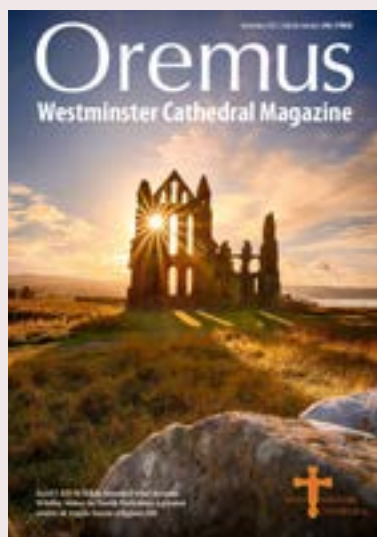


Oremus

Westminster Cathedral Magazine

St Nicholas secretly provides three poor girls with gold purses as dowries, prefiguring his later role as Santa Claus

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Oremus, the magazine of Westminster Cathedral, reflects the life of the Cathedral and the lives of those who make it a place of faith in central London. If you think that you would like to contribute an article or an item of news, please contact the Editor.

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St Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, is depicted in a work of charity in a miniature from the Book of Hours of Simon de Varie (KB 74 G37) by the Master of Jean Rolin II.

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A Work Proceeding!

Canon Stuart Wilson

I am writing this on the eve of All Saints and sitting calmly in my rooms letting the day drift by. It was different 27 years ago. I was getting ready to make the journey to the Cathedral where on All Saints Day 1996, 11 of us were ordained priests at the hands of Cardinal Basil Hume (of blessed memory).

I had served the Lord as an Anglican priest for 22 years but along with many others, I asked if I could become a member of the Catholic Church with the hope that I might be discerned to have a priestly vocation.

After the Ordination, I went back to my parish of St Scholastica's in Clapton and my Parish Priest, Fr (now Bishop) Paul McAleenan and settled down to work. However, as I was to learn: never get too settled, as priesthood is a work of *process*!

By January 1997, I had packed my bags and *proceeded* to a new parish. It was St Mary of the Angels in Bayswater where I worked with Fr Mark Langham who had taken over from the well-loved Fr Michael Hollings. It was an amazing parish and I learnt so much from the priests and people. There was 'never a dull moment'. I learnt to serve the Lord at the altar but also at the tables for the homeless in the Fr Michael Hollings Centre.

Two years there and then the Cardinal asked me: 'Will you go to Our Lady Help of Christians in Kentish Town and become their Parish Priest?' I was daunted, but agreed and I *proceeded* to that wonderful parish. I was succeeding Archbishop George Stack and Canon Pat Browne in a terrifically lively community. Sunday saw the church full with as many seated in the upper balcony as on the ground floor. Two priestly colleagues, Frs Clive Lee and Michael O'Boy, supported me. Generous parishioners meant that



the Gospel was lived out in many ways including caring for the homeless and hungry in the parish hall and responding to the many rings of the doorbell.

Just when I had got used to everything, I got another request from the new Archbishop, Cormac Murphy O'Connor. He wanted me to help him put a new idea into practice. Thus was born the renewal programme *At Your Word, Lord*. I *proceeded* to Vaughan House with a team consisting of a religious sister, and four dynamic laypeople, 2 women and 2 men. Over the next three years, I visited many parishes as we trained and supported the priests and lay leadership. We encouraged the renewal of the people in the parish and it was a wonderful time. I lived in OLV Kensington, where I again had priest colleagues with whom to share life.

In the autumn of 2006, I was given a Sabbatical; I *proceeded* to the Diocese of Parramatta in Australia and still treasure every single day spent there. On my return, I was asked to *proceed* to St Mary's, Cadogan Street, Chelsea. I think the phrase that best describes this period is 'helping to build up'. Chelsea people are always on the move. Many left to return to home but many new people arrived. We began to look at refashioning the Church and the Rectory. We worked, prayed and paid for everything. It was such a lively time as we grew in every way. In 2007, the Cardinal appointed me a Canon. I *proceeded* to my stall.

In 2015, I received another request and I *proceeded* to Allan Hall Seminary as Spiritual Director. What an amazing four years that was. Already, I was leading Vocations Promotion in the Diocese and now I was able to help develop these men in their response to the Lord's call to priesthood. Each ordination of a new priest filled me with joy and a little pride that I had had a hand in helping this happen.

On 2 September 2019, my life changed again. I left the Seminary and *proceeded* to St James', Spanish Place. It was a joy to be in that beautiful church each day and meet the many visitors and a privilege to play a part in the Companions Café run by the Order of Malta.

In October 2021, I *proceeded* to St Mary Moorfields and St Joseph, Bunhill Row to work alongside Fr Chris Vipers – a friend of many years. I have made wonderful pastoral friendships during this time. It is great to live and work in and around the City of London. I love having an altar to celebrate Holy Mass each day with God's Holy People. I am not sure if I shall *proceed* anywhere else; but Lord - help me look forward to that journey when I proceed to my Father's House.

Fr John writes



Regular readers will know that I like to draw your attention to current exhibitions that may be of interest. This edition features two, one within walking distance, at the National Gallery and the other a Eurostar-ride away, in case you fancy an autumnal day out in Paris, although beware, as the objects on display there are loans from our own V & A Museum.

I was taken aback the other when Richard, our Head Sacristan, brought out the eight volumes of the 'Bulley Bible', surely one of the Cathedral's more surprising treasures; he is writing about it this month and next and you can judge for yourselves from the images just what a superlative work of art it is – the volume containing the gospels has been used in the Cathedral for some of the most solemn celebrations of the liturgical year.

Philip Hodge's century-old Chorister Memoir continues to provide a fascinating behind-the-scenes account of how music was made. I particularly like Fr Collings' remark on the singing of lengthy *Tenebrae* services: 'the choir boys perform all this music on a penny bun and a glass of watered milk' – it is not so nowadays!

Away from the Cathedral and indeed from home, Mr Scott Cree, the head of SVP School, writes about taking a Year Group away on a residential week in Surrey and of the educational and personal benefits that the children gain. School outings are hard work and require considerable organisation, so we were pleased to welcome the choir of Glenstal Abbey School in Ireland to sing a Saturday Vigil Mass during their recent UK tour.

One area of diocesan life that has grown significantly in the last few years has been the work of Caritas Westminster in support of all manner of social need and as advertisements for 'luxury' Advent Calendars (twenty-five different gins, anyone?) proliferate, so I make no apology for giving over two pages to the Caritas Advent Calendar's suggestion for everyday things we can donate to help those who have little or nothing to look forward to as Christmas approaches.

Cathedral penitents will remember gratefully Fr Keith Sawyer who has retired from his regular hearing of confessions here. However, sorting through a pile of papers, I came across a distinctively hand-written piece by him and have included it as a reminder of his particular voice and style.

This December edition accompanies us through the Season of Advent and the January edition is planned, as is customary, to be available in the Cathedral and online for Christmas; my apologies to postal subscribers who may have to wait a little longer for their copies.

Fr John Scott

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The Bulley Bible: Part 1

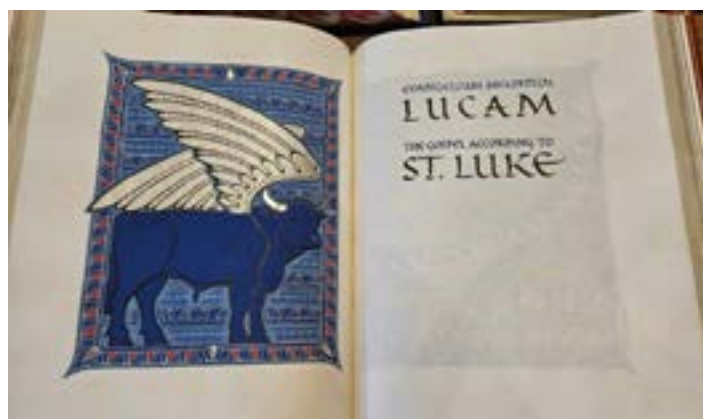
Richard Hawker, Head Sacristan

This month I would like to share with you one of my very favourite things in the sacristy. A true labour of love and devotion: Edward Bulley's bible. I shall tell you more about Bulley next time, but for the moment I want to focus on his work.

What we have are eight hand written, hand illuminated, hand bound volumes. They contain the entirety of the bible, written out in Latin (Vulgate) and English (Revised Standard Version). It is divided into eight volumes (six for the Old Testament, two for the New Testament). The Bulley Bible represents possibly the first time, since the popularization of the printing press that such a work had been undertaken; it is almost certainly the first one that gives both and Latin and English rendering of the scriptures. All of the work: writing, illustrating, to binding them and making the protective boxes are all the work of Bulley. The style of these volumes is timeless. There are allusions to other great illuminated texts, such as the Book of Kells and the Lindisfarne Gospels, but we also see the influence of the likes of David Jones and Eric Gill. The materials used for the books were the best that Bulley could buy: handmade paper for its strength and longevity, Chinese ink, because it does not fade, and the best colourings that he could afford.

Bulley was taught by Edward Johnston the renowned calligrapher (we owe Transport for London's font 'Gill sans' to him) in the 1920s. This influence is clear in the script Bulley used, which is based on one of Johnston's own: 'Fountain'. This script was drawn from the Winchester school of calligraphy of the

tenth century: once again, giving an impression of timelessness. He deliberately avoided any kind of figurative illustration in the text itself. Some of the end papers he did illustrate, such as the book of Gospels, with the symbols of the four Evangelists. He did not feel he could pit himself against artists such as Rembrandt in terms of illustrating scripture. However, he could not resist embellishing the Prophets, and so most of them have something at the beginning of each book of the prophets: Daniel in the lions' den, the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel, a huge wave for Jonah, and, most interestingly, a bombsite for the Lamentations - recalling the Blitz some years previously.



The title page of St Luke's gospel



Daniel in the lions' den



A selection of images and book bindings



A typical page of text, from the Letter to the Galatians

The bindings of the books are as spectacular as their contents; these are inspired by jewelled bindings of the tenth century. Whilst Bulley knew something of binding, and silversmithing, and the setting of precious stones, he did not have access to the necessary equipment, and so enrolled as a student of the London College of Printing, and Sutton College of Liberal Arts, in order to improve his skills and have the use of the necessary equipment for this great labour of love.



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If you would like to become a Companion of Oremus, see page 2

'When the English spoke French'

Lucien de Guise

The tear gas has cleared from the *Place de la Concorde*. During the summer, Paris was burning with discontent and the peaceful-sounding square was at the eye of the storm. Street riots may have been part of the reason for fewer visitors than deserved to a remarkable exhibition. *Medieval Treasures from the Victoria and Albert Museum: When the English spoke French* is a provocative title in an era when the Brexit word is still heard daily. What the public rarely remembers on either side of the English Channel is how closely tied the British Isles and the Continent once were.



The 'Luck of Edenhall', made in Syria or Egypt, is England's most treasured example of medieval enamelled glass

For 300 years, the ruling class of England did indeed speak French; mainly because they were French. These centuries were also the peak of religious art in England. Once upon a time, the whole of Christendom looked to England for embroidery. This was before there was a Church of England (1534). When Europe was all Catholic, the term *Opus Anglicanum* was the highest praise that a piece of embroidered cloth for church use could aspire to. In 2016 the Victoria and Albert Museum put on an exhibition with that unashamedly Latin, Catholic-sounding title. Seven years later, the V&A is still the main supplier to museums around the world.

The new host venue in Paris is less established than the V&A. The *Hôtel de la Marine* is a 250-year-old building that stands majestically on the *Place de la Concorde*. It has only been an exhibition space for two years. In a country that still has a deeply anti-clerical vein running through it, the spirit of secularism might have worked against such a Catholic exhibition. The tenant of the *Hôtel* that has put on this show is, paradoxically, the Al Thani Collection. Owned by a member of Qatar's royal family, it is an indication of how the Islamic world can be more open to other cultures than is sometimes suggested.

This is not an exhibition on how Islamic art influenced the West – which is a theme that many museums in Europe and America have worked on. It is all about the cultural achievements of an outpost on the fringes of Europe. There was also a little help from its Continental neighbours, when everyone was part of one big, moderately happy, Catholic family. Christendom was less about borders in the past, and much less about language. The exhibition could have been titled 'When the English spoke Latin.' The language of Rome did, of course, go out of fashion in Britain after the Protestant Reformation, especially for religious purposes.

During those centuries that England's elite preferred to speak French rather than English, the land of the Anglo-Saxons developed a highly visible spirituality. The Al Thani Collection exhibition shows this off admirably. Every piece is from the V&A, which makes a visit to our nearby museum in South Kensington a bit dispiriting at the moment. From a time when the only art that existed was devotional items, the exhibition is a reminder of what an inspiration faith can be.

It is often hard to know where these items were made, and their history is even more complicated. Many were kept



Carved around 1150, this *Deposition* is typically English in its expressiveness

in France after the Reformation and then brought back to England in the 19th and 20th centuries. The exhibition could have featured the Cathedral's very own Our Lady of Westminster, which has just such a history. It had been kept in France from the 15th or 16th century until 1954, when it was auctioned in Paris and brought back to its homeland by Cardinal Griffin. Another work that has resided in England much longer is the so-called 'Luck of Edenhall'. Legend says that a crusader brought it back from the Middle East, or that it had been made by fairies. Family superstition stated that the owner's good fortune was dependent on keeping the glass intact: *If this cup should break or fall, farewell the luck of Edenhall*.

Some objects that will seem new and exciting for visitors to Paris are more familiar for London audiences. One star of the show is an enamelled reliquary casket of St Thomas Becket. Made in Limoges, France circa 1180-90, this V&A acquisition became a centrepiece of the British Museum's exhibition on St Thomas two years ago. This was one of the few exhibitions with a Christian theme that

Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum



The greatest delight of the 'Gloucester Candlestick' is its gilded details

Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum

Well away from Canterbury, the *Place de la Concorde* has its own grisly past that the *Hôtel* is happy to bypass in favour of the untainted and the exquisite. This is where the guillotine was placed for King Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette and more than 1,000 others. Sainly Catholic victims were mostly beheaded in another square nearby. Sixteen female Carmelites refused to comply with Revolutionary orders and were brought to Paris for their martyrdom. So inspiring is their story, a musical work was written about them in the 1950s by Francis Poulenc. Often called the most Catholic opera of the 20th century, 'Dialogue of the Carmelites' was staged at Glyndebourne during the summer. The ambience was heightened by Poulenc's chilling addition of the sound of the guillotine swooshing down on the nuns, who were fast-tracked for canonisation by Pope Francis last year. Cross-Channel dialogue is still happening. The exhibition ends just after Epiphany, on 7th January.

the UK's flagship museum has staged in recent times. St Thomas truly embodies the internationalism of Europe at the time. The martyred Archbishop of Canterbury was himself the London-born son of French parents. During one of the difficult periods in his relationship with King Henry II, Becket fled to exile in France. It was also in France, where he preferred to live, that King Henry II of England issued his notorious and poorly worded instruction to a group of homicidal knights: 'Will nobody rid me of this turbulent priest?'

There is much more than Becket on display at the *Hôtel de la Marine*. The materials range from elephant ivory to walrus ivory — and much more. There are rare survivors in gold, silver and gemstones and examples of *Opus Anglicanum*. They have gone easy on the gory relics, though. Everything about the *Hôtel* is about superb aesthetics and seeking not to offend. The British Museum exhibition was supposed to feature Becket's bloodstained shirt from his murder in Canterbury Cathedral. Due to Covid lockdown logistics, the Vatican was unable to send this relic to London and seems not to have been asked by the Paris exhibition organisers. Maybe Westminster Cathedral could borrow it one day? It would make a sobering addition to the festive season as St Thomas Becket was martyred in the middle of Christmastide (1170).



English embroidery was the most sought after for church use in medieval Europe

Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum

Advent Giving Calendar



Download the calendar here →








Advent Giving Calendar

Advent is a special season in the Church's year when we prepare to celebrate the coming of Christ. However, with the cost of living crisis, many in our communities are facing difficulties.

This Advent Giving Calendar is designed for you to use this season as a time to think about those who might need some extra support this Christmas. You can follow along each day and make up a food parcel that you generously donate to a food project in your church or school, or one local to you.

How to use the Advent Giving Calendar

-  Ask your church or school if they run a food bank, food collection, a community meal, or any other kind of food outreach, and if they would like some donations.
-  If you are not sure, contact us at Caritas and we can help you find a food project near you. Our contact details can be found at the bottom of this page.
-  Each day in Advent, find the corresponding snowman on the calendar, which will tell you what you need to buy to add to your collection. You could team up with others too, and share the collecting between you.
-  Take the collected items to your chosen food project. You might want to take them in early, to make sure they are there in time to help people this Christmas.
-  Join the Advent Giving Calendar community online. Spread the word about the calendar and share photos of your collecting on social media.

Use the hashtag: #AdventGivingCalendar

and tag us:



@CaritasWestminster





@CaritasWestm




@Caritas_Westminster

Not able to donate certain items?

-  Give what you can, or donate something that you would like to receive.
-  Ask your local food project what other help they may need. Perhaps you could volunteer this winter, or spread the word about what they do.

If you need support with food

-  Please do speak to your church or school and they can tell you what support there is in your area. You can contact Caritas too.

Who made this calendar?

This calendar was created by Caritas Westminster, the social outreach charity of the Diocese of Westminster. One of our areas of work is to support parishes and schools that provide food to communities. There are over 300 food projects in the diocese, including food banks and pantries, food collections, food sharing and giving, and community meal initiatives. Almost all are run by volunteers, working tirelessly to end poverty and create connection and community through food. Use this calendar to help support their efforts this winter.

If you would like to find out more, please contact us below:

cfc@rcdow.org.uk

www.caritaswestminster.org.uk

020 7931 6077



Pesellino, Painter of *cose piccole*

National Gallery

The first-ever career-spanning exhibition dedicated to the Renaissance painter Francesco Pesellino (about 1422-1457) opens at the National Gallery in December 2023. Active in Florence in the mid-15th century, Pesellino had a notable career but his early death at 35 and the subsequent misattribution of his surviving works have made him one of the greatest Renaissance painters that few people have heard of. This exhibition seeks to remedy that by presenting a monographic display of his achievements through works in the National Gallery Collection as well as key works from across Europe and the USA, including the Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, USA, the Musée du Louvre, Paris, the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon, and The Courtauld Gallery, London.

Born Francesco di Stefano in around 1422, he was known as Pesellino, after his grandfather Pesello who raised him and likely introduced him to painting. Pesellino's painterly ambition, however, far outstripped his grandfather's and he probably gained experience with other painters given his ability across various media. Defining features of Pesellino's career were his exceptional talent in the painting of *cose piccole* (small things), his propensity for working in collaboration and his commissions by Florence's ruling Medici family. These three characteristics contributed to establishing his reputation among early chroniclers and historians.

The National Gallery is uniquely placed to introduce his work to a broader audience given the presence in its collection of two of his undisputed masterpieces; two *cassone* (chest) panels depicting the Story of David, about 1453-5, and the magnificent Pistoia *Santa Trinità* Altarpiece, 1455-60.

Fifty years on from when they were first displayed at the National Gallery, the two Story of David panels form the centrepiece of the exhibition. Probably dating from the last years of his career, they demonstrate the depth and breadth of Pesellino's talents as a painter of complex narratives, ceremonial splendour, animals, and intricate detail. The panels have recently undergone an extensive conservation project and viewers can newly appreciate the care with which he designed and executed these remarkable works of art.

Displayed in the round, in cases, visitors can get closer to these intricate works than ever before and appreciate them not just as works of art, but also as objects intended for domestic use in the Renaissance home. Key to this redisplay is the opportunity to untangle the symbolism, which is at times playful and witty. Such symbols and heraldic devices which, scattered throughout the panels' imagery, and even the subject of David himself, hint that these panels were a Medici commission.

From the domestic to the divine, the Pistoia Trinity altarpiece is one of only two large-scale altarpieces he is known to have



The Pistoia *Santa Trinità* Altarpiece, 1455-60.

produced. Left unfinished at his death, it was completed in the workshop of Filippo Lippi, for whom Pesellino had completed a predella for the Novitiate chapel in *Santa Croce* 15 years earlier. This is the earliest *pala* (an altarpiece with a single main panel) in the National Gallery. As one of the few nearly complete altarpieces in the collection, the work reveals much about his posthumous reputation.

Pesellino's early death clouded his legacy: his works were completed by collaborators such as Lippi, and the attributions of his works and those of his grandfather became confused by later writers. However, even given his short life, Pesellino had a significant influence on the artists that came after him. Giorgio Vasari included him in his *Lives of Artists*, writing: 'From what we know of him, if he had lived longer, he would have achieved much more than he did'. Although his career as a painter of altarpieces was cut short, his small-scale devotional works also inspired the following generation of painters: his *Madonna and Child* (1450s), kindly lent by the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon, has between 20 and 30 known imitations.

The exhibition is accompanied by the first fully illustrated catalogue dedicated to the artist to be published in English. This is also the first book-length publication on the artist in over 120 years. Dr Laura Llewellyn, Curator of Italian Paintings before 1500, says: 'Works by Pesellino are rare indeed, but at the National Gallery we are lucky enough to have two of his undisputed masterpieces in the collection. The recent conservation treatment of the magnificent *Stories of David* panels has provided an opportunity to bring this remarkable though little-known painter into the spotlight and to celebrate his achievements with the first-ever exhibition dedicated to his short career'.

Pesellino: A Renaissance Master Revealed

The National Gallery, Room 46, Admission free:
7 December 2023 - 10 March 2024

Catholic Listeners launches its website

Catholic Listeners, the ground-breaking telephone helpline aimed at both Catholics who have drifted away from the Church but are considering coming back and those who want to explore aspects of their faith, has launched a new website.

Based at the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Farm Street, Catholic Listeners was the initiative of its parish priest, Fr Dominic Robinson SJ. It was set up 18 months ago with funding from the Cardinal's Lenten appeal and since then its volunteer listeners have helped over 300 people. Many of those calls were initially from those who had struggled to remain connected to the faith during lockdown, but the service has now taken on a wider remit.

The new website will enable Catholic Listeners to respond online to the most common questions about Catholicism, with links to pages which explore the

Catechism, scripture and Church documents, whilst the next stage of development will be an online personal response facility to complement the telephone service.

Fr Dominic says that online searches about the existence of God jumped during the pandemic to their highest point since Google first began recording such data in 2004. However, searchers had to scroll through twelve pages of results before they found an answer to that question from a Catholic organisation. The new website will utilise Search Engine Optimisation to ensure that it stays near the top of Google's search results.

One section of the website is entitled 'Life's big questions' and addresses issues such as 'How can I come back to church after a long time away?' and 'What does the Catholic Church teach about

forgiveness?' There are links to specialist support organisations for those who want to link to a Catholic counsellor as well as to 'Good to Talk', a discussion forum at Farm Street where people can explore and engage with faith-related questions.

The Project Manager for the website is Ade Owusu-Ansah, a Westminster Cathedral parishioner and volunteer, who has said that new topics will continue to be added to the website in future including advice on how to find a spiritual director: 'As we say on the website, "Wherever you are on your journey, we are here to help" and I would like to encourage everyone to visit the website to see what we have to offer and tell friends and family about us'. Catholic Listeners can be found at www.catholiclisteners.com and the telephone helpline can be reached on 0800 448 0704 from 4pm – 7pm on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays.

Leaving a Legacy to the Cathedral in my Will

Mary

The Cathedral is very important to me. I relish being able to spend quiet time in front of the Blessed Sacrament and what a privilege it is to be able to attend daily Mass. I thank God especially for this.

I love the grand liturgies, which the Cathedral does with such aplomb. I also love the quiet low-key Masses, like the weekday 8am, which generally only has a handful of faithful, parishioners praying devoutly in the nave.

Apart from all these spiritual attributes, I love the Cathedral for its large open spaces, where one can be in the middle of the congregation and yet not feel crowded or hemmed in. I love the sense of grandeur, arising partly from the beautiful mosaics and marbles.

To paraphrase Newman, here is a Church.

I love the peace of the Cathedral which is present even when groups of visitors are wandering round or chattering. In some strange way these can all be blocked out and one can still feel uplifted and made aware of the presence of God in this holy place. I feel inspired and moved when I see individuals dotted around the Cathedral praying fervently and peacefully in the middle of all the activity around them.

For all these reasons I will be remembering the Cathedral, this very special place, in my will. After all, it would only be giving back, in a small way, in token of all the enormous blessings I have received here.



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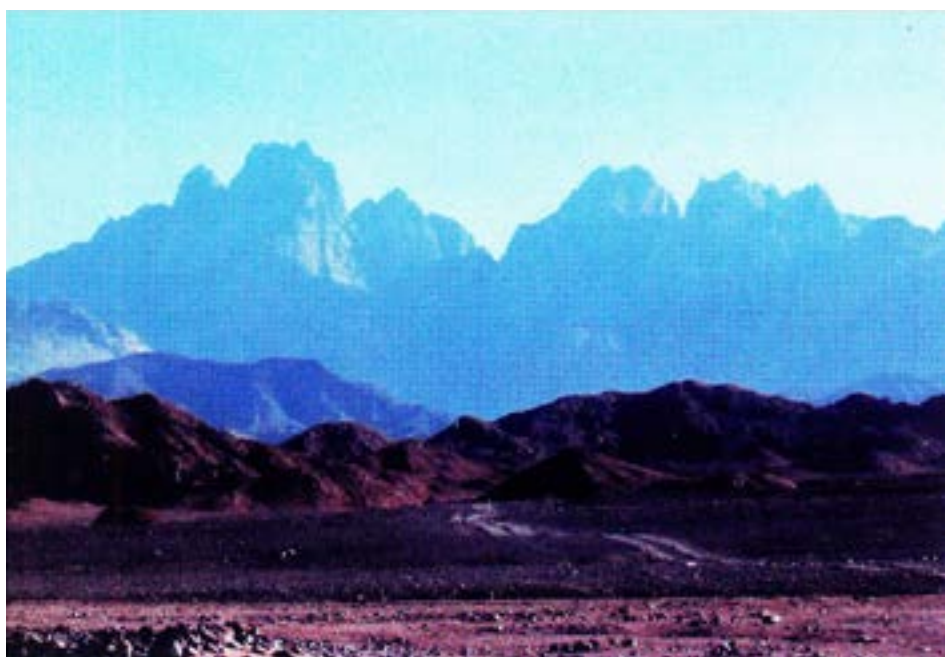

Imperial porphyry from Egypt

Patrick Rogers

Imperial Porphyry, also called Egyptian Porphyry and Purple, is the most valuable of all the Cathedral's marbles. Known to the Romans as *Lapis Porphyrites* and to the Byzantines as the Stone of Rome, the quarries were imperial property and the porphyry itself initially reserved for the Roman emperors. When it finally became available for purchase and a price was put on it by the Emperor Diocletian in 301 AD, it was valued at 250 denarii (£25) a cubic foot – the highest price for all Roman marbles.

The name porphyry is derived from the Latin *purpureus*, meaning purple, the imperial colour. It is dark purplish red spotted with white crystals and is an ignimbrite, molten magma formed at very high temperatures in the earth's interior in the Pre-Cambrian period – more than 570 million years ago – which has cooled and solidified below the surface. The quarries are situated either side of a wadi called *Abu Ma'amel* and some 3,500ft up a mountain, *Gebel Dokhan*, the Mountain of Smoke, in Egypt's Eastern Desert. Unpaved Roman roads run from there to *Keneh* (Qena), 96 miles to the south-west on a bend of the Nile near Thebes, and to the Red Sea port of *Myos Hormos* (Mouse Harbour), 23 miles to the north-east.

To these remote and mountain-enclosed quarries at Gebel Dokhan, Mons Porphyrites to the Romans, were sent stonemasons, imperial civil servants and support staff protected by soldiers. Contemporary sources indicate that Christians and other convicts were also sent to work at the quarries from the 2nd to the early 4th centuries in AD in this, the Age of Martyrs, though no proof of this has yet been found at the site. At the quarry face porphyry blocks were split away along a line of deep incisions (cut by chisel), by inserting metal – or possibly



Mons Porphyrites – The Mountain of Smoke – in the Egyptian Eastern Desert.

wooden – wedges, the latter then being soaked with water to make them swell. The blocks were then shaped with chisels and lowered down the steep mountain slipways on wooden sledges tethered by ropes to stone cairns placed on either side. Once on level ground the porphyry blocks were loaded from ramps onto wagons to be pulled by oxen the 100 miles or so down to the Nile and from there by water to Alexandria and thence to Rome.

The settlement has not been fully excavated, but coins, inscriptions, graffiti and written records indicate that the quarries were worked at least as early as the first century AD, one inscription in a shrine dedicated to the god Serapis being discovered from the reign of the Emperor Tiberius and dated 17-19 AD. But increasing external pressure on the boundaries of the Roman Empire, the need for the Roman army to be deployed closer to home, and perhaps the relaxation of the harsh laws against Christians, finally

led to the settlement being abandoned at some stage in the 4th century after the time of Constantinople the Great (306-337 AD), all the signs being that the exodus was abrupt and hurried.

For 1,400 years *Mons Porphyrites* was known only to the Bedouin. It was rediscovered by the British explorers James Burton and Sir Gardner Wilkinson in 1822-23. Wilkinson made detailed notes and plans and sent back samples of porphyry to England. Others followed



The ruined Roman fort at the centre of the Gebel Dokhan quarry complex, with quarries behind.



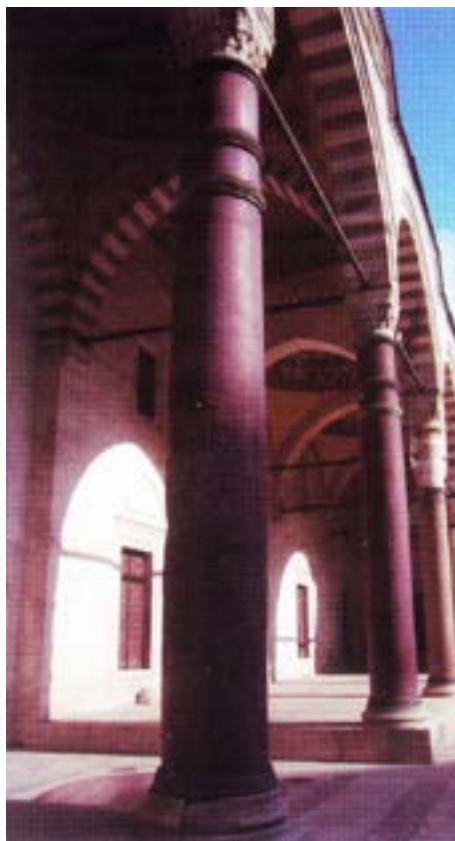
The four tetrarchs carved in porphyry in the 6th century and taken from Constantinople to stand outside the Treasury of St Mark's, Venice.

and in 1887, William Brindley, co-founder of the firm which was later to undertake most of the marblework in Westminster Cathedral, also set off for the quarries. Leaving *Kenah* with his wife, 19 attendants and 15 camels, he reached the mountain in six days and, following the old Roman tracks, climbed up to the quarries where he found porphyry of every description and variety, some partly wedged from the face. On returning to *Kenah* and then to Cairo, Brindley negotiated a concession to rework the quarries.

In 1888 the London Trades Directory entry for Farmer & Brindley included 'Quarry proprietors of ancient Egyptian Porphyry.' Two years later Brindley announced that 280 small blocks of porphyry had just arrived in London. He planned to use *Myos Hormos*, less than 25 miles away on the Red Sea, to send the porphyry through the Suez Canal to England. But the combination of the great hardness of the rock, the absence of sufficient water and the availability of only rock and pebble-strewn and partly washed-away Roman roads and the need to carry heavy loads over soft sand in approaching the harbour, proved insurmountable. By 1907 the quarries had still not been worked commercially and Brindley was calling on others to take up the challenge. A few

blocks were used for public buildings in Cairo in the 1930s and in 1989 an English sculptor, Stephen Cox, travelled to *Gebel Dokhan* to obtain porphyry for the new Cairo Opera House. He produced several more works in porphyry including the altar, font, consecration crosses and Stations of the Cross for St Paul's Church, Haringey, in 1993. Since then boulders of porphyry from the wadi floor below the quarries have been supplied at the rate of about 150 cubic metres a year by an Egyptian firm, Field Investments Egypt, but the old Roman quarries remain untouched as archaeological sites.

In the first century AD the elder Pliny wrote that the porphyry quarries of Egypt could furnish blocks of any dimension, however large. The Emperor Constantine's column in Constantinople (still standing, though much damaged) was 100ft high, made up of nine cylindrical drums each 11ft in height and diameter. Two centuries later, eight columns almost 40ft high were used to decorate the Church of Santa Sophia, Constantinople, sent to the Emperor Justinian from Valerian's Temple of the Sun in Rome. Smaller columns decorate the façade of St Mark's, Venice, with more porphyry used for the pulpits.



Porphyry columns in the courtyard of the Suleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul, probably taken from the Byzantine Church of the Holy Apostles.

There are some 300 porphyry columns in Europe (mainly in Rome), numerous sarcophagi and innumerable slabs, including a circular one 8ft 6in across on the floor of St Peter's, Rome – traditionally where Holy Roman Emperors from the time of Charlemagne were crowned.

In the 12th and 13th centuries, the Cosmati school of craftsmen in marble and mosaic, taking their inspiration from the Arab-Norman-Byzantine style to be seen in Sicily, revived the ancient art of *Opus Sectile* in Rome by cutting up old marble to form patterns on church floors and furniture. The designs centred on roundels, usually of porphyry, and the practice was widely copied. Original Cosmati work can be seen decorating Henry III's tomb and on the sanctuary floor in Westminster Abbey. The Florentines, notably Francesco del Tadda, also carved porphyry for the Medici family and other wealthy clients at the time of the Renaissance.



Porphyry on the floor of St Paul's Chapel in the Cathedral.

In Westminster Cathedral the pulpit (originally made in Rome) and the floor of St Paul's Chapel are decorated with porphyry roundels, panels and chips in the Cosmatesque manner. The altar in St Paul's and the floor of St Joseph's Chapels are also inset with porphyry while panels decorate the east and west walls of St Patrick's and the east wall of St Andrew's Chapels. According to the *Westminster Cathedral Chronicle* of September 1928, when the west wall of St Patrick's was decorated, the two panels of Purple Porphyry installed there were cut from a block brought to England by Lord Elgin and reputed to have come from the Temple of Diana (Artemis) at Ephesus. If so, they could well have witnessed the riot caused by the activities of St Paul in that city (Acts 19). A single slim porphyry column, almost certainly given by Edward Hutton in 1956, is now used to support a light which burns perpetually in the Holy Souls' Chapel.

Madrigals and a Portrait of Dr Terry

Philip Hodges

The experience of *Tenebrae*

The choir stalls in my day were primitive. Formed in a semi-circle, they were knocked up from cheap soft wood and rose to lectern level and were illuminated by electric bulbs secured to wrought iron hoops attached to the back of the desks. All the wax canvassed supply wires were exposed and anchored by dirty insulating tape. We boys would melt candle wax on the primitive metal shades and fashion it into model aeroplanes during a lull in the service. I was an ace at modelling the ‘Sopwith Pup,’ the fighter plane then chiefly used in aerial dog-fights over the lines in France.

Below the desks were simple shelves with a guard-rail to hold the music and any other impedimenta we had need of. During the long office of *Tenebrae*, which took two and a half hours, we were allowed to take our home-made lemonade in bottles with a sucking straw into choir for there was a prodigious amount of choral work to be got through. The office of *Tenebrae* (Darkness) was, in fact, the two liturgical hours of Matins and Lauds during the Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of Holy Week. Fr Collings suggested that the music list in the public vestibule should be annotated ‘the choir boys perform all this music on a penny bun and a glass of watered milk.’

The service, always in the early spring, commenced about 5.30pm in twilight. As night fell, the gloom of the vast nave added drama to the emotional appeal of the music. In the sanctuary a large triangle of wood was set up as a candelabra bearing 15 candles, 14 brown ones down the sides and one white one at the apex. These candles were extinguished *seriatim* as each psalm was completed as a sort of luminous hour-glass. During the singing of the Canticle of Zachary (Benedictus) at the end of Lauds, the large candles on the High Altar were extinguished and any remaining solitary lights in the nave were switched off. The total darkness of the vast building broken only by a solitary shaded lamp in

the apse during the recitation of the psalm *Miserere mei Deus* was truly dramatic and awe-inspiring. This psalm was recited antiphonally in monotone by the clergy choir and the apse choir. Terry instructed us to mutter our verses in a sort of break-step fashion thus adding a doom-laden aura to the finale.

There is no doubt that the ancient liturgists who designed this service were impresarios of the first rank using night-fall, poetry, visual symbolism and emotional music to illustrate the awful death of Christ on the Cross which was accompanied by darkness over the face of the earth and fearful thunder. When every source of light was extinguished the choir banged their books which produced the sound of distant thunder rolling round the saucer-like domes of the cathedral. The ‘rubric’ in the psalter says *Fit fragor et strepitus aliquantulum* which, being translated means ‘Let a little din and commotion be made’ but this was always liberally interpreted by us boys and the backs of the psalter books showed evidence of this.

The settings of the *Responsoria* or texts from Holy Writ assigned to be sung at *Tenebrae* were by the Spanish mystic composer Tomas Luis da Vittoria in the 16th century and the Lamentations of Jeremiah with their strange Hebraic numerals, Aleph, Beth, Jod, Nun, Gimel, Lamed and Daleth were sung to the settings of our own English genius Thomas Tallis. Tallis’ Lamentations have attained a place in the corpus of music of the golden age and I was surprised, much later in life, to find them in their repertoire of a secular choir.

As has been remarked, Terry was a martinet whose fiery temper had been noted by boy-choristers long before my time. He was inclined to corpulence and, according to Hilda Andrews in her memoir of Terry, *Westminster Retrospect*, he was referred to by the boys as ‘Old Belly-bags’. In my day a boy, driven to the brink of

revolt by Terry’s ungovernable temper, ran out of his office shouting ‘Pot Belly Terry’ and this reverberated along the long corridor outside. As evidence, however, of his occasional ‘sick’ humour I would add something that happened to me personally. Whilst extemporising at the organ during a service, Terry looked up at the long mirror above his music rest and saw, in reflection, myself and Terence McHugh pinching one another. It was one of his ‘bad’ days. He brought the extemporisation to a swift cadence, leaped from the organ stool and descended on us in a raging fury. ‘I’ll see you two boys in my office after service’ he spluttered. In due course, still in choir dress, we knocked at his office door and were admitted by Miss Todd, his young and ‘dishy’ secretary. He was dictating to her an article for *The Queen*, a woman’s glossy magazine. We were told to kneel down in the only space left in that tiny office whilst he continued his dictation.

He had a special punishment book of his own which he took down from a shelf and wrote out the details of our offence, to wit: ‘After repeated warnings (this was his standard opening) these two boys continued to fool around in choir to the distraction of myself and the rest of the choir during this morning’s High Mass.’

No sooner had he signed this not strictly accurate statement when there was a knock at the door. Because McHugh was kneeling immediately behind the door he was obliged to rise and answer the knock. Outside a man’s voice said: ‘Good morning, could I please speak to Dr Terry?’ This was the unmistakable voice of an amateur composer, a lawyer, whom Terry had obliged by performing one of his works. This man was in the habit of importuning Terry to discuss some of his other music, much to Terry’s annoyance since he was an incorrigible time waster. Terry signalled to McHugh: ‘I’m not at home’ and McHugh, never at a loss for the mot juste said: ‘I’m sorry but Dr Terry is out at the moment’ and closed the door rapidly.



© Library of Congress

Tenebrae on Spy Wednesday 1941 at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem

Terry told us to stand. As he heaved a sigh of relief he drew a line through the details of our crime in the punishment book and added: 'Owing to the presence of these two boys in my office I was preserved from an unutterable bore who called'. We were then dismissed with one of his sinister smiles.

Journalism and public life

Terry as a journalist knew well how to trail his coat in musical controversy in the press. In this he may be regarded as the counterpart of his cousin, J F Runciman, who was renowned as a journalist for his bite and provocativeness of his contributions to the *Saturday Review*. Terry was a subscriber to Durrant's Press Cuttings Agency and any reference to him in the national press was carefully monitored by this agency and supplied to him by post. I often saw these extracts piled up on his desk.

He was popular as a witty lecturer in academic circles. During the War, society women would ask him to provide music for exclusive soirées they used to hold at one another's houses in aid of some war charity at, say, a guinea a ticket. This price assured the hostess that only the 'quality' would attend. I remember such a soirée in Queen Anne's Gate, St James' Park, when we sang folk songs. Among

the promoters were Lady Glenconner, The Hon Eleanor Brougham and Captain (later Sir) Osbert Sitwell.

In preparation for this affair we boys were taken to the flat of Mrs Gordon Woodhouse, the well-known harpsichordist somewhere in Belgravia. She greeted us in a turban and an exotic get-up. At the far end of the lounge was a harpsichord and lying about on various chairs were sets of virginals like so many infants' black coffins. Mrs Woodhouse flitted from one instrument to another and talked about plucked-string keyboards. It was here that I heard the soft notes of a spinet for the first time. It was a hot day in July and a French window opening onto an external balcony was ajar. Soon after our arrival there was the sound of a pianoforte coming from an adjoining flat. It was a Chopin prelude and I was thinking how well it was being played when Mrs Woodhouse rushed to the window and shut it with a grimace as though to exclude some bodily flatulence. 'I simply cannot stand the sound of a piano' she remarked. On another occasion we sang in the orchestral pit of the Palace Theatre whilst society children, mothers' darlings, appeared on the stage in a series of *Tableaux Vivants*.

As a lecturer on music, Terry's wit, sardonic tilts at text-book theory and his

biting irony always went down well with audiences. He would deliver his lecture from brief notes and move to a piano where he would stand splay-legged to illustrate a point he had made. Having been introduced by the chairman he would rise. But owing to his corpulence he had the unfortunate habit of 'settling his crotch', a gesture insignificant enough but one which, by repetition, we had come to expect with that boyish love of the slightly obscene.

The Great War was then at its height and there was great carnage on the battlefields of France. We saw many khakied men covered in mud snatching the brief respite of a six-day leave in 'Blighty'. Some were stuck with a strange silence because of the awful slaughter they had witnessed and to which, shortly, they were about to return. A small detachment of the choir would go to various wooden huts set up around Westminster where men in transit could take a brief rest and have a meal. Here we would sing to them a few folk songs. I remember singing in a hut sponsored by the patent medicine firm *Iron Jelloids* when a wan faced soldier drew me aside and said: 'Couldn't you just sing us Nelly Dean?' We also sang in several temporary base hospitals for wounded soldiers but it is doubtful if we gave them much pleasure for our repertoire was hardly the popular variety.



The King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery, wins the most colourful uniform competition

Remembrance Sunday

The Sunday Solemn Mass moves forward to 10am on Remembrance Sunday, to allow for the Act of Remembrance at 11am. All three Services were well represented, with the Royal Air Force providing the two Deacons of the Mass.



The Navy meets the Cardinal after Mass

© Diocese of Westminster



Boys from the Emerald Isle

Benedictine Education at Glenstal Abbey

For a whole number of reasons, the number of schools attached to Benedictine monasteries has sharply dwindled to almost nothing in recent decades. However, Glenstal Abbey in Ireland still retains its boarding school and the boys of its choir recently came to the Cathedral as part of a tour and provided the music for the Saturday evening Vigil Mass.



David de Winter (centre) toasted out

From Lay Clerk to Deputy

The young David de Winter was a noted Cathedral Chorister as a boy and learned his lessons so well that he was able to return as a Lay Clerk. Now, after over a decade of service, he is leaving to pursue his singing career, whilst retaining a foothold here, like others before him, on the Deputies' list. At drinks after Sunday Vespers the Master of Music produced David's audition file and read selected extracts, while David replied with memories of assorted glorious and inglorious moments that have marked his time. We wish him well for the future.

Catholic Police Guild Centenary Requiem Mass

Two sides of the Force were on display at this year's CPG Mass. Ceremonially all was in order, with halberdiers, flag and banner bearers and cadets carrying the Metropolitan cross and candles, whilst in the apse the police choir provided the music.



The Halberdiers

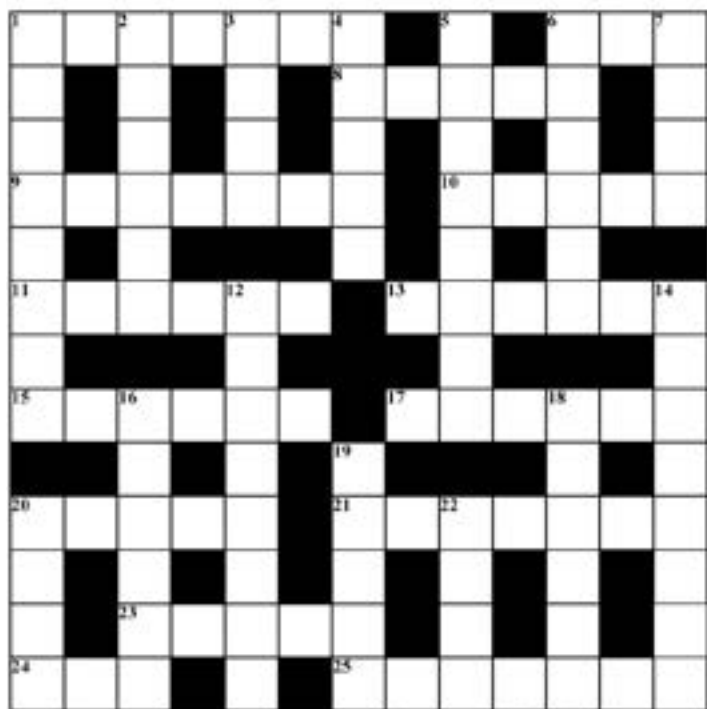
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The Police Choir filled the apse



Alan Frost December 2023 – No. 116

Clues Across

- 1 & 22 Down: London district where Lords Cricket Ground is located (2.5.4)
 6 Fictional Queen of the Fairies [e.g., in WS *Romeo and Juliet*] (3)
 8 Saint and foundress of Whitby Abbey, of the famous Synod [664] (5)
 9 Patron Saint of horses, whose feast is on Boxing Day (7)
 10 Wat -----, leader of the Peasants' Revolt (1381), killed at Smithfield (5)
 11 Greek island, the homeland of Ulysses (6)
 13 Little angel! (6)
 15 9th c. King of Wessex whose descendants ruled England until 1013 (6)
 17 Ancient Polish city, of which the future Pope John Paul II was Archbishop (6)
 20 'The Holy -----', legendary chalice in Arthurian tales (5)
 21 London prison to where the Tyburn Gallows were moved in 1783 (7)
 23 British people led by Queen whose sculpture is at entrance to Westminster Bridge (5)
 24 --- Volatile, solution popularly known as 'smelling salts' (3)
 25 Board game with snakes for climbers! (7)

Clues Down

- 1 The Winter one occurs on December 21 (8)
 2 Spouse of Mary, chosen Mother of Jesus (6)
 3 St ---- of Lincoln, bishop consecrated in 1186 at Westminster (4)
 4 Be outstanding when the sun is out? (5)
 5 Maker of arrows for a toxophilite (8)
 6 Composer whose Symphony No.2 is known as the Resurrection (6)
 7 British War with South Africa at turn of 20th century (4)
 12 One of a group singing Christmas songs (8)
 14 Within the sound of which, traditionally, a Cockney is born (3,5)
 16 Country associated with nuts! (6)
 18 Santa, we hear, with contract condition! (6)
 19 Blacksmith's item in famous Verdi Chorus (5)
 20 African cattle hearing up to date information! (4)
 22 See 1 Across

ANSWERS

Across: 1 St John's 6 Mab 8 Hilda 9 Stephen 10 Tyler 11 Ihnaca 13 Cherrub 15 Egbert 17 Cracow 20 Graill 21 Newgate 23 Iceni 24 Sal 25 Ladders
 Down: 1 Solstice 2 Joseph 3 Hugh 4 Shine 5 Fletcher 6 Mahler 7 Boer 12 Carolier 14 Bow Bells 16 Brazil 18 Clause 19 Anvil 20 Gnus 22 Wood

There Was a Time: An Advent Poem

Fr Joseph Breighner

There was a time when there was no time,
 When darkness reigned as king,
 When a formless void was all that there was
 in the nothingness of eternity,
 When it was night.
 But over the void and over the night Love watched.
 There was a time when time began.
 It began when Love spoke.
 Time began for light and life, for splendour and grandeur.
 Time began for seas and mountains, for flowers and birds.
 Time began for the valleys to ring with the songs of life,
 and for the wilderness to echo with the wailing of wind
 and howling of animals.
 And over the earth, Love watched.
 There was a time when time began to be recorded.
 A time when Love breathed and a new creature came to life.
 A new creature so special that it was in the image and likeness of Love
 Of Love who is God.
 And so man was born and the dawn of a new day shone on the world.
 And over man, Love watched.
 But there came a time when the new day faded.
 A time when man who was like God tried to be God.
 A time when the creature challenged the creator.
 A time when man preferred death to life and darkness to light.
 And so the new day settled into twilight.
 And over the darkness, Love watched.
 There was a time of waiting in the darkness.
 A time when man waited in the shadows,
 And all creation groaned in sadness.
 There was waiting for Love to speak again--for Love to breathe again.
 And kings and nations and empires rose and faded in the shadows.
 And Love waited and watched.
 Finally, there came a time when Love spoke again.
 A Word from eternity--a Word
 Spoken to a girl who belonged to a people not known by the world
 Spoken to a girl who belonged to a family not known by her people
 To a girl named Mary.
 And all creation waited in hushed silence for the girl's answer.
 And Mary spoke her yes.
 And Love watched over Mary.
 And so there came a time when Love breathed again
 When Love breathed new life into Mary's yes.
 And a new day dawned for the World
 A day when light returned to darkness, when life returned to dispel death
 And so a day came when Love became man--a mother bore a child.
 And Love watched over Love--a Father watched His Son.
 And, lastly, there came a time when you and I became a part of time.
 Now is the time that you and I wait.
 Now we wait to celebrate what the world waited for.
 And as we wait to celebrate what was at one time, we become a
 part of that time
 A time when a new dawn and a new dream and a new creation
 began for man.
 And as a part of time, Love waits and Love watches over us.

To submit a poem whether by yourself or another for consideration, please contact the Editor – details on page 3.

CATHEDRAL HISTORY A PICTORIAL RECORD

Celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the opening of Westminster Cathedral

Paul Tobin

Although the funeral of Cardinal Herbert Vaughan in June 1903 was the first Mass to be celebrated in the Cathedral, it was not until Christmas Eve that year that the public were able to attend Mass there regularly. Five days later, his successor Archbishop Francis Bourne was enthroned as the fourth Archbishop of Westminster and was destined to have the longest reign, lasting just over 34 years.

For purely practical reasons it was decided to mark this particular Golden Jubilee by holding a week of celebrations around the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on 8 December 1953. On that day Cardinal Bernard Griffin as Archbishop of Westminster celebrated a Pontifical High Mass, preceded by the Office of Terce at 10am, with the preacher being the Bishop (later Archbishop) of Southwark, Mgr Cyril Cowderoy (1905 – 1976). The Apostolic (Papal) Blessing followed and the great hymn of thanksgiving, the *Te Deum*, concluded the proceedings.

The week of Evening Services, at which there were guest preachers, started at 8pm, apart from the inaugural event starting at 7pm on Sunday with the singing of Compline. The sermon on 'Westminster Cathedral' was given by Mgr Ronald Knox and followed by Pontifical Benediction given by Archbishop Edward Myers, Co-adjutor to the Archbishop of Westminster without the right of succession. Other preachers included two Benedictine Abbots: Herbert Byrne OSB of Ampleforth and Christopher Butler OSB of Downside. The latter was destined to become an Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster in 1966. Another future bishop, Fr Agnellus Andrew OFM, a well-known figure for his commentaries on major Catholic ceremonies for television, the Jesuit and Dominican Provincials, Fr Desmond Boyle SJ and Fr Hilary Carpenter OP, completed the group of noted preachers of their time.

The amount of lighting provided by the chandeliers in the Cathedral was considerably less than nowadays, as can be seen by the fact that only the middle



and bottom rows of lights in the nave were used. The accompanying photograph was taken during the singing of the Collect, as the *Legile* is seen facing towards the throne for the singing of the Epistle by the Sub Deacon of the Mass. When the Epistle had finished, a Master of Ceremonies would carry the stand to the Gospel (Left) side of the Sanctuary, in preparation for the singing of the Gospel, whilst the Choir sang the Gradual and Alleluia chants.

Sources:

The Tablet: 12/12/1953

Westminster Cathedral Chronicle: November and December 1953

Image: *The Topical Press Agency Ltd*, 20 & 21 Red Lion Court, Fleet Street, EC4

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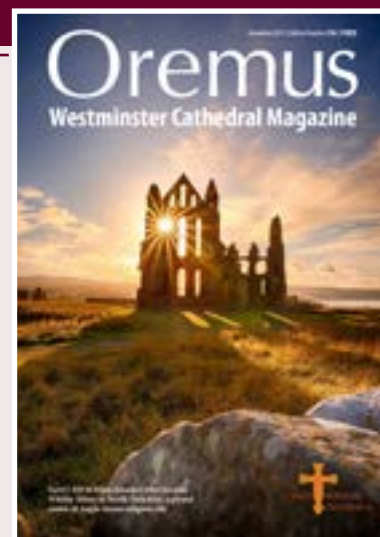
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Oremus 12.23



Eyes to See

Steve Burrows

I was hurrying towards the station on a rainy morning. The light was washed out and grey cloud and drizzle were trailing down between the buildings. It was wet day in a northern city, and the figures in the streets were anorak'd and umbrella'd.

I got into Piccadilly - Manchester has one, too - and there, seeming more distinct than the bulky passers-by, a neatly attired black man addressed us through a loudhailer. He was a street preacher busy amongst us as we shopped and ran our errands. I heard the name 'Christ' a couple of times, but did not listen to his sentences. But wait; though his exhortations seemed to go like water off a duck's back, do acknowledge that here the numinous was being proclaimed, news of Him through whom all this was made.

I went on against the current of citizens flowing out of the station and on to the approach, but I wasn't the only one braving that tide. There was a young black man, head uncovered and dressed in vest and shorts, so he was exposed to the fine rain. He resembled a young Muhammad Ali, with the thin rectangle of a phone strapped to an upper arm, setting off the musculature there. He was moving like the boxer too, dancing forward through the people whilst clapping his hands above his head and calling out 'Whoop! Whoop!'

'Whoop! Whoop!?' Well, if you've heard the song 'Sound of da Police' by KRS-One, then the 'Whoop! Whoop!' there, was like the 'Whoop! Whoop!' here - full of fun and challenge. Excuse me? What is KRS-One, you ask? A national infrastructure project? - No. Doctor Who's mechanical dog? - No. If you were a young person, and modern, why wouldn't you call yourself KRS-One? Get your heads straight, sisters and brothers. But perhaps a BBC Radio 4 reference would be helpful, so let me add that Alfie Moore's radio comedy show 'It's a Fair Cop' uses the song as its theme tune.

Anyway this young man was expending his energy attempting to ginger us up. And with occasional success. A group of women coming towards him began to echo his chant. 'Whoop! Whoop!' they called back, several times, before breaking down into laughter. He left them in his wake. He was in his pomp and in high spirits. So he moved on, beating back against our settled minds, provoking us.

An Example of Not Seeing

In the novel 'Barnaby Rudge', chapter 29, Dickens shows the character Mr Chester, a worldly man with an unrepented guilty past, as blind to the beauties of nature during his horseback ride through a forest where: 'In shady spots, the morning dew sparkled on each young leaf and blade of grass; and where the sun was shining, some diamond drops yet glistened brightly, as if in unwillingness to leave so fair a world, and have such brief existence. Even the light wind had its hope and promise; and whispered of its intercourse with Summer, and of his happy



Manchester's Piccadilly Gardens in 1889

coming. The solitary rider went glancing on among the trees ... looking about him, certainly, from time to time, but with no greater thought of the day or the scene through which he moved, than that he were fortunate (being choicely dressed) to have such favourable weather. He smiled very complacently at such times, but rather as if he were satisfied with himself than with anything else: ...'

The Answer 1

At a Westminster Cathedral Mass on 17 November 2022, the Gospel reading was of Christ prophesying over Jerusalem (Lk 19:41-44): 'If this day you only knew what makes for peace - but now it is hidden from your eyes'. In his homily the priest said: 'We walk about with our eyes closed, thinking God has no interest in us. This is certainly not the case. We must open our spiritual eyes and see that all the time God is creating new opportunities for us. We must open our spiritual eyes to see and use these opportunities. Saint Thérèse of Lisieux had the gift of knowing she was called upon to use every second of her life to show God's glory.'

The Answer 2

At Mass at St Mary's, Mulberry Street, Manchester on 21 July 2022, the Gospel reading was of Christ explaining why he uses parables to teach the people (Mt 13:10-17): 'because they look but do not see and hear but do not listen or understand'. In his homily the priest said 'some things were not worth seeing, and some things were not worth hearing or giving your attention to. But Jesus is really worth seeing, and listening to. And the more we attend, the more we will see and gain. It is about having Christ that the words 'to he who has, more will be given' apply, because Christ will reward more attention with more gifts.'



Year 5 visit to Sayers Croft

Nat Scott Cree, Head Teacher

School life these days can be a time-pressured affair with the demands of the curriculum to fulfil, as teachers and classes move through topics and themes in a wide range of subjects, whilst keeping up with feast days and other important events in the calendar that we mark and celebrate throughout the year.

Perhaps one of the most memorable and rewarding learning experiences is the one afforded to the older pupils in the school who can spend a week away from home and school on a residential visit. This past month, our Year 5 class, accompanied by school staff, travelled to Sayers Croft, a quiet and secluded activity centre nestled in the Surrey countryside close to the Surrey Hills area of outstanding natural beauty. It is far-removed from the hustle and bustle of Victoria and city life.

Sayers Croft has been accommodating groups of children (including from SVP) since the Second World War, and to this day, maintains a uniqueness, charm and simplicity that similar venues might struggle to replicate. For our pupils, it is the perfect blend of stimulation, challenge and comfort, mixed with the reassuring familiarity and accompaniment of peers and adults whom they know well, as for many of them, this is their first ever experience

of being away from their homes and families. It is not unusual for parents to experience more worry and upset than their children when they wave the coach off from Ambrosden Avenue early on the first morning.

Once there, the days are full-on and packed with activity and therefore there is little time for children to miss home. All the while, children are gaining valuable skills and knowledge not just in the curriculum sense, but in the crucial skills that will equip and prepare them for their future lives, such as independence, self-care, resilience, teamwork and leadership.

Besides exciting and challenging activities like climbing, orienteering and caving, pupils experience the joys of a night-time walk and campfire and a day-long hike in the beautiful countryside, complete with packed lunch and panoramic views from the top of Pitch Hill. Time is set aside at the beginning and end of each day for prayer, reflection and worship in the same way that it would be at school, which provides necessary guidance, reassurance and focus.

A key learning point from the visit (and an important feature of Sayers Croft's own vision and values) is the need to care for our natural

environment by reducing waste and reusing and recycling as much as we can. This links very well with our school values this term of respect and responsibility and Pope Francis' encyclical on caring for our common home, *Laudato Si*.

When the week is over and the children return to SW1 and a joyful reunion with family on the Cathedral piazza, you get the distinct impression that over 5 days, a hugely significant amount of both learning and personal growth has taken place, some of which might not be obvious until weeks or even months later and almost certainly could not have been covered in an average week in the classroom at school. This makes the visit a hugely worthwhile and rewarding one for both pupils, parents and staff alike. As one pupil commented: *'My visit to Sayers Croft was fantastic, because I was worried about going and in the end it was a lot of fun and I'm really glad I went!'* It is perhaps no surprise that when I meet former pupils and ask them what they most remember about their time at the school, they almost always unequivocally reply: 'Sayers Croft!' such is the strength of the memories and experiences it provides for each cohort that visits.

Tales of the English Martyrs

On St Swithun Wells' way to the scaffold, which was erected opposite his own door, meeting an old friend he said: 'Farewell all hawking and hunting and old pastimes; I am now going a better way.' The butchery of Fr Genings before his eyes only hastened his own desire to die. 'Despatch,' said he; 'Mr Topcliffe, despatch; are you not ashamed to let an old man stand here so long in his shirt in the cold? I pray God make you of a Saul a Paul, of a persecutor a Catholic professor.' And in such-like speeches, full of Christian charity, piety and courage, he happily ended his course, 10 December 1591.

St Swithun Wells in St Etheldreda's church, Ely Place



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The Month of December

The Holy Father's Prayer Intention:

For persons with disabilities:

We pray that people living with disabilities may be at the centre of attention in society and that institutions may offer inclusive programmes which value their active participation.

Friday 1 December

Ps Week 2

Feria

Friday abstinence

Saturday 2 December

Blessed Virgin Mary on Saturday

4pm Monthly Low Mass (Blessed Sacrament Chapel)

Sunday 3 December

Ps Week 1

1st SUNDAY OF ADVENT

* Migrants' Day

12pm Solemn Mass (Full Choir)

Vaughan Williams – Mass in G minor

Byrd – Rorate cæli

Palestrina – Ego sum panis vivus

Organ: *Dupré* – Le monde dans l'attente du Sauveur (Symphonie-Passion)

4pm Solemn Vespers and Benediction

Marenzio – Magnificat octavi toni

Byrd – Vigilante

Organ: *J.S. Bach* – Wachet auf (BWV 645)

4.30pm Mass for the Deaf Community (Cathedral Hall)

Monday 4 December

Advent feria

(St John Damascene, Priest & Doctor)

2pm Woldingham School Carol Service (ticketed)

Tuesday 5 December

Advent feria

5.30pm Cathedral Chapter Mass

Wednesday 6 December

Advent feria

(St Nicholas, Bishop)

1.15pm Lunchtime Concert

Thursday 7 December

St Ambrose, Bishop & Doctor

2pm SVP School Christmas Celebration

5.30pm Vigil Mass of the Immaculate Conception

The Cathedral is open from 7.30am and closes in time for 7pm.

Monday to Friday: Morning Prayer 7.35am, Mass 8am, Mass (Latin, unless there is a Funeral) 10.30am, Confessions 11.30-12.30pm, Mass 12.30pm *, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament 1.15-4.30pm, Benediction 4.30pm, Confessions 4.30-5.30pm, Sung Vespers 5pm (Latin, Choir, except Tuesday, English, Cantor), Solemn Mass 5.30pm (Choir, Tuesday: Boys' voices, Wednesday: Men's voices).

Saturday: Morning Prayer 7.35am, Mass 8am, Mass 10.30am (Latin, Choir), Confessions 11.30-12.30pm, Mass 12.30pm *, Confessions 5-6pm, Sung Vespers 5.30pm (English, Cantor), Sung Mass 6pm.

Sunday: Mass 8am, Sung Morning Prayer 9.30am, Sung Mass 10am, Confessions 10-12.30pm; Solemn Mass (Choir) 12noon *, Solemn Vespers and Benediction (Choir) 4pm, Confessions 5-6.45pm, Sung Mass 5.30pm, Mass 7pm.

For full opening and closure times of the Cathedral and for confession and service times, please consult the Cathedral diary on the website.

* Live streamed via the Cathedral website

Friday 8 December

No Friday abstinence

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, Patron of the Diocese

8am – 6pm NHS Blood Transfusion Service in Cathedral Hall

5pm Solemn Second Vespers

5.30pm Solemn Mass (Full Choir)

Victoria – Missa Ave maris stella

Britten – A Hymn to the Virgin

Organ: *Tournemire* – Paraphrase-Carillon (L'Orgue mystique XXXV)

Saturday 9 December

Advent feria

(St Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin)

Sunday 10 December

Ps Week 2

2nd SUNDAY OF ADVENT

10am – 2pm Parish Christmas Fair in Cathedral Hall

12pm Solemn Mass (Full Choir)

Berkeley – Missa brevis

McDowall – O Oriens

Tallis – O salutaris hostia

Organ: *Franck* – Choral No 2 in B minor

4pm Solemn Vespers and Benediction

Lassus – Magnificat octavi toni

Handel – O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion

Organ: *J.S. Bach* – Nun komm der Heiden

Heiland (BWV 661)

Monday 11 December

Advent feria

(St Damasus I, Pope)

7.30pm London Fire Brigade Carol Service (ticketed)

Tuesday 12 December

Our Lady of Guadalupe

7pm HCPT Christmas Carols (Archbishop Cushley)

Wednesday 13 December

St Lucy, Virgin & Martyr

No choral services today

11.15am WCCS Pre-Prep Nativity I (Lady Chapel)

1.15pm Lunchtime Concert

Thursday 14 December

St John of the Cross, Priest & Doctor

8am – 6pm NHS Blood Transfusion Service in Cathedral Hall

11.15am WCCS Pre-Prep Nativity II (Lady Chapel)

Friday 15 December

Friday abstinence

Advent feria

2pm WCCS Carol Service

Saturday 16 December

Advent feria

Sunday 17 December

Ps Week 3

3rd SUNDAY OF ADVENT (Gaudete Sunday)

12pm Solemn Mass (Men's voices)

Victoria – Missa Trahe me post te
Palestrina – Benedixisti Domine
Victoria – Ecce Dominus veniet
 Organ: *J.S. Bach* – Prelude and Fugue in E major (BWV 566)
4pm Parish Carol Service
 Organ: *J.S. Bach* – In dulci jubilo (BWV 729)

Monday 18 December

Advent feria
5.30pm Diocesan Staff attend Mass
 (Cardinal Nichols)

Tuesday 19 December

Advent feria
All Masses in Cathedral Hall; Confessions in the Cathedral
7.30pm Christmas Celebration I

Wednesday 20 December

Advent feria
1.15pm Lunchtime Concert
All Masses in Cathedral Hall; Confessions in the Cathedral
7.30pm Christmas Celebration II

Thursday 21 December

Advent feria
 (St Peter Canisius, Priest & Doctor)

Friday 22 December *Friday abstinence*
 Advent feria

Saturday 23 December

Advent feria
 (St John of Kanty, Priest)

Sunday 24 December

4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT
12pm Solemn Mass (Men's voices)
Victoria – Missa Alma redemptoris mater
Parsons – Ave Maria
 Organ: *Alain* – Litanies
CHRISTMAS EVE

3pm Organ Recital: *Messiaen* – La Nativité
4pm Pontifical Solemn First Vespers of Christmas (Cardinal Nichols)
Buxtehude – Magnificat in D
Poulenc – O magnum mysterium
 Organ: *Messiaen* – Dieu parmi nous (La Nativité du Seigneur)
6pm Vigil Mass of Christmas
7.30pm Cathedral closes; reopens at 10pm
11.15pm Vigil and Solemn Pontifical Mass During the Night (Cardinal Nichols)
Haydn – Missa Sancti Nicolai
Darke – In the bleak mid-winter
 Organ: *Widor* – Toccata (Symphonie V)

Monday 25 December

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

8am Mass of the Dawn
10am Sung Mass of the Day

12pm Solemn Pontifical Mass of the Day (Cardinal Nichols)

Victoria – Missa O magnum mysterium
M Martin – Novo profusi gaudio
Britten – A Hymn to the Virgin
 Organ: *Cochereau tr. Filsell* – Toccata (Symphonie improvisée)

2.30 – 3.45pm The Cathedral is closed

4pm Solemn Second Vespers and Benediction
Victoria – Magnificat primi toni
Byrd – Hodie Christus natus est
 Organ: *Balbastre* – Quand Jésus naquit à Noël

4.45pm The Cathedral closes
 On Tuesday and following days:

10am – 6pm Cathedral open
10.30am, 12.30pm, 5.30pm Mass
11.30am – 12.30pm Confessions

Tuesday 26 December

St STEPHEN, The First Martyr

Wednesday 27 December

St JOHN, Apostle & Evangelist

Thursday 28 December

THE HOLY INNOCENTS, Martyrs

Friday 29 December *No Friday abstinence*
 ST THOMAS BECKET, Bishop & Martyr,
 Patron of the Parish Clergy



The earliest known representation of St Thomas' Martyrdom

Saturday 30 December

6th DAY IN THE OCTAVE
 OF CHRISTMAS

Sunday 31 December

THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY
 AND JOSEPH
12pm Solemn Mass
 Vigil of the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy
 Mother of God
5.30pm Sung Vespers (English)
6pm Sung Vigil Mass

Key to the Diary: Saints' days and holy days written in **BOLD CAPITAL LETTERS** denote Sundays and Solemnities, **CAPITAL LETTERS** denote Feasts, and those not in capitals denote Memorials, whether optional or otherwise. Memorials in brackets are not celebrated liturgically.

What Happens and When

Catholic Grandparents' Association

Hinsley Room,
 Second Sundays 12-3.30pm

Charismatic Prayer Group

Cathedral Hall,
 Fridays 6.30-9pm

Divine Mercy Prayer Group

St Patrick's Chapel,
 Sundays 1.30-2.30pm

Filipino Club

Hinsley Room,
 First Sundays 1-5pm

Guild of the Blessed Sacrament

Blessed Sacrament Chapel, Mondays
 6.15pm

Guild of St Anthony Lady Chapel,
 Tuesdays 6.15pm

Interfaith Group Hinsley Room,
 Third Wednesdays 2-3.30pm

Legion of Mary

Hinsley Room,
 Monday 1.30-3.30pm

Nigerian Catholic Association

Hinsley Room,
 Fourth Sundays – 1.30-2.30pm

Oblates of Westminster Cathedral

Hinsley Room,
 Fourth Sundays 2.30-4pm

Padre Pio Prayer Group

Sacred Heart Church,
 First Thursdays 1.30-3.30pm

RCIA Group

Vaughan House,
 Tuesday 7-8.30pm

Rosary Group

Lady Chapel,
 Saturday 10-10.25am

Walsingham Prayer Group

St George's Chapel,
 First Tuesdays 2.30-4pm

Yoruba Association

Hinsley Room,
 Third Sundays 1.30-3pm

The Secret Pigeon Service

Fr Keith Sawyer

Gordon Corera, a former BBC Security Correspondent, has written a book on the rôle of pigeons in Europe in World War II. This is a kind of reflection, from a Catholic priest's viewpoint, on that book which is well worth reading in its own right.

The main thrust of the book is about pigeons and the men and women of the Belgian Resistance, and British Armed Forces and their civilian supporters. Between them, they operated, with varying success, a network of pigeon flights across the Channel, to send information – maps, written information – by means of attachments to the pigeons' legs. A pigeon is a homing bird (we have the phrase 'a homing pigeon' in daily usage). The dove released from the Ark after the Flood in the Old Testament was really a pigeon, or certainly of the pigeon family. The point was, it came back. So too with the pigeons of the unit known as MI 14, the secret but effective British wartime pigeon service.

What in particular interests me is the part played by a Belgian priest, Fr Joseph Raskin. He was in a missionary order, the Scheut Fathers, the *Congregatio Immaculati Cordis Mariae* (they abbreviate to CICM). He had been a missionary before the war in China, and was a good artist. The whole story of his work in the Belgian Resistance, and his skills with his pen and rice paper, is far better told by Gordon Carera's book. Fr Raskin was confessor for King Leopold III, who stayed in Belgium throughout the war to be with his people. Some criticised him for this, but the alternative would have been to go with the Belgian Government in Exile.

Fr Raskin was a key participant in the Resistance's work with pigeons. Eventually he and his colleagues were caught, taken in some cases to Germany and executed. Fr Raskin was executed in October 1943, five years before I was born. Yet with all the differences of language, background and theological culture, I feel a great sense of identity with him in his (and my) priesthood.



Pigeons on parade

Towards the end of his life, he met a German Army Chaplain, Fr. Steinhoff, whose ministry was in Dortmund where Fr Raskin was executed. The German priest wrote to the Belgian priest's sister after the war, and once again I feel that Catholic priests have a bond with each other which transcends language, culture and political ideology.

In 1980 I was asked to transfer my Territorial Chaplain's Commission to a Regular Army Chaplain's Commission. I declined, but if I had gone full time into the army I could perhaps have been in the Falklands, that bastion of British life in the South Atlantic, where in fact the majority of my parishioners would have been Argentinian prisoners of war. I would have felt more at home with them than the non-Catholic Falklanders, I do assure you. I think we can trust that Fr Raskin would have gone to confession to Fr Steinhoff. Again, Christ in his sacraments links priests across boundaries.

The Catholic Church in Camden Town was originally run by the Scheut Fathers as the Belgian Church in London. Circumstances changed, but it is still in the Westminster Year Book as 'Our Lady of Hal', a reminder of its Belgian origins. I'm not sure if there are any Scheut Fathers still in this country.

In a sense it is not clear if Fr Raskin could ever be formally canonised as a martyr. He was executed for wartime activity, his faith underpinning his work. But in the strict sense, it is questionable. A generation earlier Fr Charles de Foucauld, a French priest, was shot by renegade Tuaregs in North Africa but it is questionable why he was killed. Was he shot for being a Catholic priest, or for keeping rifles for the French?

Be that as it may, I hope that, if ever I had to face violent death, I would have the calm courage of Fr Joseph Raskin. I hope, too, that I should continue to ask his prayers for myself, as I continue my own missionary journey as a Catholic priest, so that when as inevitably happens I feel that forces not from God are overcoming me and the wider world, I may nonetheless ask his prayers.

Fr Keith is a retired priest of the diocese of Northampton

Gordon Carera's book – Secret Pigeon Service: Operation Columba, Resistance and the Struggle to Liberate Europe was published in 2018 and in paperback in 2019 by William Collins.

In retrospect: from the *Cathedral Chronicle*

VARIA

The Cathedral parish has lost a great worker, and the poor of Westminster a good friend, in the death of 'Sister Teresa', who for nearly 40 years lived at the convent of the Sisters of Charity, Carlisle Place, and worked as a visiting sister among the poor. Sister had been a Sister of Charity for more than 54 years and came to Westminster in the last years of Cardinal Manning. This part of London was then very different from what it is now; where the Cathedral now stands was the Middlesex county prison, and nearer the river, on the site of the present Millbank L.C.C. Estate and the Tate Gallery, Millbank Prison. As a result the population of the district contained a large proportion of the very poorest, and of the undesirables of London. The surroundings of a prison are always dreary, and, in a large town, the tendency of the discharged prisoners is to stay in the district where they are discharged. Hence Westminster, then, was a real underworld.

The Education Act of 1870 had not yet made much impression upon the masses of the people, and the underworld was tenanted largely by those who were bad because they were ignorant. To the convent came all sorts and conditions of men who had had little or no chance in life, and the work of the sisters was to train these men, to try to elevate them a little by giving them some education in things secular as well as in the Catholic faith. This occupation soon became Sister's life work; and the changed condition of the district, the reform of so many men of the lowest type, the salvation of not a few – all this, under God, was due to her influence and splendid devotion.

For some years she was the best known figure in the streets between the Abbey and the Cathedral, probably the worst slum in London. From morning till night she was to be found visiting the poor in their homes, attending the sick and distressed, arousing the lapsed and recovering the fallen. Her very name was a household word. During the last five years she has gradually failed, and three days before the Feast of All Saints she was called to her reward, being 'ready to go home to her mother in

Heaven, our Blessed Lady', as she herself said. The men of her club, for whom she had done so much, carried her body to the Cathedral and the solemn Requiem Mass was celebrated by Mgr Howlett, in the presence of a large gathering of her friends, the poor. The Cathedral clergy attended both in the church and at the graveside, and many of those for whom Sister spent her life in Westminster gathered round as she was laid to rest.

from the December 1923

Westminster Cathedral Chronicle



THE REREDOS RECENTLY ERECTED IN THE CATHEDRAL.

Made of wood, painted and lightly decorated, it is divided into five panels, the upper part with trellis work. It is only a temporary structure until such time as the very costly permanent reredos can be considered. As will be observed, it affords a much better view than was possible before of the marble decoration of the apse.

Raising £80,000 in one week

Joe Allen, Friends' Co-ordinator

As you read this, our 2023 Big Give is live and underway. From midday Tuesday 28 November to midday Tuesday 5 December, we are aiming to raise £80,000 and in so doing complete our fundraising campaign for the sanctuary lighting. Our fundraising has run for over 12 months now, seeking to raise a total of £300,000 to replace the lighting which illuminates the main sanctuary as the focal point of the Cathedral and of the celebration of Mass. Not only is it more effective, but also much less costly to run.

£80,000 in one week seems a large sum, yet through the Big Give we have £40,000 of matched funding already awaiting our donations, so that if you give, for example, £5, the Big Give will match your donation and turn it into £10, and so on. When you consider the matched funding element, the task at hand becomes lighter. However, we will only meet our fundraising goal with your generosity – readers of *Oremus*, Cathedral parishioners, and faithful supporters and Friends further afield.

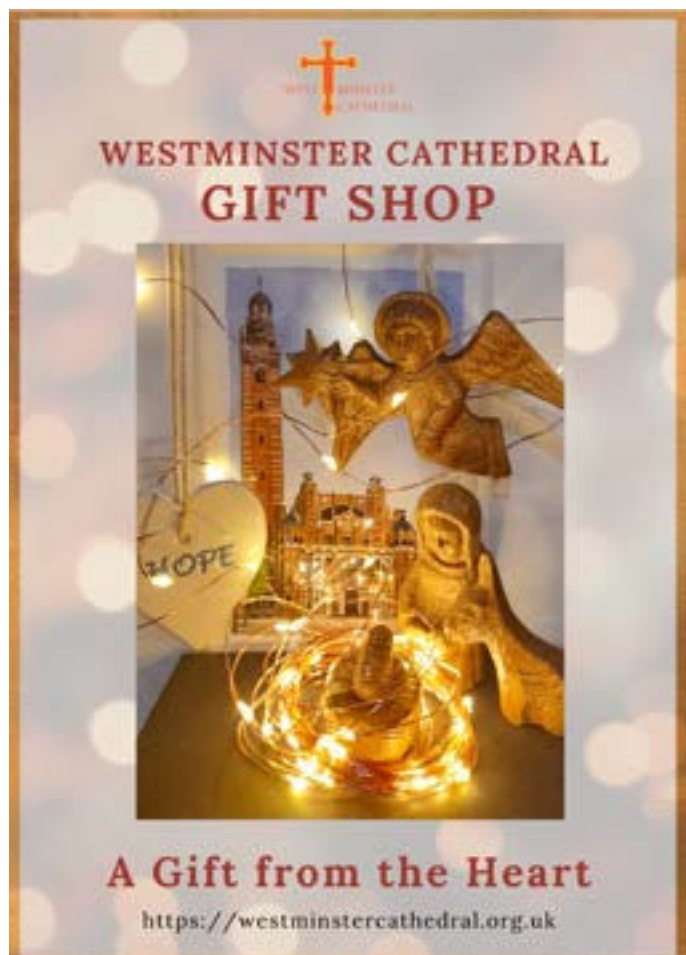
Why give? Westminster Cathedral has a particular significance, situated as it is in the political heart of the nation, but being also the Mother Church for Catholics in England and Wales, a place of worship second to none. The Preface for the Dedication of a Church prays: *'Year by year you sanctify the Church, the Bride*

of Christ, foreshadowed in visible buildings, so that ... she may be given her place in your heavenly glory.' So our Cathedral is a foreshadowing of the heavenly Jerusalem, a sign both of God's glory and of his goodness to us in this life. Your generosity, however big or small, will be the key to supporting the Cathedral's continuing mission and to completing our current Friends' project.

- The Big Give Campaign will run from midday on Tuesday 28 November to midday on Tuesday 5 December.
- For your donation to be matched and doubled by The Big Give: you must donate via the website, via the link: <https://bit.ly/FriendsBG23> or the QR code on this page.
- The only exception is for donations above £500 which can also be made via BACS. Please contact the Friends' Office to arrange friends@rcdow.org.uk
- Any enquiries or questions can be answered by emailing friends@rcdow.org.uk

Please spread the word among your parishes, organisations, and friends and family as we seek to raise these all-important funds!

theBigGive.org.uk

WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL
GIFT SHOP

A Gift from the Heart
<https://westminstercathedral.org.uk>



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