one direction (perhaps towards money or power or image or some of those things we've been trying to give up for Lent, like coffee or chocolate or drink or the X-box). The small word "in" (do you believe *in* – *credere in*) underlines the sense that, "To confess belief in God is to set all our life, our mind, our heart, in God's direction." (Lash, p.33)

Christianity might be seen as a context in which we learn, season by season, year by year, some freedom from the chains that worship of any created thing might bring. We ask the Lord to "purify our hearts", to "loosen us from that which imprisons us", and to "give us sight to see", so that by faith we might see all things as God sees them.

"...the Holy Spirit"

When we think of the word 'spirit' now, a whole host of images might enter our minds, perhaps associated with ghosts or genies or contrasted with matter or body or reason. When the Bible speaks of God as Spirit, "the contrast drawn is that between not-life, or lesser life, or life gone wrong, and life: true life, real life, God's life and all creation's life in God. The central metaphor for such life is wind, the breath of God." (Lash, p.114)

The Hebrew word for spirit is *ruah*, an onomatopoeic word which also means both breath and wind. God breathes life into creation and "the wind blows where it will", reminding us that the world is not under our control, nor under that of any other created thing. When we confess our faith in the *Holy Spirit*, we are making an act of worship, "acknowledgement, in awe, that every movement of the world towards delight and harmony is played by God" as a kind of 'wind instrument'. (Lash, p.115)

The Holy Spirit is the gift which is constantly being given by the giver (God the Father) to the recipient of the gift (God the Son, Jesus). Since God gives nothing less than God, and God is Love, it might be helpful to see the Holy Spirit as the gift of Divine Love, perfect, unconditional, faithful, infinite, freely given Love. Furthermore, this gift of Love gives Life, real, authentic, Divine Life. (The Nicene Creed, which we use most often at Mass, invites us to profess "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of Life")

"God gives all life, is intimate to every movement, animates all action, fuels freedom, breaks down barriers, breathes dead bones dancing, irrigates the desert making flowers bloom...The Holy Spirit is God's life breathing all things alive, gathering humankind into the fresh peacefulness, finished fruitfulness, of God's creation." (Lash, pp.124-6)

"...the communion of saints"

Each Easter, we are asked, "Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting?" We see that mention is made of what we might call these 'general effects' of the Spirit's work, the character and destiny of our life in God, the Spirit's gift. (c.f. Lash, p.112)

I would like to highlight the 'communion of saints', the "bonds of *caritas*, or friendship, binding all God's people – and, not least, the living and the dead" (Lash, p.119) which is an effect of the Holy Spirit's work. The Holy Spirit unites us, without overcoming or threatening or destroying our diversity. Rather, the Spirit requires unity in diversity.

"It is not difference that is ruled out by God's gathering, but discord; not richness that is incompatible with the Spirit's beauty, but division; not mutual interchange and education re-

quiring (and not inhibiting) disagreement, but exclusion, domination and neglect. Moreover...appropriate unity is never the consequence of the violence that we do, the expression of dominative power, but only comes to birth through dispossession. Now, as always, it is through Christ's blood that God makes peace." (Lash, pp.128-9)

It is the Holy Spirit, giver of Love and Peace, which makes us friends, with God and with one another, which enables us to belong, to God and to one another. It is the Holy Spirit who leads us on the uphill struggle from peace to infinitely being-given peacefulness.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

Nicholas Lash, again, argues that

"to confess our faith in God as Holy Spirit...is to pledge ourselves in service of the labour of what might be called the politics and ecology of the world's peacemaking, under no illusion that death and mourning, crying and pain, have yet passed away.

But, pass away they will, or creation would remain unfinished, God's utterance interrupted, peacemaking incomplete. Life is God, given, and 'life everlasting' is the fruition and fulfilment of life's gift, in God." (Lash, pp.157-8)

If, when we renew our baptismal promises this Easter, we are at least in part pledging ourselves to co-operate with God's work, with God's "Amen", God's "I do", then, just as with marriage, this is not a pledge that can be made vicariously. I am not being asked what anyone else believes but rather what I believe. I am being asked not just where the world comes from and where the world is heading but where I come from and where I am heading, what is my role in God's story. I am being invited to make a profoundly personal testimony.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

The quotes at the bottom of each page are references to the Holy Spirit which can be found in the Holy Bible Revised Standard Version containing the Old and New Testaments Catholic edition

Chaplaincy at Winchester prison

I started my role as Catholic Chaplain at HMP Winchester in August 2022. The Prison Service requires that every prisoner should have some possibility of practising their religion, and having access to a minister or equivalent.

Originally, the only chaplain who would be in a prison would be an Anglican minister (going right back, the only three people required to be employed by a prison would be a governor, a doctor and a chaplain); however, now the term 'chaplain' is used for any religious person authorised by their religion to lead worship.

As well as leading weekly services and instruction classes, the main chaplains are asked to do what are called daily statutory duties. These are visiting those in the segregation block and those in the healthcare block.

The prison has a number of nurses who work there, and can deal with the great majority of those who are sick, with the very few others going across the road into the Royal Hampshire County Hospital.

Visits are also made to those who will be shortly released. This can be distressing, as some have nowhere to go and will be homeless. The parish Saint Vincent de Paul Group are helping in at least providing some basic necessities in these cases.

Finally, anyone coming in to the prison is required to meet with a chaplain within 24 hours. For some for whom it is their first time, prison is a terrifying experience and the opportunity to have a talk with someone from the caring profession is important (it is worthwhile noting that whoever is doing this duty that day visits all the new arrivals irrespective of their religious beliefs). But all too often, the person will admit that they have been in prison before.

I am writing this at the start of Lent. This season always starts with the 40

Fr Jean-Patrice Coulon, describes his role as a prison chaplain



days and 40 nights of Our Lord in the desert. The desert was a lonely, isolated place populated with wild beasts.

In a different way, the prison is also dangerous identified with separation and misery. It could well be thought of as a playground for the devil, who however we think of him continues to tempt us to believe the lie that God does not love us and to fall away from following His commandments.

However, the second Sunday of Lent invites us to the mountain where the apostles encounter God as Trinity: the Father speaking from the heavens, the Holy Spirit in the form of a cloud, and the Son transfigured in brilliant light.

It is at one and the same time wonderful and frightening; what we simply term as awe.

A couple of parishioners from Winchester are helping in an Alpha programme run by Christ Church which has just started in the prison. In the same way as the parish programme, it has the same aim of facilitating a prayerful encounter of awe and wonder with The Lord, knowing that this can have a profound effect on a person's life. Having gone through the

process of security clearance, they will be able to also assist with the Sunday Mass, which in this case takes place on a Saturday morning.

A prison chaplain once recounted that a parishioner said to him that it was marvellous that he went in to the prison as he was taking God into the prison. He replied saying that God was already in the prison.

Perhaps the role of a chaplain as a minister of the grace of God is helping people to realise that.

Prison is in some ways a metaphor for life. We are all encouraged every year to not be afraid of entering the danger of the desert and being afflicted with the temptations of the devil.

This training is important because we all have to renew our trust in God as our loving Father, and our belief that we will not have the fullness of life outside of His commandments. If we can do that, we can then be prepared to experience a meeting with God on the mountain.

But even with that joy, it is still tempered by Jesus saying that He must suffer and die on the Cross. Suffering is realistically a part of this world and our fallen human condition, but thanks to Christ who did not turn away from suffering, the Cross is now transformed into victory and resurrection that we celebrate at Easter.

We find this joy in the Mass which is celebrated in the prison, but just as essential is the Sacrament of Confession where we ask forgiveness for our sins. For a good number of prisoners, it will also be important to forgive others who have hurt them profoundly for them to move on.

The Victorian prison cell in some ways resembles a monastic cell, and that is entirely intentional. The idea was that prison would not be an end

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And Peter said to them: "Repent, and be baptised everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:38

Celebrating 10 seasons of Alpha

Allegra Matunda selects snippets of testimonies of God's work

We are nearing the end of our 11th Alpha course in the parish. But, in this Year of the Holy Spirit, let us look back over the last completed 10 seasons and track 10 snippets.

Many things have changed for me but to pick out the most profound things, I would have to say my approach to prayer and the understanding of the Holy Spirit in my life. Praying, for me, was confined to my attendance at Mass. Having shared with others in my group, I am now not finding excuses for neglecting prayer but saying to myself 'I could pray about that'. I ask for help in all sorts of ways and feel less burdened as a result. I even ask people who I meet if they would like me to pray for them if they are having a hard time and to my surprise they have said 'Yes'!

Having participated in similar courses in the past, what struck me most were the depth of the Alpha videos and the love and dedication of the parish team. Our 'small group' clicked easily, as we reflected on the videos week by week, sharing our insights and experiences. It really

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in itself, but that the cell would provide an environment to think on one's faults and make a change for the better, so that one could achieve rehabilitation. Prison overcrowding makes this difficult, as does a decline in mental health in the community which then translates into the prison. I was grateful for the opportunity to preach in the parish where I was able to give the simple message that the prisoners are parishioners too. Please remember them in your prayers, and for the staff and chaplaincy team who seek to help them, as well as any practical help that you can give as in the examples listed above.

kept me going during lockdown, spiritually and socially. The highlight for me had to be the 'Holy Spirit away day'. Praying together brought us closer as friends and, as we asked the Holy Spirit to come among us, I experienced a great sense of peace and trust that God was at work.

None of us really knew why we came that first time. Some of us didn't even really want to be here. In fact, on several occasions in that first session, we questioned why we came. But we all believe it was a very good decision to do so.

Something just crept into these sessions that filled us up every week... And so, we kept coming back. We seemed to be drawn in by sharing our faith in such an uncomplicated and approachable manner. It felt like the highlight of the week as we all grew significantly in our faith in an unexpected and simple manner. We got re-introduced to the core of our faith. We discovered that just talking about religion, whether it's a lack off, or the questions you have about it, in an open and non-judgmental environment was rather.... satisfactory! It went right to your core and seems to stay with you for days to come.

For me, the wonderful thing about Alpha was the consistent message of hope, love, forgiveness, and mercy that our Lord Jesus wishes to shower on each one of us, if we allow him to do so. It reaffirmed that no one, no matter how far we may have fallen or where we are on our journey of faith, is excluded from the love and mercy of God.

About a year ago, I was a lapsed Catholic from Essex coming to Winchester to study at the University. I was in a place entirely new to me, with a lifestyle I was entirely unfamiliar with, and with more questions about faith than I knew what to do with. One brave evening I decided to go to Mass, where I heard Alpha testimony and the invitation to join. With a free hot meal on offer, it was a



hard no for a student, and I signed up with very little expectations. I had no idea the impact it would have on me!

The course was exactly what I needed as somebody unsure of themselves and their faith. I felt welcome, I felt heard and most of all I felt change. I was seeing things from different perspectives, finding comfort in knowing that I was not alone in my doubts, and found, slowly but surely, those doubts were being broken down.

I met so many incredible people with whom I have become great friends, and just a year later, I am attending my fourth Alpha course as a host! I am still learning and growing in my faith. Alpha helped me to become a member of the wonderful community here at St Peter's, and it has helped me to understand the relationship I have with God. I still have questions, and I still even have doubts, but I know for certain that I am closer to God now than I have ever been... and moving closer still (I hope.)

As a group leader, I always feel a fresh and renewed encounter with the Holy Spirit. He never ceases to amaze me by the affect He has on everyone on the course, both guests and leaders alike.

And another striking thing about the friendships people make with each other on Alpha courses are so strong and long-lasting. It must be something to do with the extraordinary journey we all experience when we do an Alpha course. For many, it is a

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But you shall receive the power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.... Acts 1:8



Participants at an Alpha adult and youth spiritual away day at Farleigh prep. school.

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journey of faith which takes us through a door in the wall and we never want to return to the way life used to be before.

Alpha became not only a ‘lesson in my spiritual reunion with God’ but also that ‘wake up and smell the coffee’ moment. After allowing fears and feelings of unworthiness to hold me back for far too long, I feel rejuvenated, inspired – REBORN.

As my relationship with Christ evolves into something far deeper, I am fortunate to have found this CHURCH, the love and spiritual guidance from many new friends, and the ongoing fellowship from the parish.

I feel that I now belong more to the parish – that I know more people by name, and I can go up to them after Mass and greet them, smile, say hello and I have even been for coffee with a few people I met at Alpha after a Sunday morning Mass. It has grown on me, I am part of a new community, which feels much better than just coming to Mass as a

singular individual activity. My Alpha group increased my awareness of how others feel, which totally shifted the way I see other Catholics now. I know that I am accepted for who I am whether I fail sometimes and there are others there if I want them to support me. I have experienced a recognisable love and I believe there is so much positive good that we create when we come together as people, no matter what our backgrounds.

It gave me the opportunity to discuss and share our faith with others (something I hadn't had before) and to forge friendships in an informal and relaxed way. Friendships that may never have been formed in other circumstances.

I don't mind admitting that discussions on my table started off somewhat stilted – after all, we were basically strangers who happened to share a church. But after a couple of sessions, we started to talk about things that really mattered to us personally, like difficulty with praying, difficulties in our families, whether we should read the bible. We shared amazing stories about coming to

faith, the miraculous fruits of prayer, of comforting the dying, of the amazing grace of being able to forgive someone who had harmed a loved one.

We were certainly no longer strangers by the end of the Alpha journey. I am very grateful to the other people on my table – by sharing their faith they have helped strengthen mine, and I think they would say the same.

What these testimonies tell us is that the Alpha course does indeed bring new or deeper faith in people's lives, sometimes even unwittingly! It helps foster that sense of community and belonging as we grow in our belief of a God who continually surprises us.

Alpha runs on a culture of invitation, friends bringing friends to a conversation about faith, life, and God which is authentic and unforced.

Who could you invite? Next time we run an Alpha, why not think of who you could invite?

For more information, please visit www.catholicwinchester.org.uk or email: alpha@stpeteswinchester.org.uk

Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for, we do not know how to pray as we ought... *Romans 8:26*

Early days of Covenant With the Poor

Brian Mustoe reveals the historical background to the parish Covenant With the Poor quarterly appeals

On Trinity Sunday, 4 June, parish priest Fr Mark Hogan and a parishioner will sign a document to re-confirm a commitment initially made on 18 May 1997 by Canon Peter Doyle and Desmond Le Grys and renewed annually.

Bishop Crispian Hollis headed his pastoral letter (right) for Lent 1997 'A new covenant with the poor', writing that in preparing for the millennium jubilee the poor should have pride of place in anything being planned.

He wrote: "It must not just be a token gesture – signed by the Bishop and then forgotten – but a real act of commitment by us all, bishop, priests, religious and people of the Church in Portsmouth."

The parish of St Peter's and the Winchester Martyrs, through its various guises, has ensured it was not a token gesture quickly forgotten; but a successful on-going project supported by all the congregations and raising several hundred thousands of pounds for schemes at home and abroad.

The first parish covenant in 1997 re-affirmed the groups and individuals who strived to assist the poor and listed more than 20, many of which continue today such as CAFOD supporters, Catholic Women's League, Christian Aid, Winchester Beacon (Night Shelter helpers), St Peter's School, St Vincent de Paul Society, Second collections for appeals, Traidcraft and Trinity Centre.

It continued: "Our covenant includes the new responsibilities and undertakings of:- Cafod project; Help for young, unemployed, homeless and all on the margins of our own community and city; campaign to cancel third



One of the projects supported in 2018 raised over £4,400 to build a garden room for the Medaille Trust, Southampton, for confidential discussions with rescued victims of human trafficking and CWtP representatives Anne Vinnell (right) and Jo Tanter (2nd right) visited.

world debt; campaign to help asylum seekers; twinning with a parish in Bosnia; promotion of Fair Trading and prayers for the poor, underpinned by an effort to live the beatitudes preached by Jesus in the sermon on the mount."

After the initial signing financial support was

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PASTORAL LETTER

For
LENT 1997

"A NEW COVENANT WITH THE POOR"

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

One of the points that I emphasised strongly during our Autumn Meetings in preparation for the Millennium Jubilee was that the poor should have pride of place in anything we were planning. I return to this point as we set out on our Lenten journey

CAFOD have suggested that such solidarity with the poor can be best achieved if we – as a diocese and as parishes – make a "New Covenant with the Poor." I very much favour this but I realise that it will entail a considerable amount of thought and planning.

If it is to express a real preferential option for the poor, both at home and abroad, then this Covenant – this solemn promise – must have the support of the whole diocese. It must not just be a token gesture – signed by the Bishop and then forgotten – but a real act of commitment by us all, bishop, priests, religious and people of the Church in Portsmouth.

There are all sorts of things we can do and I highlight just three possibilities here.

- 1) We can renew the commitments we already have to the Family Fast Days and the support of projects, already undertaken, both at home and overseas.
- 2) We can look for new commitments and, perhaps, fund them by the donation of a percentage of our parish or diocesan income.
- 3) We can become more aware of the campaign for the cancellation of Third World Debt, and support those who are already involved in this campaign, such as members of our own Justice and Peace Commission.

given to the Trinity Centre and various meetings were held in the parish and a covenant with the poor steering group was formed in June with Danny Cormack, Des Le Grys, Thea Van Damm and Ana de Rubio at the helm.

There was a parish exhibition on 3/4 October 1998 when the group shared a site with Operation Heart which was to be a beneficiary of money raised. This was set up originally as a local aid convoy transporting much needed supplies to the victims of war in Bosnia and also funding important reconstruction projects.

A Mass for the Poor was scheduled for 18 October (One world week). Later in the year Sue Foster, Claude Smith and Jo Tanter were invited to join the group. To mark the millennium, £12,000 was raised in association with Eleison to help the Jesuits in El Progreso, Honduras, build a medical clinic.

It steadily became apparent that the easiest way to raise money rather than holding events was organising direct appeals, and subsequently these have been held quarterly.

While the CWtP group convenes every three months to

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Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. *Matthew 12:31*

discuss future projects to support, the meetings are open to all members of the parish to attend.

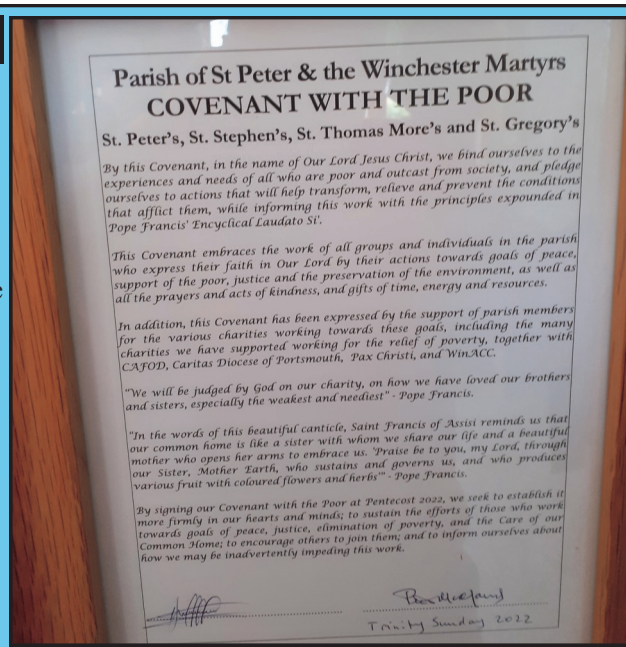
Ideally the group chooses two local and two international charities each year and prefers to have some parish link or connection with the recipients.

Over the years it has funded projects in areas as diverse as India, South Africa, Palestine, Eritrea, Guatemala, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Ghana,

Afghanistan, Philippines, Bolivia, Turkey, Syria, Anguilla, Kenya and Zambia.

Beneficiaries closer to home include Emmaus, Basics Bank, Winchester Go LD, the Medaille Trust, the Sisters of St Lucy, Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group.

A quarterly leaflet, *The Promise*, is printed which highlights the current appeal and the group also has a section on the parish website.



Making Winchester a city of sanctuary

A parishioner describes how St Peter's is assisting asylum seekers

Although Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group (SWVG) has had plenty of experience of supporting people seeking asylum in housing in Southampton, working in Winchester presented a new and considerable challenge in a smaller and quieter city.

SWVG was able to build on the excellent work done by churches such as St Peter's and the United Church, councils and many other bodies to support Ukrainian refugees. It was the start of an impressive campaign.

A growing number of volunteers from SWVG, Winchester City of Sanctuary, churches, library, and charitable and other organisations have worked hard to provide hotel residents with practical help and advice, and to make them feel welcome.

Those seeking sanctuary come from countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Sudan, and many more.

Most have no income at all, others are starting to get their £9 a week.

Joining forces with Winchester City of Sanctuary, St Peter's Sanctuary Welcome Hub, and United Church

Meet and Greet, SWVG's priority was to provide hotel residents with suitable warm clothing and ensure that they had access to medical care.

A few were identified as unaccompanied minors and have since been rehoused in safer surroundings. We also provide them with phones or SIM cards, and if needed we direct them to an immigration lawyer.

The next priority was to set up English classes and find welcoming spaces for them to gather in Winchester.

City faith organisations have been quick to respond. St Peter's Church, the United Church, the Quakers, the Salvation Army and others have all gladly and generously opened their doors. Every week, volunteers lead a football match. The next plan is to start a walking group.

Winchester Library is a Library of Sanctuary. It has set aside space for people seeking asylum to use computers once a week and to have a peaceful, relaxing place to read and study.

Among the hotel residents there is a great sense of camaraderie and mutual support. Those who speak fluent English and who are teachers by profession are helping with the English

lessons.

In a recent lesson, working on the verb 'to be', one young man came to the first person plural, 'we are'. He stopped and looked round the table. 'We are... a family'.

Others are helping those who need more IT skills. Three men have already completed their initial SWVG training. Every Tuesday is spent enabling our guests to undertake sport.

Currently, we are working with the University and Energise Me to provide football games with grateful thanks to Brian Mustoe and Peter Amies (Annette Parr's brother) along with SWVG members in driving this forward.

As a City of Sanctuary, Winchester is living up to its name.

There is much more to be done and plans are being made for creative and volunteering projects as well as more work with Winchester University, our local University of Sanctuary.

If you have ideas for activities or would like to help us expand the support we can offer in Winchester, please contact sue.jessup@swvg-refugees.org.uk or les-ley@winchester.cityofsanctuary.org.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Our goal should be to live a life of love

Rosanne Walker and Madeline Rakowicz report on a national conference

‘Sharing the Church’s Story’ was a major Catholic conference organised by Catholic Voices and the Word on Fire Institute.

The conference on 11 February (the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes) was held at the Queen Elizabeth II Centre in Westminster and attended by over 1300 participants.

The vision of the conference was to bring people together for an experience of personal renewal and to be equipped for mission to bring about renewal of the Catholic Church in the UK.

Brenden Thompson communicated the desire of Catholic Voices: to help create a generation of lay Catholics who can communicate their faith and the Church’s story with clarity, charity, and confidence.

Opening the conference, Cardinal Vincent Nichols reminded us that we mustn’t forget the Church’s history and the ‘giants of faith on whose shoulders we stand’.

Indeed, we should call to mind those who have lived the Catholic faith before us and ‘draw strength from them in handing on this great story’. He then invited us all to prayer.

The keynote speaker in the morning was Bishop Robert Barron, founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries and Bishop of Winona-Rochester, USA.

Just prior to coming, he said his purpose was as always to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus. ‘Secularism is on the rise in the West, and its influence is strongly felt in Great Britain. But yours is a land of faith, marked by the witness of many great saints and martyrs.’

He reflected on the role of laity in evangelisation and the universal call to holiness. He underlined the importance of poverty, chastity, and obedience to all Christians, stressing that it



was not just the clergy who were called to live out the counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience, but also the laity in their specific vocations.

He suggested that if the laity lived out both the commandments and evangelical counsels we would transform the world. Using the example of St Thomas More, who gave up power and wealth as King Henry VIII’s chancellor to stay true to Christ, Bishop Barron said, “We should live in a spirit of detachment from the worldly goals of wealth, honour, pleasure and power.”

Bishop Robert Barron explained that poverty for the laity is different from the literal poverty required of monks and nuns. For the laity, it means a detachment from the world, where God – not wealth, honour, pleasure or power – reigns supreme.

Bp Barron used Thomas Aquinas’s analogy of the wheel of fortune, and challenged us all to consider whether we were really living at the centre of the wheel with Christ, rooted in Him, rather than on the rim of the wheel where changes in the circumstances of our lives dictate our wellbeing.

Meanwhile, chastity for the laity challenges us to break out of the black hole of egotism– explaining that to truly love is to will the good of the other in our relationships.

The call to obedience – perhaps the hardest of the three – is to: ‘realise that your life is not about you. Your life is to surrender to God’s purposes.’

Bishop Barron reminded us that life isn’t a drama about me (written, starring and directed by me), but God’s drama, written by God, in which I have my unique part to play.

We can refocus our lives to God’s will and God’s drama through prayer: the raising of the heart and mind to God.

He finished by exhorting us all to prayer in our daily lives, reminding us of St Therese of Lisieux’s little way of love, and of Mother Teresa’s motto to do little things with great love.

Following this, Bishop Barron was in conversation with Tom Holland, discussing how the Church can tell its story in an era that can no longer be called that of Christendom but rather ‘post-religious’.

While Tom pointed out that much of the fabric of our society still has its roots in Christianity, Bishop Barron exhorted us that we should be even more stoic and visible in our living out of the faith.

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Afternoon breakout sessions included 'Lewis, Tolkien and Evangelisation', 'Christian Persecution: Breaking the Silence' and 'Third Spring? Renewal and Reading the Signs of the Times'.

Times of prayer were also offered, and throughout the afternoon various Catholic organisations were represented in the Expo Market.

It was heartening to recognise many faces from the past, and to catch up with many friends, albeit briefly. It was a particular joy to see the Dominican Sisters of St Joseph from our own diocese there, and to write petitions which would be taken back to the shrine at Walsingham.

The day finished with an address from Monsignor John Armitage who exhorted all the faithful to heed their own calling, to be faithful to what it is that the Lord calls each one of us to, and to witness to the joy of the Gospel in this apostolic age wherever God places us (in our families, our churches, our workplaces).

He spoke about how we need to read the signs of the times in this present apostolic age, as we move from an era of Christendom to that of apostolic mission. He challenged us to discern how God is calling each of us to mission.

The day concluded with a beautiful time of Eucharistic adoration, which gave us time to assimilate all that we had heard and seen and spend some quiet time in our Lord's presence. Perhaps this was the most moving time of all: a thousand people on their knees in the QEII conference centre, praying in silence before the Blessed Sacrament.

Bishop Barron says that if those who attended could take just one thing away, he hoped it would be that, "Our goal each day should be to live a life of love, to will the good of the other."

Discovering more

Tony Darlison updates on the latest parish formation course

Since 2020 we have been running formation courses to help one another explore the beauty of the Catholic faith in greater depth.

Topics have included: Mary, Lent, the Mass, God's Creation and Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible.

This year is both the parish and the diocesan Year of the Holy Spirit; accordingly, the latest course to be offered was *Discovering More about the Holy Spirit*, which was run in three online sessions during February.

In the first session we reflected on the central mystery of the Christian faith, the Father who created us in love, the Son who saves us by His sacrifice, the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, ever drawing us to eternal love in the Blessed Trinity.

In the second week we sought to discover more about the powerful working of the Holy Spirit in creation and our salvation. God's Spirit hovered over the water (Genesis 1:2); He spoke through the prophets of the Old Testament; He anointed Jesus our saviour; He gave the Church its voice at Pentecost.

Today we are given the Holy Spirit, present in His Church, in its ministers and members, in the sacraments, in the scriptures and in the Church's teaching. He has fulfilled his promise: "I will not leave you orphans" (Jn 14:18).

In the final session we reflected on how the Holy Spirit works with us to make us perfect in Christ.

When we do our part by trying to develop the Christian virtues, when we allow the Holy Spirit to perfect our work by bestowing on us His supernatural gifts (Isaiah 11:1-2), and when we use the gifts (charisms) the Holy Spirit has given us for the benefit of others, then we start to experience the fruit of the Holy Spirit, a foretaste on earth of the heaven which is our true home.

If you missed the course, or would like a reminder of the material, recordings of the talks are available at <https://catholicwinchester.org.uk/formation/discovering-more-about-the-holy-spirit/>



Annual financial report

The annual report, including details of our parish finances and a description of what has been going on over the past 12 months with a comprehensive review of the life, activities and achievements was published in February.

A zoom meeting was held when members of the parish finance and property advisory committee presented the report and answered questions about the parish finances.

A link to the report which is available on the parish website is listed here. <https://catholicwinchester.org.uk/financial/annual-report-finance-parish-priests-review/>

Time for faith, friendship and family

Peter Shepherd explains why he became a Catenian— and still is

Sitting down to write this article for CrossKeys feels a bit strange. My first job many years ago was as a writer – a copywriter for a big educational publisher – but it’s ages since I wrote an article for an actual magazine.

The situation came about because I chanced to be on the same table as Brian, CrossKeys editor, at an Outreach Ministries Summit in the Pastoral Centre. Brian was discussing the comparative merits of the online versus hardcopy versions of CrossKeys, and I chipped in.

I told him about some research I’d done into the print-to-digital transition in the magazine market, and we chatted. Our chat qualified under the heading of self-motivation in the fulfilment of ministry leadership, and he suggested my writing this.

Anyway, here’s the thing: I wouldn’t have met Brian if I hadn’t been in the Catenians. Since joining, I’ve met people who’ve worked in computing, banking, online mapping, airport logistics, the army, the navy, local government, petrochemicals, timber structures, hospital management, and hospitality; people whose interests range from photography to the banjo to golf to Scottish football teams.

There’s never a lack of things to talk about, nor a lack of sympathetic ears when things look less than rosy.

We laugh together in the good times, and support each other in the bad – and if that sounds cheesy, believe me, it’s better than the alternative.

So, what are the Catenians? We are an association of proudly Catholic laymen, committed to the values of faith, friendship and family. Exclusively men? Yes – maybe not forever (topic under discussion) – but certainly for now.

That’s because when the Catenian



Catenians and wives (back row, one far left, five far right) helping out at St Swithun Wells Summer Camp BBQ in 2021

Association was formed, over 100 years ago, integration into the business world was difficult for Catholics, and the business world was male-dominated.

My role at the Outreach Ministries Summit was to assist in raising awareness of Catenianism among parishioners – and here we are.

It was in 2009 that I was invited to join the City of Winchester Circle of the Association. It wasn’t the first time I’d been invited.

The fact was that the four-hour round-trip London commute each day, plus regular business trips abroad, left me feeling I had no time for external commitments.

Then, when my work activities scaled back, I realised my mistake. I needed to ‘get out more’ (or so my close family told me).

I attended my first meeting as a ‘Visiting Gentleman’, meaning that I was the Circle’s guest for the dinner which followed the meeting.

The meeting itself struck me as somewhat formal (it’s less so now), but with a user-friendly format which has proved enduring: prayer; the welfare of fellow Catenians and their families; remembering our deceased; agreeing charitable donations; involvement in youth activities; support for the clergy; recruitment; so-

cial events and future planning.

The Association operates two central funds, one helping members in difficulty, the other awarding bursaries to Catholic youth embarking on faith-related missions.

Winchester Circle has made use particularly of the latter, and from Circle funds we’ve recently supported local causes including food banks, youth wellbeing, and St Vincent de Paul.

Our social activities like everyone else’s hit a wall during the Covid lockdowns. We’re slowly getting back up to speed.

Sometimes we’re joined at dinner by wives, and sometimes also by the widows of deceased Circle members. Sometimes the ladies branch out and party on at Zizzi’s while we’re dining more sedately.

As often as possible we all get together for expeditions to places of culture or refreshment, or both.

The Circle’s regular meeting venue is the Royal Hotel, St Peters Street Winchester. We may purchase a drink or just swap stories at the bar before the meeting, which starts at 7pm and generally lasts about 45 minutes. Dinner follows at 8pm, and we’re usually on our way by 10pm. We meet on the first Thursday of

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For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death Romans 8:2

Holy Communion at home

Paul Kennedy describes the need for more Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

every month, except December, when for the past two years we've reinstated our fabled Christmas party.

To return to where I started, the reason I got involved with the Outreach Ministries was because I was concerned about people becoming isolated during lockdown.

Now, I'm concerned because working from home has become the norm in many jobs, with potentially similar results: lack of opportunity to develop friendships, relax and socialise.

Our mission as Catenians is to offer a welcome to those who want to join us, and share our values of faith, friendship and family.

This is just one Catenian's view. Other views may differ! – but not, I'd guess, by much.

To find out more, visit our national website at www.thecatenians.com or look out for us at the church door after one of the masses in June or July.

There's always room for another Visiting Gentleman.

Covid 19 disrupted many lives and many services or ministries. One ministry that was disrupted was Home Communion – taking Communion to parishioners who were unable to come to Mass.

Context of the Ministry

Our parish has a large geographical area – from Lasham Airfield in the east to the Wiltshire boundary in the west. It brings together the communities of St Peter's Winchester, St Stephen's Winchester, St Gregory's Alresford and St Thomas More's Stockbridge. Like all parishes it is affected by reductions in the number of priests and the considerable demands upon the time of those who are in post.

This makes it impossible for ordained clergy to provide Communion at home on a regular basis for those who cannot get to Mass. Therefore, most parishioners who receive Communion at home receive it from Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC for short).

Problems arising from shortage of clergy are not new and not exclusive to our parish. Back in 1970 Pope Paul VI authorised the appointment of ministers from the laity to assist with the distribution of Communion at Mass and to people in their homes. The official document made it clear that the decision was a response to the shortage of clergy. Part of the objective was that nobody should 'be deprived of this sacramental help and consolation.'

Currently around 54 parishioners receive Holy Communion where they live. Some are in their own homes: others are in care homes. Some EMHCs are formally dispatched after Sunday Mass, others carry out their ministry at other times if that is more suitable for the person at home, or the care home where they are living.

During home communion, the EMHC follows a format similar to a service of Liturgy of the Word and Holy Communion – penitential rite, formal prayer, scripture reading, the Our Father, Communion and final blessing.



All EMHCs who visit people in their homes or in hospital are subject to criminal records checks and have safeguarding training before they are authorised to visit parishioners in their homes. This complies with diocesan guidelines on safeguarding vulnerable people.

The impact of Covid 19

During the pandemic the Home Communion Ministry had to be suspended to reduce the risk of spreading infection. Once it was over, we could begin rebuilding the Ministry.

As normality returned, it was clear that some of those who had received Communion at home were no longer around, also some of the EMHCs had moved away or retired.

We currently have a shortage of EMHCs to take Communion to people in their homes so there are a number of parishioners who should be receiving Communion at home who do not have an assigned minister at present.

Therefore, there is an opportunity for new volunteers to join the team of EMHCs who take Communion to parishioners in their homes. If you are interested, please contact Father Mark.

If you, or a family member, need Holy Communion at home, please contact the parish office on 01962 852804. Do not delay making contact if you need the ministry – the quicker you tell us you need Holy Communion at home, the sooner we can provide it. We have a local organiser in each worshipping community who will contact you to make the necessary arrangements.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit: and began to speak in other tongues... Acts 2:4

Time to drop in on the youth group

Jo Donaldson reports on the youth group's latest activities

This academic year we have had a super time as a youth group for those aged 11-17 and we meet on a Friday evening from 6.30pm – 8pm.

We have been doing our sessions on a four week cycle which has included film nights, book study and discussion, you choose (the young people choose the topic), and games night.

We have also had 'one-off' nights which the young people chose at the start of the year. These have included; a cultural food sharing evening, a trip to the escape rooms, a 'lock-in' where the young people stayed onsite for 24 hours and 'Come dine with me'. We are looking forward now to a trip to London, going kayaking, and camping.

We try to review the group every six months to make sure it fits with what the young people want. Our timetable is jointly arranged

by the young people and by the youth team. This is to ensure that we cover topics that the young people want to learn about and we do things that we know they will enjoy.

This also gives an opportunity for new members to be involved in the decisions made by the group.

New members are welcome to call in to a session at any time, but please do come with a parent/carer to drop you off.

We welcome new members throughout the year, and if you're in year 6 please check out the group anytime from May to July. The environment of the youth group is welcoming and fun, so new members generally fit in quite easily. We have a range of ages at the group (from 11 – 16) but they all mix well and interact with each other.

For a chat or any more information, please contact: youthstuff@sstpeterswinchester.org.uk or go to the youth ministry page on the parish website.



Youth group members have enjoyed a variety of activities since September.



Baptism is first step to new friendships

Rosanne Walker turns the spotlight on the children and family ministry

Baptism reflection

One of the joys of the baptismal preparation sessions is young families coming together and sharing their faith experience, learning from, and encouraging one another.

Since the summer we've seen our vision of accompanying families growing, with the baptism visiting team supporting families through from initial inquiry to post baptism, and the baptism preparation team delivering effective preparation sessions with groups of families.

Towards the end of January, we

hosted the annual baptism celebration Mass and buffet with nearly 25 families attending. It was wonderful to share with one another, celebrating the wonderful gift of new life and faith given to us in the Holy Spirit, with new friendships formed among both parents and children.

First Holy Communion

The First Holy Communion programme leads children through sacramental preparation for both the Sacrament of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion and supports parents during the programme.

Last year was the first year it ran without impact from Covid restrictions, culminating in two wonderful

and joyous celebrations of Mass with nearly 40 children making their First Holy Communion. This year, we successfully introduced an autumn programme enabling the children and their parents to come together, to make a commitment for the year, to learn about the beautiful truths of our faith, and to share their experience with one another. Almost 50 children will make their First Reconciliations at the end of Lent, with the First Holy Communion Masses planned once again for July.

Domestic church

We are beginning to grow family ministry with a view to enable the

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He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.... 2 Corinthians 5:5



Altar servers enrolled in Guild of St Stephen on 26 December.

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sacramental programmes to sit within a coherent framework of faith formation and help equip parents in their God-given role as first educators of their children in the faith.

During Advent and Lent, we once again offered ideas in how to live as domestic church in the home through these liturgical seasons, with reflections on the Sunday Gospels, saints of the week, various suggestions for appropriate activities and ideas for prayer times. We are hoping to grow this ministry within the parish at different levels over the coming few years.

Messy Church

After a trial run in January, Messy Church began in early March with our experienced leaders Louisa and Carol (who had previously run the Pat-a-Cake playgroup), here offering something with a more spiritual perspective.

It is open to anyone of any age or stage in their faith, however it is especially relevant for young children and their extended family. It is now

growing steadily; we hope that it will grow to be a way of forging friendships between those who regularly attend Mass and those who perhaps haven't been inside a church for a long time, and a real place of welcome and fellowship.

Children's Liturgy

Children's Liturgy seeks to unpack the readings and Gospel message for our children during Mass, in the context of Liturgy of the Word. It has been wonderful to gradually move back to in person liturgy without restrictions; both groups at St Peter's and St Stephen's are flourishing with many children attending each Sunday led by our dedicated teams of liturgy leaders.

The Epiphany party at St Stephen's in early January was a huge success and we are very much looking forward to the Good Friday Family Way of the Cross liturgy which is always so moving and well attended.

Altar Serving

On the feast of St Stephen (26 December) many of our altar servers were enrolled in the Guild of St

Stephen during a special Mass in St Stephen's Church. They prayed the prayer of commitment together with Fr Mark and were presented with their medals, while others received a new cincture (belt) showing their commitment and progression within the ministry. It was a truly joyous occasion. We look forward to seeing more of our young people growing in service in this beautiful way.

Life in the Spirit for Children

This new, exciting initiative of Life in the Spirit for Children is currently planned to start after Easter at St Stephen's Church.

It will be a series of five weekly sessions when the children will learn about and experience God's love for them, how the Holy Spirit can work powerfully in their lives and the exciting journey God has planned for them.

As it says in Acts: "You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you. It is also for your children" (Acts 2: 38-39). Let us all pray that in this year of the Holy Spirit, we would all be open to the graces the Lord has for each one of us.

And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom, and of understanding... *Isaiah 11:2*

Learning away from the classroom

Head teacher **Louise Buxton** describes some of the school's recent events

St Peter's School is a place where children learn and grow in a happy, secure and nurturing environment with Christ at its centre.

Through our broad and balanced curriculum, we strive for children to be; excited by learning, developing curiosity and learning respect for the world around them, for others and themselves.

Rich learning opportunities, both within the classroom and in the locality beyond it, ensure our curriculum focuses on developing the whole being so that children are prepared for their life ahead.

Our children enjoy an educational visit or a special curriculum day every term. Places that enriched our learning in the spring term included Winchester Cathedral, The Science Centre and the River Itchen from source to end. We also had a visit from the Mini Professors, along with days celebrating Italian and Australian culture. Meanwhile our Year 6 children went off for their annual



Reaching new heights.

residential trip to Osmington Bay.

The weather was glorious – blue sky every day and the children really threw themselves into all the challenges that such a week brings; from making their beds and trying new food to abseiling down steep walls!

Here's what some of our children said:

Daniel: "The residential was really fun and amazing as we did lots of

great activities – my favourite activity was the giant swing."

Ava: "The food was really nice and there were always lots of options to pick from."

Chase: "I liked the residential because I got to do some new things that I might not do again – once in a lifetime."

Matilda: "It was nice to try new things and get pushed a bit further to challenge ourselves and achieve new things."

Nicholas: "The thing that I really liked about residential is that we weren't forced but we were encouraged to try."

Iris: "The staff were really kind to us and helped to make our experience more fun."

Thank you Father Mark for joining us for part of the residential trip – unfortunately we have no photos of him scaling walls or abseiling but confirm he did this!

"Jesus comes to give life, and life in abundance" John 10:10

This term at Little Fishes we have been focusing on kindness, respect and valuing one another. During the day we encourage thoughtfulness as we play together, to offer help if someone feels sad and celebrate our achievements and special events.

We have an "I am proud of..." board. When a child has discovered something for the first time or developed a new skill, we take a photo and display it on the board for all to celebrate. It is wonderful to see the look on the child's face when they see their photo and feel a sense of achievement and pride.

To feel a sense of belonging and to be accepted is vital to a child's emotional well-being. During the term we have experienced activities which support the children in developing a knowledge that they are unique, as are their friends. Together we form our Little Fishes community.

Our Little Fishes families have been sending in photos of special family occasions, events and festivals which we put in our 'family celebration album'. The



children can browse through the album during the day, gaining confidence in talking to their friends about their experiences and feeling special about who they are.

In the words of our mission statement we aim to 'share God's love to the children and nurture a sense of kindness, love and respect, enabling them to flourish in life.

The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel.... *Judges 3:10*

Entering a season of fruitfulness

This Easter we will be entering into our third year of Acorn groups and our 2023 theme is ‘Fruitfulness’.

Year 1 was ‘Rootedness’ and about prayer and being anchored into Christ while year 2 has been on ‘Growth’ and how, when rooted in Christ, our faith grows and develops. This year’s theme of fruitfulness is about starting to see the fruits of a life in Christ.

How can I recognise God’s action in my life? How do I learn to pay attention to what He is doing in my life? How aware am I of God even in difficult and trying times?

So, this year, as ‘Acorners’, we are learning, not only to pay more attention to, but trying to become more intentionally aware of what God has done and is doing in our lives.

To help us with this, we have been encouraged to try ‘Journaling’. Journaling prayer is a tool for spiritual growth which helps bring life and faith together. We are not going to keep a diary of what our day has been like but rather, we will chart instances in our lives that we wish to bring/share with God. We hope that journaling will provide us that concrete ‘rear-view mirror’ (hindsight) through which we can look back and realise that God was always there even if we didn’t appreciate it at the time.

This paying more attention to God in the daily, which we have been referring to as ‘God-winks’ moments, have been furnishing our conversations in the small groups giving us a real sense of wonder and awe...

We are also looking forward to our next Acorn Groups weekend retreat in June which will be based around John 15: 5, “*I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing*”. The main thrusts of the talks will be about the fruitfulness which comes when we trust, are open



Sarah Layzell reports on the latest Acorn initiative

and remain faithful to God.

It is always great to hear people’s experiences so, below, Esmeralda and Lesley, share what it has meant being part of an Acorn group...

“I was born and raised Catholic, but at best, I was a badly formed one. The many gaps in the practice of my faith limited me to being a Catholic in form rather than in substance.

I knew that these gaps needed to be filled before I could reach the deeper spirituality that I craved. The Acorn Groups are filling those gaps...

I think of my Acorn group as a flower because flowers are beautiful, healing and bring tremendous joy. A flower in full bloom is God’s perfect creation at a glance. In the spectrum of our human existence, our 90-minute Acorn bi-monthly meetings can feel that way.

My Acorn group is where, together with my steadfast spiritual friends and without fear of judgement, I can explore my faith, try to make sense of life’s suffering, share sorrows and joys.

We learn to be giving and generous because this is how God loves us. Thanks to being part of an Acorn group, I was able to grasp the meaning of ‘in the image of Christ’. My image of Christ was quite fuzzy before and it has become clearer and sharper, inspiring me to try to become a better person.

I seek daily prayer because, in the words of Pope Francis, ‘without prayer, our life and mission loses all its meaning, strength and fervour’ and ‘life can seem tedious and bothersome’. Surprisingly, it now feels safe to let go and put myself in God’s

hands. This realisation has given me the confidence to seek God’s purpose – and not anyone else’s – for me. While Bible readings can still feel too abstract to be relatable, I persevere thanks to my Acorn group friends who patiently decode their messages for me.

I hope that your path will lead you to an Acorn Group and I pray that you find in it the same fulfilment that I have.”

“I approached my first Acorn group meetings with nerves, trepidation, and I guess, an element of reluctance. Why? Having completed my Alpha course I, (like many others) was part of a close group where we not only explored prayer but also had deep meaningful discussions about religious belief and the nature of God. I was desperate to continue my learning and journey about what it really means to place God in the centre of your life with friends. I had never before been able to share and discuss my faith with like-minded friends. Could my new Acorn group (a group of strangers) match this? I did not think so.

One year on, I look forward to the sessions as much as I did as with the Alpha group. I now have another group of like-minded friends who support each other actively through prayer – our WhatsApp group is rarely quiet! – and we are led by inspirational leaders who actively fuel my thirst for learning and growth.

The group work together to support each other and I feel that each of us is in a hammock cradled by the rest of the group. Each session is both stimulating and thoughtful and funny – we laugh, we learn, and we pray together. It is wonderful.”

If you would like to find out more about the Acorn groups or join a group, please email Sarah in the first instance acorn@st.peterswinchester.org.uk

But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord.... *Micah 3:8*

Stories calling for a change of heart

Liza Nahajski gives an account of *The Letter* – a film about dialogue and hope by award winning 'Off The Fence Productions'

As the world's media turned its attention to Egypt and the gathering of nations at COP27 in November 2022, the parish Laudato Si group in Winchester hosted a public screening of *The Letter* a new film about the climate crisis.

A small group of people gather with Pope Francis and share their stories calling for 'a change of heart'.

A chief from the Amazon represents Indigenous People; a climate refugee from Senegal represents the Poor; two scientists from Hawaii represent Nature; and a climate activist from India represents Youth.

We see how compassionate dialogue is transformational. St Francis was the inspiration for us to respond with a renewed wonder and reverence for nature through his beautiful prayer of praise to God 'Laudato Si'.

The film show was a great success with over 60 guests from our parish, other churches, local climate action groups and political parties, among those gathered in the Pastoral Centre. The stories of displacement, threats and loss were shared in compassionate conversations.

The film also explored the reverence different faiths express for the planet that sustains us. The beautiful imagery captured a sense of the transcendent experienced in the grandeur and wonder of our world. We were challenged not to allow ourselves to be enslaved to destructive behaviours.

Many people stayed to share feelings, values and inspirations to action. Our diverse audience shared compassion and a desire to act justly now and for future generations.

A local Green Party councillor commented: "The simple idea of bringing together four of the different



voices that Pope Francis called for in Laudato Si was a very powerful way of presenting some of the issues around the Climate Emergency and to highlight the need for action from every one of us... Films like this and the stories that it tells are crucial in encouraging people to 'try to be the change you want to see in the world'. Thank you for sharing. I hope that many more people watch this film."

We were heartened that many people were keen to share the film with others and we were particularly keen to engage with younger people so we were delighted when Winchester University Department of Philosophy, Religion and Liberal Arts screened the film in January 2023.

Dr Marika Rose – Senior Lecturer in Philosophical Theology, said: "I was personally really interested in the inter-religious dialogue aspect of it; kind of surprised honestly that this seemed to be seen as an opportunity simply to work alongside other faiths rather than as an opportunity for evangelism! Thanks again for suggesting it, it was a great way to start the semester."

We also looked forward to sharing this with Winchester College and Peter Symonds Religious Studies and Philosophy departments in March.

Do you know schools or other groups who might share this film?

You can also watch it yourself and

share this link with friends

<https://scanner.topsec.com/?d=2475&r=show&u=https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rps9bs85BII&t=640c04b375fe540110a137b887bc5214737527e6>

If you are interested in environmental and ecological matters then consider joining the parish Laudato Si' group. We are particularly looking for more involvement from our young people (contact Jo Donaldson), looking to extend the viewing of *The Letter* (contact Liza Nahajski) and getting more contributors to the Laudato Si' section of our parish weekly newsletter (contact Mike Slinn, Beth Taylor or Mary Siddall).

Diocesan Medal

Parishioner Sue Masser has been presented with a Diocesan Medal by Bishop Phillip Egan in recognition of the valuable work she has done for the diocese, serving as a member of the Trustee Board and sub-committees since 2016. She has also dealt with many sensitive issues to do with clergy retirement on the Management Board of the Priests Retirement Fund.

CrossKeys welcomes letters, stories and photographs
Deadline for Summer 2023 edition:
 Monday, 19 June 2023
Editor: Brian Mustoe 01962 854241
 Email: bmustoe@btinternet.com
 Printed by Sarsen Press 01962 854281

Then the Spirit came upon Ama'sai, chief of the thirty...1 Chronicles 12:18