

March 2024 | Edition Number 300 | FREE

# Oremus

## Westminster Cathedral Magazine

Cardinal Vincent  
pauses before  
blessing the ashes  
for imposition at  
Mass to mark the  
beginning of Lent

If you can, please  
make a donation for  
your copy to cover its  
production cost.  
Thank you.

WESTMINSTER  
CATHEDRAL



# Join the Companions



## ...and help us to keep publishing Oremus free of charge

Although we earn income from the advertising which we carry, *Oremus* relies on donations from readers to cover its production costs.

The Companions of *Oremus* was established to recognise those who give generously to support us. Open exclusively to individuals, Companions' names are published in the magazine each month (see page 7). All members are invited to one or more social events during the year and Mass is offered for their intentions from time to time.

If you would like to support us by joining the Companions, please write to *Oremus*, Cathedral Clergy House, 42 Francis Street, London SW1P 1QW or email [oremuscomps@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:oremuscomps@rcdow.org.uk) with your contact details, including postcode. Members are asked to give a minimum of £100 annually. Please mention how you would like your name to appear in our membership list and if you are eligible to Gift Aid your donation. Postal subscriptions to *Oremus* may be purchased by completing and sending to the office the coupon printed in the magazine. Subscriptions to receive *Oremus* either by email (free) or as hard copy by post (p & p payable) can also be entered by visiting <https://westminstercathedral.org.uk/the-cathedral-community/about-oremus/> and completing the form there.

*Thank you for your support.*

## CHELSEA

INDEPENDENT FAMILY FUNERAL DIRECTORS

One of London's independently owned funeral directors,  
run by Alex Jones and family.

- 24 HOURS A DAY, 365 DAYS OF THE YEAR
- PRE-PAID FUNERAL PLANS
- WORLD-WIDE REPATRIATION SERVICE
- MEMORIAL MASONRY SERVICE
- CARING ADVICE, NO OBLIGATION
- HOME ARRANGEMENTS AVAILABLE
- PROUDLY INDEPENDENTLY OWNED



### CHELSEA

260b Fulham Road, London, SW10 9EL  
Tel: 020 7352 0008

### WESTMINSTER

91 Rochester Row, London, SW1P 1LJ  
Tel: 020 7834 3281

### FULHAM

235 Munster Road, London, SW6 6BT  
Tel: 020 7385 0866

**Golden Charter**  
Smart Planning for Later Life



# Oremus

Cathedral Clergy House  
42 Francis Street  
London SW1P 1QW



T 020 7798 9055  
E oremus@westminstercathedral.org.uk  
W www.westminstercathedral.org.uk

*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.

**Patron**  
The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster

**Chairman**  
Fr Slawomir Witor

**Editor**  
Fr John Scott

**Oremus Team**  
Tony Banks – Distribution  
Marie Carne – Content Compilation  
Ellen Gomes – Archives  
Zoe Goodway – Marketing & Finance  
Paul Moynihan – Proofreading  
Manel Silva – Subscriptions

**Design and Art Direction**  
Julian Game

Registered Charity Number 233699  
ISSN 1366-7203

Opinions expressed by contributors do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor or the Oremus Team. Neither are they the official views of Westminster Cathedral. The Editor reserves the right to edit all contributions. Publication of advertisements does not imply any form of recommendation or endorsement. Unless otherwise stated, photographs are published under a creative commons or similar licence. Every effort is made to credit all images. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission.



On Ash Wednesday Cardinal Vincent chose to celebrate the first Cathedral Mass of the day. This year the whole of March is taken over by Lent, ending with the Triduum and the Lord's Resurrection on the 31st.

© Marcin Mazur

## Inside Oremus

### Cathedral Life, Past & Present

J S Bach's St John Passion – A Lenten Performance	4
Gaza and the West Bank – The Cardinal's Call to Prayer	9
Canons of the Cathedral Chapter – Canon John O'Leary	12 & 13
Cathedral History – Early Mosaicists by Patrick Rogers	14 & 15
Memoirs of a Cathedral Chorister 1916 - 1921 by Philip Hodges (continued)	16 & 17
Cathedral History, A Pictorial Record – St Patrick's Day 1932 by Paul Tobin	20
The Baptistry – An Artists' Reception by Edward Kendall	21
Chorister Recruitment	28

### Features

An Exhibition in Retrospect – St Francis by Christopher Howse	6 & 7
<i>Notre Dame de Paris</i> at Westminster Abbey	8
'Scrap the Cap' for Catholic Free Schools by the Catholic Union	8
<i>Notre Dame du Dimanche</i> An Anniversary by David Fenton	9
<i>Legion: Life in the Roman Army</i> at the British Museum by Lucien de Guise	10 & 11

### Regulars

From the Editor	5
Monthly Album	18 & 19
Poems and Crossword	22
In Retrospect – from the <i>Westminster Cathedral Chronicle</i>	23
Diary and Notices	24 & 25
Friends of the Cathedral	26
SVP Catholic Primary School	27

6



10



16



18

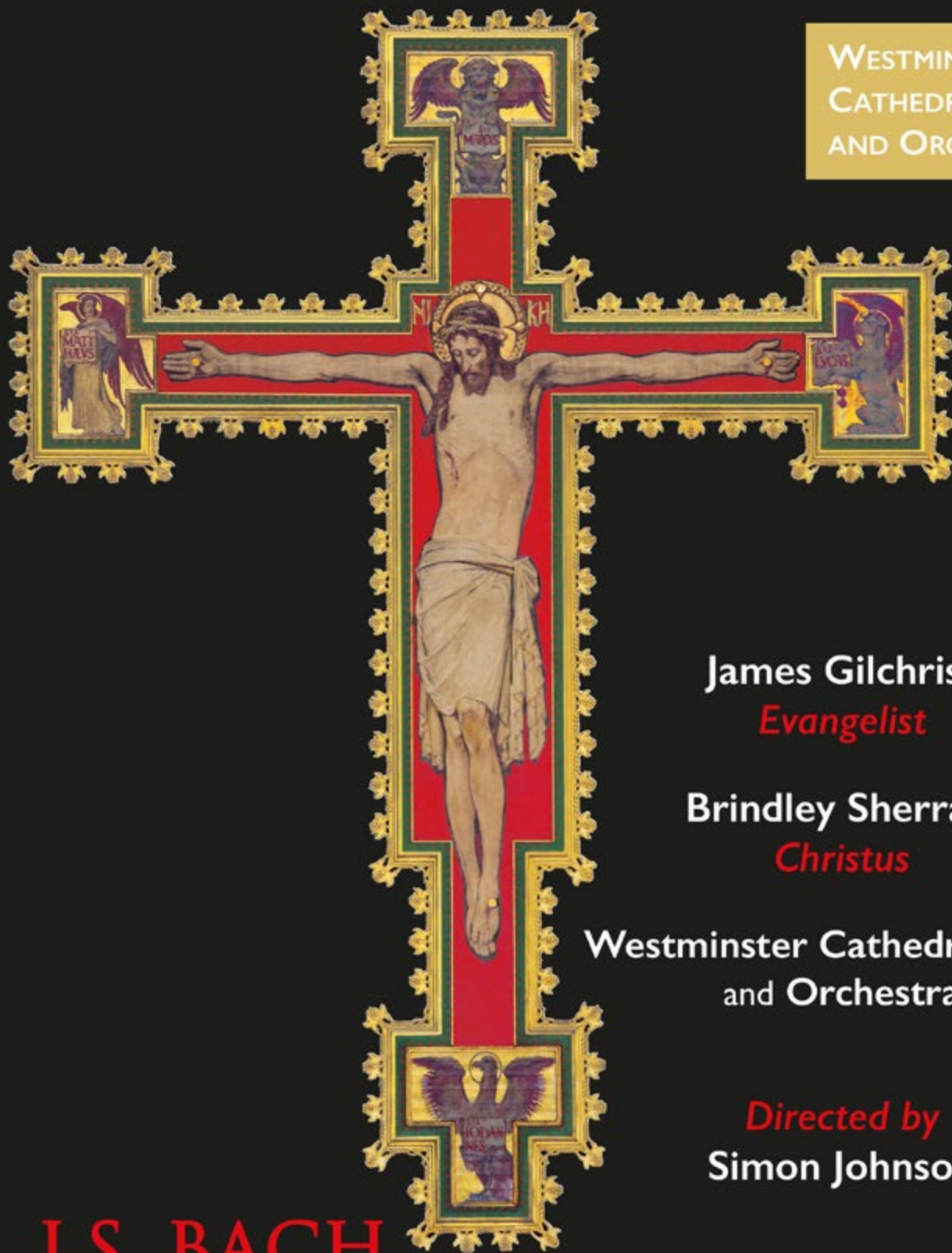


19

&  
26



WESTMINSTER  
CATHEDRAL CHOIR  
AND ORCHESTRA



James Gilchrist  
*Evangelist*

Brindley Sherratt  
*Christus*

Westminster Cathedral Choir  
and Orchestra

*Directed by*  
Simon Johnson

J.S. BACH  
ST JOHN PASSION

Thursday 14 March 2024 7.30pm

[www.westminstercathedral.org.uk/event/passion2024](http://www.westminstercathedral.org.uk/event/passion2024)

An event in aid of Westminster Cathedral

# Fr John writes



I had already started researching a cover image for this edition before I realised that the relatively early date of Easter, with its Octave, means that Our Lady will not have her day until the second week of April. Therefore, the cover image, taken from the Cardinal's Ash Wednesday Mass, can remind us of our Lenten discipline and hope, to be fulfilled on the very last day of this

month in the Lord's Resurrection. As the New Year is the time for resolutions, so is Lent the time for deeds.

*Oremus* continues the publication of Philip Hodges' early 20th century Chorister Memoir and it is gratifying to have heard from members of his family how pleased they are to see it in print. Indeed, a parcel of music written by Philip in later years has recently arrived here and I have passed it to the Music Department for their archive.

Thinking of younger people, you may be surprised to note, as I was, that the School of Mosaicists once based in the Cathedral Tower included apprentices drawn from 'Canon Craven's Crusade of Rescue' -willing or unwilling volunteers one wonders? I am not aware that any of the present Cathedral Canons have such institutions attached to their names, but, resuming this month a series on the lives and ministries of the Canons, we discover how Canon John O'Leary finds himself in the responsible role of Rector of Allen Hall Seminary, supervising the formation of our future priests.

Then, two contrasting stories from the Church in France. For a few months down the road at Westminster Abbey there is an exhibition on the history and rebuilding of *Notre Dame* Cathedral in Paris, doubtless timed and internationally publicised in advance of the Cathedral's reopening at the end of this year, when the *Gloire of La Belle France* will be on full show. Contrastingly, I report on last summer's 150th anniversary celebrations at the rural shrine of *Notre Dame du Dimanche* (she does not approve of working on Sundays). Curiously Our Lady's apparitions there are judged to be as credible as those at Lourdes. Perhaps the message is that God desires to make himself known to rich and poor, high and low, in every place.

*Fr John Scott*

## Westminster Cathedral

Cathedral Clergy House  
42 Francis Street  
London SW1P 1QW

Telephone 020 7798 9055  
Email [chreception@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:chreception@rcdow.org.uk)  
[www.westminstercathedral.org.uk](http://www.westminstercathedral.org.uk)

## Cathedral Chaplains

Fr Sławomir Witon, *Dean*  
Fr Brian O'Mahony, *Sub-Dean*  
Fr Hugh MacKenzie  
Fr Mike Maguire, *Precentor*  
Fr Vincent Mbu'i SVD  
Fr John Scott, *Registrar*

## Also in residence

Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Victories:  
Sr Angelina, Sr Fatima and Sr Jesuina

## Music Department

Simon Johnson, *Master of Music*  
Peter Stevens Obl. OSB, *Assistant Master of Music*  
Chris Too, *Organ Scholar*

## Cathedral Manager

Peter McNulty

## Estates Manager

Neil Fairbairn

## Finance Manager

Algernon Keuneman

## Fundraising Manager

Laura Dudhee (Maternity cover)

## Chapel of Ease

Sacred Heart Church  
Horseferry Road SW1P 2EF





# St Francis, Evangelist

Christopher Howse

**An exhibition at the National Gallery in London in 2023 called *St Francis of Assisi* was widely enjoyed and praised. Sometimes British people absorb religious truths by admiring art. That was what happened in 2009 with the exhibition called *The Sacred Made Real*, also at the National Gallery. It made forceful use of Spanish polychrome statuary of the 17th century.**

Some of it shocked a British audience: the realistic sculpture of Christ dead in the tomb, covered with wounds and blood, by Gregorio Fernández, or the half-length Man of Sorrows showing Christ after his scourging, by Pedro de Mena. But it was obvious after that exhibition that polychrome statuary could not be dismissed as bad taste or fit only for dark side chapels of foreign churches. Of course, even though thousands saw that exhibition, they remained a small minority of the nation. But the default attitude had changed: the religion that this art reflected had to be taken seriously.

That exhibition in 2009 included a statue of St Francis of Assisi standing in meditation, by Pedro de Mena, and it also showed the extraordinary painting, 5ft high, of St Francis kneeling in meditation, by Francisco de Zurbarán. It is on permanent display in the National Gallery, but perhaps often gets overlooked for that reason.

This painting was the star exhibit (apart from one which I shall mention later) at the *St Francis of Assisi* exhibition 14 years later. It was worth seeing in reality, because no reproduction of it can do justice, for example, to the shaded face just discernible within the deep frame of the cowl. Zurbarán is celebrated for his representation of textiles, and here the patched habit of the *poverello*, the man of poverty, is depicted in a setting without details, promoting a sense of tranquillity and detachment from the world.



*St Francis in Prayer* by Zurbarán

The people who came to see the St Francis exhibition were probably well disposed to the saint, or what they knew of him. To them he valued the natural world. The exhibition catalogue opened with the *Canticle of the Sun*, in the Umbrian dialect and in English translation: ‘Praised be You, my Lord, through all Your creatures, / Especially Sir Brother Sun, who is the day; and through whom You give us light. / And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour / And bears a likeness of You, Most High One’.

But if they got to the end of the short *Canticle*, they would have found less easy thoughts: ‘Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death, / From whom no one living can escape. / Woe to those who die in mortal sin’.

An essay in the exhibition catalogue by André Vauchez quoted G K Chesterton’s criticism of 19th-century biographers

like Ernest Renan or Matthew Arnold who discounted Francis’ asceticism: ‘The moment Francis began to do something they did not understand or did not like, they did not try to understand, still less to like it; they simply turned their backs’.

Something like this explains the antipathy of one 19th-century critic, who called this stupendous Zurbarán, when the National Gallery bought it for £265 in 1853 ‘a small, black, repulsive picture’. It certainly couldn’t be called small, and the critic in question, William Coningham, was no philistine. Indeed, in 1848 he had given the gallery two large panels from a Florentine altarpiece showing adoring saints, in which St Francis stands beside St Stephen the first martyr.

St Francis is the saint (apart from those in the Bible) who is the most widely represented in art, yet aspects of his life and message repel the dominant sensibility

of one period or another. In our day many discount St Francis' commitment to religious doctrine. The exhibition featured a big woodcut diptych by Andrea Büttner of St Francis preaching to the birds. This, we learnt from the caption, was a remaking of one of the 20 scenes from the saint's life depicted in 1250 on the walls of *Santa Croce*, Florence. In both pictures, the birds sit attentively in rows.

What we miss by Andrea Büttner's selection of the scene of preaching to the birds is that in Florence the scene immediately below is of St Francis preaching to the Muslims, in the court of the Sultan of Egypt. Historically it was a visit that St Francis certainly made, in 1219 – with more risk than ruffling a few feathers. The exhibition as a whole did not ignore this important incident

in the life of St Francis; two paintings, by Sassetta and Fra Angelico, showed him before the Sultan. For St Francis it was important to bring the Gospel to the whole world, so that everyone might believe in it. In January 1220, only months after his meeting with the Sultan, five of his Franciscan friars were put to death in Marrakesh. They were formally declared saints in the 15th century.

St Francis himself would certainly not have minded if his own approach to the Sultan had been rewarded with martyrdom. It was not that he courted death, but that he sought to be a witness ('martyr') to Christ.

His own witness was expressed by faithfulness to his rule of life. This is where the object I found most moving in the

National Gallery's exhibition comes in: it was the sackcloth habit reputed to have been worn by the saint. The coarse-spun garment was housed in a gilt Baroque frame, not because it was 'art' but because it is a relic, to be viewed with devotion.

None of the older paintings in the exhibition – an El Greco with palpable clouds resolving into a vision of Christ, or a great big Murillo of the saint embracing Christ on the Cross – were made to be seen in a museum. They were optical instruments of religion, windows to another world. I think that, although the National Gallery remained a museum, some of the visitors were able to look through that window.

*Christopher Howse is an assistant editor of The Daily Telegraph.*

## Companions of Oremus We are very grateful for the support of the following:

**Lally Ambatali**  
**Mrs Mary Barsh** *in memoriam*  
**Dr Stuart Blackie**  
**Anne Veronica Bond**  
**Lolita Botanes**  
**Richard Bremer**  
**Lorenzo Cabrelli**  
**Ms Virginia Pinto Cassama**  
**Mrs Erlinda Chin**  
**Francis George Clark**  
**R & L Collyer-Hamlin**  
**Daniel Crowley**  
**Angelita Caronan Duran**  
**Ms Georgina Enang**  
**Fr Joseph Farrell K.H.S. Golden Jubilee**  
**Wendy Felstead**  
**Alfredo Fernandez**  
**Fred Gardiner**  
**William Gardner-Hunter**  
**Connie Gibbes**  
**Zoe & Nick Goodway**  
**Rosalinda Grimaldo**  
**Agnes Haein KIM**  
**Mrs Valerie Hamblen**  
**Bernadette Hau**  
**Mrs Cliona Howell**  
**Carl Stephen Patrick Hunter OBE**  
**Alice M Jones & Jacob F Jones**  
**Poppy K**  
**Rosanne Kay**  
**Mary Thérèse Kelly**  
**John Langan**  
**David Lawton**  
**Raymund Livesey**

**Alan Lloyd** *in memoriam*  
**Clare and John Lusby**  
**Pamela McGrath**  
**Linda McHugh**  
**Christiana Thérèse Macarthy-Woods**  
**Ms Ludivina Mangmang**  
**James Maple**  
**Paul Marsden**  
**Mary Maxwell**  
**Abundia Toledo Munar**  
**Euphrasie Mundele Kilolo**  
**Chris Stewart Munro**  
**Mrs Brigid Murphy**  
**Kate Nealon**  
**Cordelia Onodu**  
**Cris Ragonton**  
**Alan Rainer**  
**Emel Rochat**  
**Berenice Roetheli** *in memoriam*  
**Clementina Rokosu**  
**Precy Salvador**  
**John Scanlan**  
**Sonja Soper**  
**Tessa and Ben Strickland**  
**Yollie Sumayod**  
**Julia Sutherland**  
**Eileen Terry**  
**Robin Michael Tinsley**  
**Lucila Torrefiel**  
**Mr Alex Walker**  
**Peter W Wilson**

**and of our anonymous Companions**

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

# The Reconstruction Deconstructed

Westminster Abbey

The immersive exhibition *Notre Dame de Paris*, has opened at Westminster Abbey and runs until 1st June.

Revealing the story of the French gothic masterpiece, from its origins in the 12th century and its 850-year history to its painstaking restoration following the devastating fire of 2019, the exhibition has been created by digital heritage specialists, *Histoverly*, in collaboration with Rebuilding Notre-Dame de Paris and supported by L'Oréal Groupe.

Already seen by 300,000 exhibition-goers worldwide including in Paris, Washington, Montreal and Dubai, the UK location is the 13th century Chapter House at Westminster Abbey, another masterpiece of Gothic architecture. The exhibition takes visitors on an interactive journey through Notre Dame's past, including the lavish wedding of King Henri IV, the glittering coronation of Napoleon Bonaparte, and the 19th century construction of Notre-Dame's iconic spire designed by Viollet-le-Duc, which was tragically destroyed by the fire. The skill, artistry and vision over the ages of its architects, craftsmen and builders, and the 21st century experts who are bringing it back to its former glory will be brought to life in the show.

Visitors to the exhibition are issued a 'HistoPad' (tm) a portable, touch-screen tablet developed by *Histoverly* that will serve as their portal to key moments in Notre-Dame's history and restoration. The intuitive device's technology is accessible to visitors of all ages and levels of technological ability. The tour is available in 13 languages and there are special features for families: a virtual treasure hunt to collect stained glass window fragments to win a diploma, and a fun selfie studio which superimposes faces onto the cathedral's fantastical beasts.



*The Cathedral before the fire*

The *Histopad* tour through Notre-Dame's history is designed to envelop the visitor in a multi-sensory experience - including audio of the cathedral's organ and tolling bells, a full-size replica of one of the structure's famed chimera statues, and a projection of one of Notre-Dame's iconic rose windows, which survived the fire.

Notre Dame is due to reopen again after restoration work on 8th December this year.

The Very Reverend Dr David Hoyle, Dean of Westminster Abbey, said: 'Like many around the world we were deeply shocked by the fire at Notre Dame de Paris. Since then, we have watched with admiration as the cathedral is painstakingly restored to its former glory, and we are looking forward with great anticipation to its re-opening later this year. Today we celebrate the opening of this immersive exhibition about Notre Dame de Paris which merges the medieval with the modern in a magnificent way.'

## Booking:

Find out more about the exhibition and how you can book your tickets <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-events>

## Watch:

Notre Dame de Paris exhibition trailer: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ME2pCcYmuR4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ME2pCcYmuR4)

## 'Scrap the Cap' Campaign Continues



The Catholic Union was back in No 10 Downing Street recently to talk about the future of Catholic schools.

Deputy Director, James Somerville-Meikle, together with Paul Barber, Director of the Catholic Education Service, met the Prime Minister's education adviser to discuss the faith-based admissions cap on new free schools.

Last year, the Catholic Union launched a new campaign to 'Scrap the Cap' and allow Catholic free schools to open. Over 1,000 people signed an open letter to the Education Secretary, Gillian Keegan, asking her finally to lift the cap.

The meeting in No 10 is the latest stage in the campaign and builds on previous meetings with officials and Special Advisers and a meeting with the Education Secretary at the end of last year.

James and Paul highlighted the benefits of lifting the cap, which would allow the Catholic Church to take part in the Free School Programme which was launched in 2010. Lifting the cap would not just allow new schools to be built, but permit existing schools to convert to academies.

They stressed that Catholic schools are already some of the most diverse in the country, with nearly half of pupils from an ethnic minority background.

The campaign continues, building on the Church's commitment to education in the diocese dating back to the pioneering work and commitment of Cardinal Manning.

## Links:

Catholic Union: <https://catholicunion.org.uk/>

Catholic Union launches campaign to Scrap the Cap: [www.indcatholicnews.com/news/47474](http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/47474)



# A Shrine Anniversary

David Fenton

*In an article of January 2019 in Oremus, David described the 19th century appearances of Our Lady in the predominantly rural vine-growing area of France's Languedoc which led to the establishment of the shrine of Notre Dame du Dimanche. Although little known, devotion at the shrine has continued, culminating in last summer's celebration of its 150th anniversary.*

**The joyful celebrations took place at Saint Bauzille de la Sylve in the diocese of Montpellier. The apparitions were described by the *Midi Libre* as 'un événement considerable de l'histoire heraultais' and by the Diocesan commission as comparable to Lourdes. It was fitting, therefore, that Mgr Nicolas Brouwet, former Bishop of Tarbes et Lourdes and now Bishop of Nîmes, presided over the first anniversary on 8 June.**

The Bishop seemed very moved and spoke from the heart in the beautiful setting of the shrine, so close to nature, surrounded by numerous vines and the work of human hands.

The serene setting formed a considerable contrast to the grandeur of the shrine at Lourdes, including the 400 or so pilgrims who attended. The day started with Mass and Angelus, followed by a reception and picnic lunch. There were also food trucks offering favourite treats, including 'fish and chips'! In the afternoon there was a conference and the day finished with a candlelight procession at dusk. Bernard Daudé, a prime mover with the shrine's Friends, and other great-grandchildren of Auguste Arnaud, the original visionary, were in attendance. The work of the Friends had ensured that the shrine was in pristine condition, with the Chapel, wrought iron and gold on the statue of the Virgin of the Apparitions all freshly painted.

Celebration of the second and third apparitions followed a month later, presided over by Mgr Norbert Torini, Archbishop of Montpellier. In thirty-three degree heat, the faithful, numbering about nine hundred, were accompanied by a chorus of cicadas. The day followed a familiar pattern, with the addition of a late afternoon procession of the Blessed Sacrament for the sick who had come from Montpellier and the surrounding region.

The Shrine has its own canticle, celebrating Mary's appearance to Auguste as he tended his vines, incorporating her instruction to observe Sunday with prayer:

Vierge du Dimanche, Bénis tes enfants  
 Daigne Vierge blanche, écouter leurs chants  
 Travaillant sa vigne, un homme au coeur bon  
 Eut l'honneur insigne, d'une apparition  
 C'était un dimanche, tandis qu'il bêchait  
 Une vierge blanche soudain apparaît  
 La dame se penche et dit au voyant  
 "Mon fils le Dimanche, s'observe en priant"  
 "Dans un mois de même, reviens travailler  
 Je viendrai moi-même te remercier"

## Peace for the Holy Land

Cardinal Vincent has written to priests in the diocese to ask for a special focus of prayer on 8 March for peace in the Holy Land. In his message, he writes: 'As we are all aware, the situation in the Holy Land has not improved, with failed negotiations, increasing humanitarian distress and a rising death toll. As Lent begins, I would like to urge that we continue our efforts, not least in prayer. And so I ask that, on Friday 8 March, there is a special focus of prayer for the Holy Land across the diocese. This could take the form of a dedicated time of prayer, perhaps before the Blessed Sacrament, for peace in the Holy Land. It could

be as simple as making any regular Lenten devotions you may be having on that day for this intention.

He asks priests to make their 'parishioners aware, and encourage them to make a special effort to take part in these prayers and devotions in their parishes'. In the Cathedral on 8 March Mass and Confession times will be as usual, but there will be afternoon Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on the High Altar as a focus for our prayers and all are encouraged to take part in the evening's Stations of the Cross, offering them as part of our prayer intention for peace.



# When Rome Ruled Britannia

Lucien de Guise



Standard bearers were an important part of the Roman army. This one died at 35

The British Museum has started the year with an exhibition that should meet with the approval of cultural-repatriation enthusiasts. There are no pilfered treasures from Greece, Ghana, Benin, Ethiopia or Easter Island. Instead, it is bringing on Colchester (Essex) and Fenstanton (Cambridgeshire). There is a lot more than the British periphery of the Roman Empire on display. *Legion: life in the Roman army* is about the military throughout the empire. Britannia was just a remote outpost, but by no means the worst posting for a soldier. The natives were not complete savages, like Germany, and the local women could be in some demand. The warriors were described as 'wretched little Britons'. You don't see much of them, the glory of Rome was defined by immortalising

its own people. Whether in stone or papyrus or their exquisite coins, they have left a massive stash of information about their lives and aspirations.

The exhibition follows the progress of Claudius Terentianus, a recruit from Egypt. He was a real Roman soldier, well known to historians through the papyrus letters he sent to his father. His career is mirrored by an extra who has received little approbation from other reviewers. *Claudius Terrattus* is a cartoon rat from the *Horrible Histories* menagerie, and he brings as much cuteness to his role as a rat can manage. When I visited, almost nobody was paying any attention to the jaunty illustrations and descriptions that have been provided throughout the show. There were few visitors under 50, so perhaps they couldn't be bothered with such juvenilia (a typical pun from Terrattus would be 'rat-tirement for me!') As these were the only quiet spaces in the enormous Sainsbury Gallery, it's possible to savour the dumbed-down erudition, which is tailored to a young audience, rather than the information naimed at grown-ups. The British Museum has been sliding into the worrying habit of underestimating its visitors' intelligence. Instead of stating 'first and second centuries' it's now '100s to 200s'.



The 'draco' was a standard plus windsock designed to create a terrifying sound and impression. The illustration is from a tomb found in Chester



Illustration depicting a gravestone found in Chester

The captions and information panels are important for an exhibition that is more about learning than aesthetics. The Romans have always been considered practical people, unlike those thinkers and dreamers on the other side of the Adriatic. Few of the exhibits are drop-dead stunning. They are more likely to be tombstones: informative rather than inspirational. The folksiness of some stone carvings can be more enjoyable than the supposed high art of the Hellenes that we hear so much about. With the Parthenon Marbles nearby, a frieze of warlike Roman horsemen should have its work cut out trying to make an impression. In terms of animation and exuberance, the Romans had as much skill as the Athenians. Perhaps there is more vitality to this item because it's a single stone, equipped with more dramatic lighting than the Duveen Gallery with its endlessly contested and coolly displayed friezes procured by Lord Elgin. I've always preferred the pared-down spontaneity of tribal art – or primitive art as it was once called – although it's unlikely that the Romans would appreciate this compliment.



The field in which the Romans tried hardest to compete with the Greeks was portraits of their emperors. These tend to have the sophistication that seekers of sleek antiquity long for. Hadrian looks thoughtfully serene, Galba seems grimly determined, while Commodus looks confident in his imaginary god-like status

These are the traditional, 'artistic' elements of the exhibition. Most of the show is about the business of soldiering. This entails the ancient equivalent of what one used to find in army-surplus stores when they existed. Tents, for example, were a vital bit of kit then as they are now. The difference is that Roman soldiers had to pay for their own. It was the same with their uniforms, which could be very expensive indeed. I once read that the subaltern Winston Churchill's first dress uniform cost him a year's pay. The other ranks didn't have to stump up in the British Army, while their Roman counterparts did. The other difference is that few Roman outfits have survived, and they tend to be understandably decrepit. These include helmets and cuirasses and remarkable crocodile-skin protective armour. All are fascinating for the stories they tell. They are not resplendent with colour or shimmering precious metals. For more vibrant hues, an ancient shield veritably sets the gallery on fire with a palette that has dulled a bit over the years but still provides a more useful indication of what battle might have been like. Perhaps we all visualise history in colour rather than monochrome, in which case young visitors get a better deal. They can not only lift a dazzlingly painted shield to test the weight, they can also try on a legionary's helmet. All in front of a massive mirror, ideal for the age of the selfie. The drabest and most depressing item is an armoured blanket for a horse. It brings home the grim nature of warfare, an art at which the Romans excelled. They were constantly on campaign in different parts of their empire, including Britain. When they weren't waging war they were simulating it at the circus. Gladiators have to get a mention, and what better example than an actual emperor? Commodus seems to have gone insane and fancied himself as a fighter and Conqueror of the World as well as a god. It seems he wasn't that good but he survived.



*An extremely rare skeleton with an iron nail through the ankle, indicating crucifixion. Found in Cambridgeshire*

There appears to be no mention of Christians being fed to the lions, or doing very much at all. The biggest gap in an otherwise comprehensive exhibition is the sect that came out of the East and eventually made Rome its headquarters. Christians deserve more of a mention, as does Christ. For me, the most remarkable exhibit of all is an exceedingly rare skeleton. It has an obvious indication of having been crucified: a large iron nail through the ankle. Truly astonishing is that it was found in Cambridgeshire. There is very little evidence for the remains of the 6,000 or so slaves from Spartacus' rebellion in 71 BC, and yet a crucified man was found as recently as 2017 in East Anglia. How many such executions can there have been in Britannia?

It's a poignant moment to see the evidence of this Roman barbarism. Explaining the importance of judicial killing, they omit the most famous victim of all. Of course Our Lord never served in any army, but if they are not going to mention his crucifixion, could they not have mentioned his contact with Roman soldiers? In the British Museum's admirable attempt to bring the Roman military closer to modern observers, they have missed out on the enduring links. In addition to Longinus, who was a vital participant in the Crucifixion, there was the Roman centurion who gave us the timeless words recorded by St Matthew: 'Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed'.



*Hadrian was among the kinder emperors to Christians, not that this is mentioned in the exhibition*

There is also St Alban, a Roman citizen as well as being the first Christian martyr in Britain. His name lives on while Verulamium does not. Westminster Cathedral is proud to commemorate him with a mosaic. The ancient Roman gods are hardly celebrated anywhere, although there is no doubt some branch of the Wicca that aims to change that.

*Legion: life in the Roman army at the British Museum, ends 23 June.*

# Canon John O'Leary

**'The Centre of the Universe': my description of The Most Sacred Heart, Ruislip; the vibrant parish where I grew up after my birth in 1967. My father was Irish, my mother is English. After redundancy from factory work, Dad became a porter at Harefield Hospital. Mum, a convert, nursed at Mount Vernon. Dad is deceased, while Mum still lives in Ruislip. I am the youngest of six. Sadly, two siblings have died: Francis, my only brother, of leukaemia, aged 26 (soon after my diaconate ordination) and Maria, at 47, from a heart attack. My home parish's life of faith, rooted in and sustained by the Lord's presence in the Mass, enabled me to listen and respond to the Father's call to ministerial priesthood. Serving at a number of ordinations in the parish was an immense inspiration. Likewise, the example of two superb parish priests, Fathers Peter Geraerts and (later Mgr Canon) Adrian Arrowsmith (Fr. A). Both proclaimed the Gospel with the clarity arising from shepherds' hearts.**

Fr A. took me on the parish pilgrimage to Rome. It was a significant turning point. Priesthood had entered my mind; but I was intent on an army career. Celibacy did not attract. Being a pilgrim taught me not to fear Jesus' invitation: 'Follow me'. Fr Michael Johnson, then Vocations' Director, later PP of Ruislip, let me apply while still in sixth form to begin seminary formation after A-Levels. Wisely he also advised me to apply to universities. I received offers to study geography. However, Cardinal Hume accepted me for formation on leaving school. Thus, in 1985 I started at Allen Hall. Fellow Ruislip parishioner, Duncan Adamson started seminary too, at the Beda College. As parish MC and friend, Duncan helped me to welcome what Jesus desires for us. His final appointment before dying in 2022 was Parish Priest of Ruislip.

After two years at Allen Hall, I moved to the Venerable English College (VEC), Rome. Defeating the Scots College at football remains a pleasurable memory! Even better, deaconing at a Mass celebrated by Pope St John Paul II. My five years at the VEC were not all plain sailing. Challenges and doubts arose. Yet I am full of gratitude for these. By God's grace, often channelled through brother seminarians, they fostered maturity. The witness of Canon John McDonald, by now PP of Sacred Heart, encouraged me through to 18 July, 1992: what a great joy to be ordained priest by Cardinal Hume in the church where I was baptised, received first Holy Communion and confirmed! The parish continues to nurture that gift of priesthood received over 30 years ago.

Over those years, appointments have been many and varied. None always easy; all rewarding. I have served as assistant priest in Brook Green and Tottenham, then parish



priest of Shepherds Bush, Kingsland and Tollington Park. In all these places, the Holy Spirit, inflaming countless people's charity, deepened my trust in Jesus and his, our Father. Tollington Park was combined with being Vocations Director. Many of the men I accompanied are now, praise God, priests. For three joyful years I was assistant chaplain to the universities of London, based at Newman House. Witnessing students' weddings worldwide has been lovely. Whilst at Newman House, and then Shepherd's Bush, I also taught philosophy at Allen Hall. In 1995, Cardinal Cormac permitted me to pursue doctoral studies at Heythrop College, based at Lincoln's Inn Parish. Parishioners kept me going (as did theatre trips) when my thesis on materialist neuroscientists and the immortal soul encountered dead-ends.



## Thank you to those considering leaving a gift to the Cathedral in their will.

This is easy to do and makes a real difference to the Cathedral. Simply provide your solicitor with the following recommended wording:

Westminster Cathedral, part of the Westminster Roman Catholic Diocesan Trustee  
Registered Charity Number 233699

*‘God has blessed us with many gifts.*

*Let us return them to Him with increase so that we can help future generations and enable our Church to grow.*

*That’s why I’m remembering Westminster Cathedral in my will.’*

Mary



If you would like to find out more or talk about the impact that you would like your gift to have, please contact Laura on the Cathedral's Fundraising Team:  
[cathedralgiving@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:cathedralgiving@rcdow.org.uk) or call 020 7798 9058

Archbishop (now Cardinal) Vincent Nichols appointed me his Private Secretary in 2011. A kaleidoscope of experiences followed. Visiting so many parishes and schools was wonderful. Journeys to Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan and Gaza are engraved deeply in my heart, as is meeting Popes Benedict XVI and Francis. Whilst Private Secretary I became chaplain to the Catholic Medical Association and member of St John and St Elizabeth Hospital Ethics Committee.

2019 marked my return to Allen Hall, as Vice-Rector and Dean of Studies. The partnership between Allen Hall, *Mater Ecclesia* College and St Mary's University was just underway. It enables seminarians to obtain pontifical and civil degrees. I resumed teaching philosophy, and began teaching theology at St Mary's. This continues in my current post as Rector. What's it like being Rector? A privilege! Humbling too! I am certainly not the best priest for this ministry. Thankfully, then, conforming seminarians to Christ the High Priest, moulding earthenware jars to hold divine treasure, really is the Holy Trinity's achievement. Thus, as did our Douai Martyrs: *vivamus in spe* (let us live in hope – Allen Hall's motto).

Installation as a Canon and election as Canon Theologian coincided with my silver jubilee year. As a Chapter member, I endeavour to support the Cathedral's mission particularly by prayer and hearing confessions when possible. Most importantly, I offer Mass for the diocese, that the Most Sacred Heart, beating in the Eucharist, may be for us all the centre of our universe.



### Serving Westminster Cathedral for Many Generations

**WESTMINSTER 020 7834 4624**

74 Rochester Row SW1P 1JU  
[westminster@jhkenyon.co.uk](mailto:westminster@jhkenyon.co.uk)

**KENSINGTON 020 3667 8664**

279 Kensington High Street W8 6NA  
[kensington@jhkenyon.co.uk](mailto:kensington@jhkenyon.co.uk)

**BAYSWATER 020 7229 3810**

83 Westbourne Grove W2 4UL  
[bayswater@jhkenyon.co.uk](mailto:bayswater@jhkenyon.co.uk)

**FULHAM 020 7385 7625**

601 Fulham Road SW6 5UA  
[fulham@jhkenyon.co.uk](mailto:fulham@jhkenyon.co.uk)

**HAMPSTEAD 020 7794 3535**

9 Pond Street NW3 2PN  
[hampstead@jhkenyon.co.uk](mailto:hampstead@jhkenyon.co.uk)

*Special Rates for Cathedral Parishioners*

24 Hour Service  
Private Chapels of Rest  
Floral Tributes  
Printing of Service Stationery  
Memorial Consultants  
Funeral Plans



**EXPERIENCED CATHOLIC FUNERAL DIRECTORS**

[www.jhkenyon.co.uk](http://www.jhkenyon.co.uk)





# Our Earliest Mosaic School and Workshop

Patrick Rogers

By the end of the 1914-18 War four of the Cathedral chapels had been decorated with marble and mosaic – The Holy Souls, St Gregory and St Augustine's, St Andrew's, and the Shrine of the Sacred Heart. In addition the main entrance tympanum, the Lady Chapel altarpiece and a few panels elsewhere had also been completed. Seven different artists, including J F Bentley, the Cathedral architect, had been responsible for a wide variety of mosaic designs but, with the possible exception of St Andrew's Chapel, Cardinal Bourne was satisfied with none of them.

As mentioned earlier, in November 1905, two years after his installation as Fourth Archbishop of Westminster, Bourne was in Rome and from there travelled to Sicily specifically to see the 12th century Byzantine mosaics in Palermo's *Capella Palatina* and in the great cathedral of Monreale nearby. There at last Bourne found what he wanted, telling the Pope on his return of his intention to reproduce the mosaics he had seen there in Westminster Cathedral. Writing later in the *Westminster Cathedral Chronicle* of January 1934, Bourne admitted that he had found the whole question of the mosaics most perplexing. After W C Symons' death in 1911 he had been persuaded by John Marshall, then Cathedral architect-in-charge, to commission Robert Anning Bell to design mosaics for the altarpiece and four wall niches in the Lady Chapel (executed in 1912-13) and then the main entrance tympanum (1915-16). But Bourne regarded the altarpiece as a disappointment and the tympanum as the 'greatest disappointment which I have received in connection with the work of the Cathedral'. By now he had convinced himself that no non-Catholic artist could be trusted with work of this type.

To commemorate his 20 years as Archbishop of Westminster, Bourne had his portrait painted in 1923. The



*Basil Carey-Elwes working on the apse of the Lady Chapel in 1931.*

artist was Gilbert Pownall, a Catholic who exhibited regularly at the Royal Academy from 1908. Bourne believed that at last he had found the right man to design the Cathedral mosaics. As Pownall had little or no experience in this medium, Bourne arranged for him to go with Marshall to Ravenna, Rome, Venice and, of course, Palermo and Monreale, to study the masterpieces in mosaic there as Bourne himself had done. During 1926 Pownall set about planning the Cathedral decoration, obtaining a sketch of the main apse and details of Bentley's 1899 plan for the Lady Chapel mosaics from Archbishop's House. By the spring of 1927 Pownall had produced a model showing his own designs for the Lady Chapel mosaics which, according to the *Westminster Cathedral Chronicle*, received much well-deserved praise. Bourne asked him to work first on the alcove above one of the main confessionals in the south transept near the Lady Chapel, and then on the Chapel itself. He also announced that a workshop and school of mosaics would be set up. In 1930 the workshop was established on the third floor of the

Cathedral tower with Basil Carey-Elwes and Thomas Josey (both of whom had worked on the mosaics in St Andrew's Chapel) as the first mosaicists and boys from Canon Craven's Crusade of Rescue as apprentices.



*Gilbert Pownall's portrait of Cardinal Bourne in 1923.*





*Gilbert Pownall and his wife*

Pownall's first designs, showing the penitent St Peter and St Mary Magdalen, were executed in 1930, using the direct method. A start was then made on the Lady Chapel, supervised by Pownall and Lawrence Shattock, the new Cathedral architect-in-charge. By now the team of mosaicists had grown, to three with the arrival of Carlo de Spirt (previously apprenticed to Zanelli) and then to five with the arrival of Filippo Mariutto and Gian-Battista Maddalena in 1931. Both were originally from Udine near

Venice but they had been working for the German mosaics firm Diespeker on the decoration of Selfridges. The Lady Chapel mosaics took the first three mosaicists five years, being completed in June 1935. The apse shows Christ as the Tree of Life with Our Lady as Patroness of London beside the Tower of London, and St Peter as Patron of Westminster beside Westminster Cathedral, together with the archangels Gabriel and Michael and other saints. On the west wall opposite is Our Lady's Coronation as Queen of Heaven. Running round the chapel is a garland of flowers held by angels and representing a great rosary culminating in Christ above the altar. In amongst the garland and Tree of Life are over 100 animals, insects, fish and birds. Below are scenes such as the declaration of the Immaculate Conception and the appearance of Our Lady to Bernadette at Lourdes. The lower frieze consists of a series of scenes from Our Lady's life, starting with her parents (Anne and Joachim) with King David, and finishing with St Luke writing his gospel.

While the work was going on in the Lady Chapel, Mariutto and Maddalena were working on the blue sanctuary arch mosaic (tympenum) of Christ in Glory surrounded by the four Evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), with the twelve Apostles on either side and a blue background consisting of perhaps a thousand little faces – the host of heaven. After 18 months' work this had



*A detail of the design for the sanctuary arch, showing the 'host of heaven'.*



*Mosaic tesserae (smalti) purchased from Venice for the Mosaic School and Workshop in the early 1930s.*

been finished and late in 1933 the two Italians started on the mosaic in St Peter's Crypt with its scenes of St Peter enthroned, attempting to walk on the water and being presented by Christ with the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. This was completed by the autumn of 1934 and the pair then turned their attention to the apse mosaic above the Cathedral choir. In July a three foot wide coloured cardboard model of Pownall's design for the apse had been placed in the Cathedral crypt with a request for comments, one of which, from 16 year-old Aelred Bartlett, resulted in Bourne telling his father that he needed his bottom smacked! The centre of the design consisted of a circle of angels while an outer ring was made up of the apostles. In rectangular panels below were biblical scenes including the Sacrifice of Isaac, The Presentation in the Temple, The Agony in the Garden, the Crucifixion (centre), the Scourging at the Pillar, the Crowning with Thorns, Cain and Abel, Moses in the Bulrushes, the Burning Bush, Pharaoh in the Red Sea, the Tables of the Law and Moses drawing water from the Rock.



*Pownall's 1931 design for the Cathedral sanctuary arch*

# A Monsignor tickled with a Feather and Snakes on the Loose

Philip Hodges

**On State Occasions His Majesty's Ministers would be present in the nave seated on gilded chairs and a cleric in cassock and soutane would be in attendance on the principals, gently advising them when to stand, sit or kneel since many were not Catholics and could be embarrassed by being exposed prominently in a strange and unknown ritual. I was present when King Alfonso and Queen Ena of Spain attended Mass in State and also when King Albert and Queen Elizabeth of the Belgians did likewise. As crowned and anointed heads, both king and consort were seated on thrones in the sanctuary.**

## **Victory and after**

The Victory March through London in 1919 was an impressive sight headed by the supreme Chiefs of Staff of the Allies riding horse-back. On the following day Marshal Foch, supremo of the Allied Forces attended Mass in State in the Cathedral. We boys were allowed to line the grand staircase in Archbishop's House as the great man arrived afterwards for lunch with the Cardinal. There were many state funerals of public men who happened to be Catholics and the military ones were always carried out with the brilliant ceremonial laid down by King's Regulations which included the deceased's charger being led with the deceased's Wellington boots suspended from the saddle in reverse position. One such funeral of military grandeur was that of Sir John Cowans, Quartermaster General of the British Army.

On November 11th 1918, Armistice Day, the cease-fire order was given at 11am. Mgr Hall relaxed his normal rigid adherence to the school timetable and took us all in a 'crocodile' to the forefront of Buckingham Palace where King George V appeared several times on the balcony. I saw girls seizing the caps from the



*The Archbishop's Private Chapel, where Philip served Mass for Cardinal Bourne*

heads of senior officers and exchanging them for their own. Gregory Murray told me that, on his returning from an organ lesson at Trinity College, the bus conductors were not taking fares. There was a strange euphoria among the crowds milling about the Mall as though all had just emerged from an evil dream of four years' duration. At the time it would have been inconceivable that in 20 years' time, another war of even greater ferocity would break out and banish all hope for the peace of mankind.

There was a mardi-gras atmosphere about and young girls would go around the West End with short bamboo canes at the end of which there was a bunch of feathers. On this first Armistice Day, the elderly and eminent canon lawyer and theologian, Mgr Moyes, of the Cathedral Chapter had returned from a walk in great indignation: one of these 'flapper' girls had dared to tickle his neck with a feather. One can only

speculate on his reactions had he lived into this permissive age when such liberties are normal among the rising generation. Peace celebrations were deferred to the summer of 1919 when a grand fireworks display was arranged in Hyde Park. Unfortunately the firework night was marred by a heavy scotch mist. We boys were allowed to ascend the campanile to view the scene from 300 feet up. It was cold and very damp up there and we were surprised to find that Cardinal Bourne had himself climbed those interminable stairs (there was no lift in those days) to watch the pyrotechnics. The observation gallery at the top of the tower is narrow and has many corners. It was embarrassing to find oneself sharing one of these nooks with this austere and unbending man.

Suddenly the Cathedral's St Edward's Tower became a focus of tragedy. At that time the observation gallery had only a parapet three feet high with a simple metal



rail surmounting it; anyone attempting suicide would have no difficulty getting over the rail. After two deaths within a year, the civic authorities stepped in and ordered the Tower to be closed to the public until strong metal cages had been erected to prevent any further deaths. The Tower now has a lift and the summit is fool-proof, but the graffiti-mongers have gone to hazardous lengths to carve their names and literary efforts in almost inaccessible places.

We had the normal transient crazes of school life such as stamp-collecting and even the taking of snuff. One of these crazes, the keeping of pet animals, took a hold rapidly. Some boys had purchased rabbits, some guinea-pigs, some tortoises and others, white mice, all bought from the zoological department of the Army and Navy Stores in Victoria Street. A very studious boy, clever but a bit of a book-worm, had two guinea pigs. I remember how deeply I respected his knowledge when he told me that 'when they climb over one another it's a sign they're about to become parents' – no other details were vouchsafed, however. At age 12 I was totally green and still wet behind the ears.

For myself I chose harmless grass snakes about 9 inches long. I had a shallow wooden box filled with straw and leaves and covered by a piece of glass so that I could see my captives. There were long spells when I could not visit my snakes since they were on the far side of the playground; getting anxious about their lack of air, I bored holes in the side of the box for ventilation. Within one day my snakes had gone: I had not realised how easily they could squeeze through the holes. The next day the *Westminster Gazette* carried the vivid story and photograph of the caretaker of one of the Morpeth Terrace flats who, it alleged, had risked his life in beating to death a poisonous adder he had found under the mat of his entrance lobby. The next day the paper carried another story of a further brave encounter, praising the caretaker and adding: 'some madman in the neighbourhood is liberating snakes and should be apprehended as soon as possible'. Mgr Arthur Jackman, the cardinal's secretary, cut these reports from the paper and posted them on the school notice board. All the pets had to be kept outside and the makeshift huts

were inadequate. Ignorance and a spell of cold weather took a heavy toll and one of the deceased rabbits provided Fr Collings with a subject for dissection which he carried out like a medical student for our admiration.

Morpeth Terrace was popular for itinerant musical beggars, two of whom attended regularly and precisely at the same time each week. The female singer would make a passable attempt at Gounod's *Ave Maria* and would hold up a black silk domino to her face as if to conceal her identity and giving the impression of having fallen from stardom. The man would play three mournful melodies on a wheezy hurdy-gurdy and they would both move down the centre of the Terrace for there was little traffic. This visit sometimes coincided with the maths lesson and I always associated these doleful dirges with trying to extract the square root or some other cerebral ordeal.

### Timetable

The daily curriculum of the school remained unchanged during my time and was constant throughout the seasons. We would be roused at 6.30am by the rector or his assistant walking round the dormitory loudly clapping his hands. We would go to the wash-place, a narrow passage lined on each side by small circular wash basins set in a continuous slab of marble. Each basin had only one tap of the press-down type supplying only the cold hard water of the London region.

Air locks in the pipes made the characteristic noise when the taps operated. The soap was 'Brown Windsor' giving off the pungent odour of carbolic. Each boy had an eye-level locker with mirror doors in which he had his toilet requisites. Mine had the stale odour of a wet hairbrush because I used to plaster my black hair down with water like Burlington Bertie.

Our individual towels were hung over a central radiator. As there were only 20 bowls between 32 boys there was competition to get first place. At 6.50am we would assemble on the lower landing and the rector would call the roll, to which we would answer *Adsum* (i.e., Present). Six boys would be detailed to serve several 7 o'clock masses in the side-chapels whilst the remainder would go to the crypt for Mass.

This crypt chapel is a low-vaulted area under the choir apse and lined round the walls with metal cupboards with ornate brass doors. These were the reliquaries containing the tiny bits of bone from the bodies of canonised saints, each in an envelope sealed by a bishop and containing a certificate of authenticity. Periodically an auxiliary bishop would perform the private ceremony of the consecration of altar stones in the crypt during which he would seal a relic of a saint in each stone. These stones would then be distributed for insertion into the altar slabs of churches in the Westminster Province.



One of the Relic Cupboards in St Peter's Crypt, the relics secured behind brass gates

## Anointing of the Sick

Although the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes was displaced by a Sunday, the Cathedral was packed on the preceding afternoon for a Mass of the feast with anointing of the sick. Bishop Paul is seen here administering the Sacrament.



© Mazur/CBCFW.org.uk

## Religious Renew their Vows

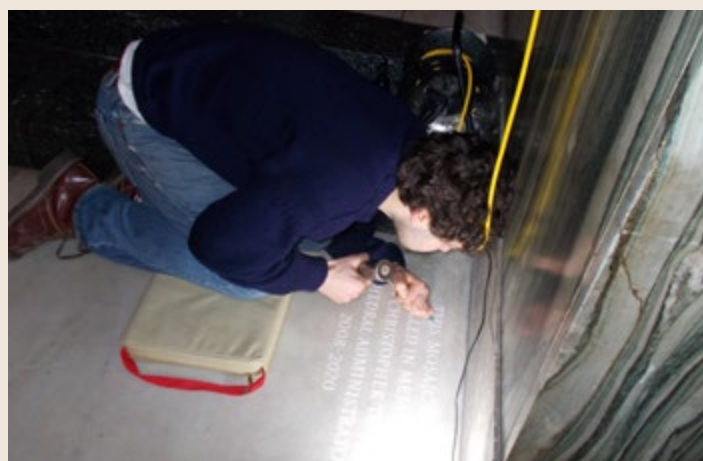
Bishops and Diocesan Clergy renew their vows at the Chrism Mass in Holy Week; for Religious, however, the time for Renewal comes in association with Candlemas and so members of communities from across the diocese came together a day later on 3 February for Mass with the Cardinal, shown at the post-Mass reception in Cathedral Hall.



© Diocese of Westminster

## WCCS Footballing Skill on Display

Oremus congratulations go to the boy who kicked the ball so hard that it lodged firmly between the pipes but avoided breaking Fr Brian's office window!



© Amanda C Dickie

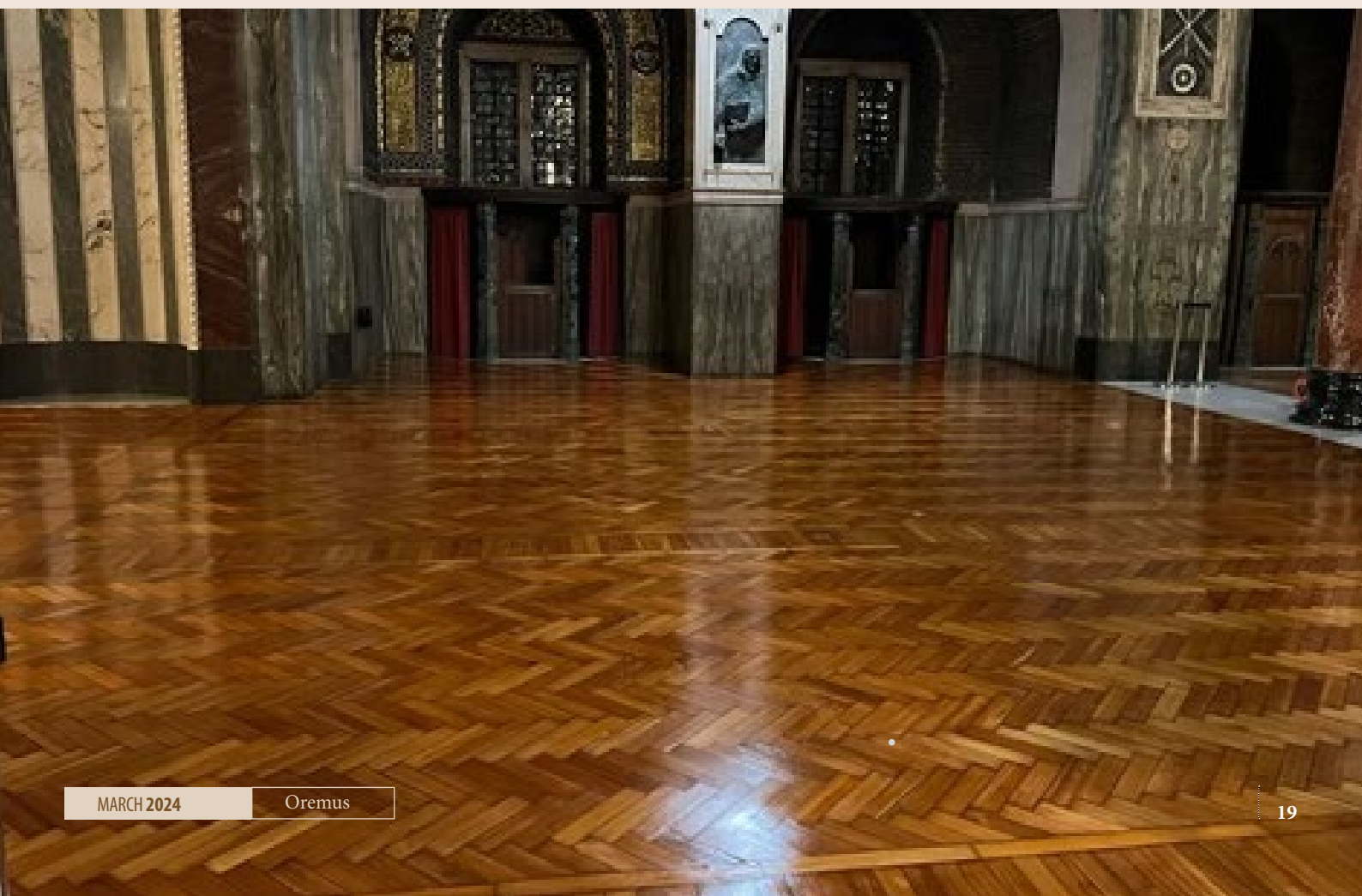
## Canon Christopher memorialised

Stone carver George S Edwards recently completed Canon Christopher's memorial with an inscription on the floor beneath the mosaic of St Augustine of Hippo.



# Restoring the Floor

You can read on page 26 about how the Friends of the Cathedral have taken on helping with the restoration of the wooden floor. The images below show sanding taking place, the stripped and cleaned wood blocks and then the restored result.



## CATHEDRAL HISTORY A PICTORIAL RECORD

### St Patrick's Day Celebrations, 17th March 1932

Paul Tobin

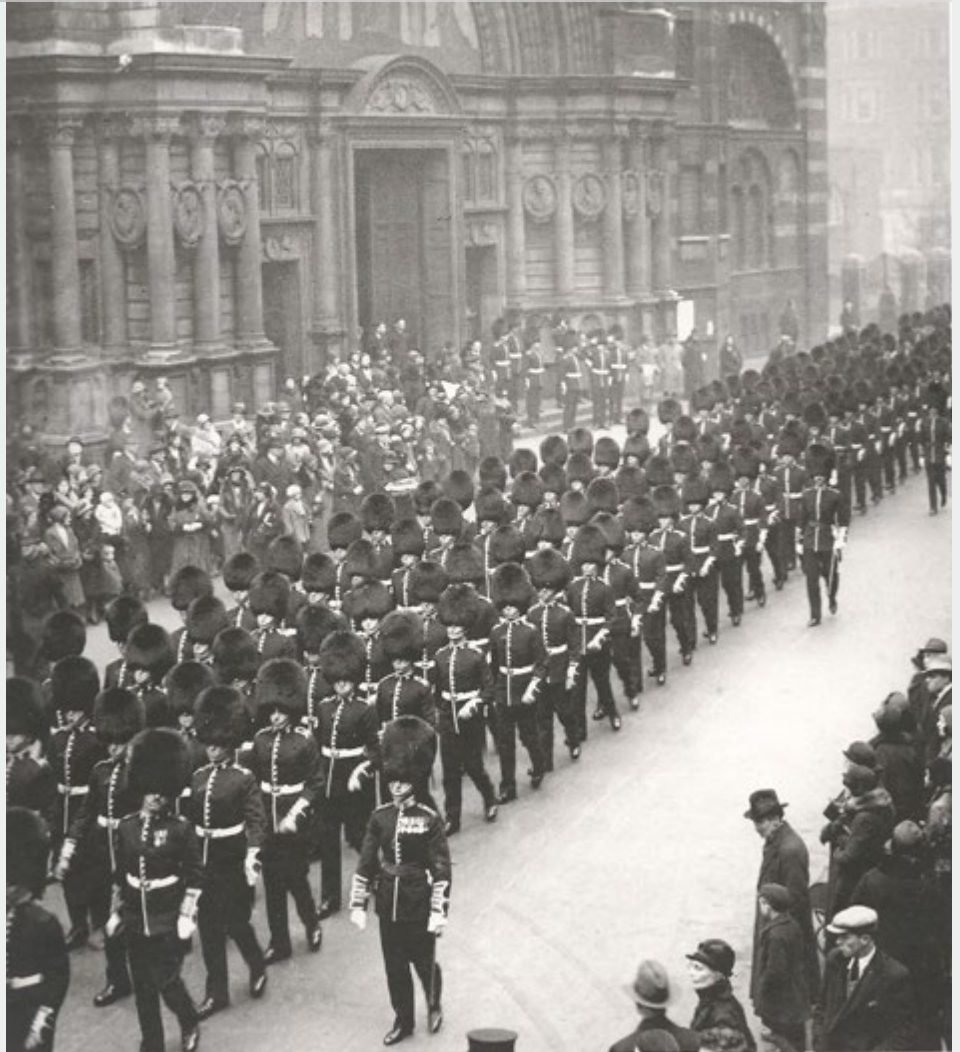
To mark the 15th centenary of the translation of the body of St Patrick, Cardinal Francis Bourne, Archbishop of Westminster 1903-1935, assisted at Solemn Mass at St Patrick's Church, Soho, whilst at Westminster Cathedral the Holy See had given permission for the 10.30am High Mass to be that of St Patrick instead of the Lenten Feria and decreed that in future on March 17th it would be the Mass of the Saint that was to be celebrated.

It is not known when the custom of singing the hymn *Hail glorious St Patrick* at the conclusion of High Mass started, but it was certainly being sung in the 1960s.

The High Mass was attended by Lt Col The Viscount Gough and other ranks of the 1st Battalion Irish Guards. Judging by the numbers of red tunicked Guardsmen who are seen marching past the front of the Cathedral, one can only imagine how impressive the sight must have been when they were filling the seats in the nave.

Sources:

*Westminster Cathedral Chronicle* April 1932  
Image: *From the Archives, Vol 2, A Universe Special Publication*



*Oremus* is available for collection from the Cathedral, can be sent to you by post, read online at the Cathedral website or delivered direct to your inbox

<https://westminstercathedral.org.uk/the-cathedral-community/about-oremus/>  
Email: [oremus@westminstercathedral.org.uk](mailto:oremus@westminstercathedral.org.uk)

**I wish to receive *Oremus* by post** (Please fill out this coupon)

PLEASE COMPLETE IN BLOCK CAPITALS

I enclose a cheque for £ ..... payable to *Westminster Cathedral Administration*

I enclose a donation of £ .....

Name: .....

Address: .....

Postcode: .....

For further information please call 020 7798 9052 or email [oremus@westminstercathedral.org.uk](mailto:oremus@westminstercathedral.org.uk).

We would like to thank our readers for their continued support and all those who send donations.

Increased postal costs for overseas mean that annual subscription rates are UK £28; Europe £58; Rest of the world £75.

Send to: *Oremus*, 42 Francis Street, London SW1P 1QW United Kingdom

*Oremus* 03.24





# Mosaics for the Baptistry

Edward Kendall



*Peter Howell addresses the assembled company*

**The search is underway for an artist to design a mosaic scheme for the Baptistry, which is the Cathedral's penultimate undecorated chapel. This is why, on the evening of Friday 26 January, 22 artists were invited to the Cathedral to familiarise themselves with the space and to learn at first-hand about the history of the Cathedral and its interior design.**

Not all churches have baptistries, many having a simple font near the entrance or a portable font which can be taken out and used as and when the need arises. For instance, in the Cathedral, even though we do have the Baptistry, for pastoral reasons many baptisms do take place in the Lady Chapel and a portable font is set up there for that. When US President John F Kennedy visited for the baptism of his niece Anna Christina Radziwill, a portable font was set up in the Crypt for that occasion – no doubt to retain the privacy of an intimate family event from the prying eyes of those wishing to catch a glimpse of such a well-known public figure.

So, what is a baptistry and why does the Cathedral have one? A baptistry is a designated area used for initiating new members into the Church. Needless to say, this means that the decorative centrepiece of the baptistry is the font and Westminster Cathedral is no exception. Our Baptistry has a substantial marble font made in Rome in 1901 on the instructions of Cardinal Vaughan, who had received the necessary funds from the Dowager Lady Loder. It was designed by Cathedral architect John Francis Bentley himself.

The Chapel is a square cross-vaulted space adjoining the Chapel of St Gregory and St Augustine, the two spaces being linked by an arched gateway. The arch is decorated with mosaics depicting the four rivers of Paradise, thus emphasising the link between baptism and conversion. Further decorative items include a large copy of Thorvaldsen's statue of St John the Baptist in Copenhagen Cathedral presented to the Cathedral by the Marquess of Bute in 1900 and a small finely carved wooden statue of St Christopher, outside the Chapel

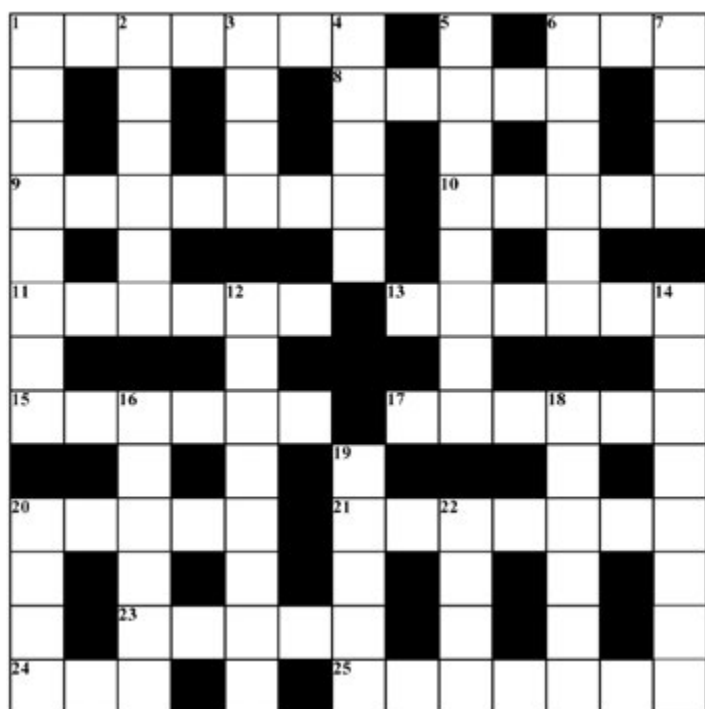
gates, presented by Catholic author Hilaire Belloc; an inscription on a bronze plate at the foot of the statue narrates the story of his giving it after seeing his son set off to fight in Flanders during the First World War. However, the whitewashed upper walls and vault are in stark contrast to the Cathedral's other Chapels and provide a blank canvas for future mosaic work.

At the event itself, after a welcome from the Cathedral Dean, and an introductory theological speech from the Cardinal, Peter Howell, a member of the Cathedral's Art and Architecture Committee since 1974, who has written a book on John Francis Bentley, and has an in-depth knowledge of the Cathedral, spoke at some length about the artistic history of the building. His talk was followed by an opportunity for the artists to examine the Baptistry and the entire Cathedral at leisure, thus giving them time to assess the scale and size of the project and how it might fit into the wider decorative legacy of mosaic.

The evening culminated with a reception in Clergy House's library, to enable the artists to mingle and discuss the project. Whilst assembled there, Suzi Pendlebury, Cathedral architect addressed the gathering, inviting the artists to put forward their design proposals. With God's blessing, in due time we hope to have this Chapel completed with mosaic decoration worthy of this sacramentally most important part of the Cathedral.



*The Font in context*



Alan Frost March 2024 – No. 119

## Clues Across

- 1 & 6: Name of marshland area of Westminster that existed on site of Cathedral (7,3)  
 6 See 1 Across  
 8 Charge imposed on little island? (5)  
 9 Member of choir (7)  
 10 Cherub in Islington on the Monopoly board! (5)  
 11 Having correct musical sound and understanding! (2,4)  
 13 See 3 Down  
 15 Patron Saint of England (6)  
 17 Colloquially a mad person, and a classic Hitchcock film (6)  
 20 Vote for the 'chosen' of God? (5)  
 21 'Rich as -----', a Roman General, as the saying goes (7)  
 23 Young fish that, when grown, used to be a popular dish with Londoners (5)  
 24 Large barrel, especially of wine or beer (3)  
 25 St ----- Tower, name of the Cathedral campanile (7)

## Clues Down

- 1 Given by the priest at the end of Mass (8)  
 2 Shellfish or mine (6)  
 3 & 13 Across: Province of Canada with world's highest tides (4,6)  
 4 Brother of Moses, led the Israelites out of Egypt (5)  
 5 They have been crowned at Westminster Abbey for centuries (7)  
 6 'The ----- into Egypt', event, much painted, of Holy Family's escape from threat of Herod (6)  
 7 Irish boy's name and 'The First' carol (4)  
 12 Opposite of a positive attitude (8)  
 14 St ----- de Gonzaga, died only 23 caring for plague victims (8)  
 16 See 20 Down  
 18 One of the Three Wise Men (6)  
 19 Notation and words for twenty musicians? (5)  
 20 & 16: Where Cain was banished and novel by Steinbeck (4,2,4)  
 22 Make solemn declaration (4)

## ANSWERS

Across: 1 Bulwark 6 Fen 8 Atoll 9 Soprano 10 Angel 11 In Tune 13 Scotia  
 15 George 17 Psycho 20 Elect 21 Crassus 23 Elver 24 Tun 25 Edwards  
 Down: 1 Blessing 2 Limpet 3 Nova 4 Aaron 5 Monarchs 6 Flight 7 Noel  
 12 Negative 14 Aloysius 16 Of Eden 18 Caspar 19 Score 20 East 22 Avow

## Our Lord and Our Lady

Hilaire Belloc

*They warned Our Lady for the Child  
 That was Our Blessed Lord,  
 And She took Him into the desert wild,  
 Over the camel's ford.  
 And a long song She sang to Him  
 And a short story told:  
 And she wrapped Him in a woollen cloak  
 To keep Him from the cold.  
 But when Our Lord was grown a man  
 The rich they dragged Him down,  
 And they crucified Him in Golgotha,  
 Out and beyond the town.  
 They crucified Him on Calvary,  
 Upon an April day;  
 And because He had been Her little Son  
 She followed Him all the way.  
 Our Lady stood beside the Cross,  
 A little space apart,  
 And when She heard Our Lord cry out  
 A sword went through her heart.  
 They laid Our Lord in a marble tomb,  
 Dead, in a winding sheet.  
 But Our Lady stands above the world  
 With the white moon at her feet.*

## A Better Resurrection

Christina Rossetti

*I have no wit, no words, no tears;  
 My heart within me like a stone  
 Is numb'd too much for hopes or fears;  
 Look right, look left, I dwell alone;  
 I lift mine eyes, but dimm'd with grief  
 No everlasting hills I see;  
 My life is in the falling leaf:  
 O Jesus, quicken me.*

*My life is like a faded leaf,  
 My harvest dwindled to a husk:  
 Truly my life is void and brief  
 And tedious in the barren dusk;  
 My life is like a frozen thing,  
 No bud nor greenness can I see:  
 Yet rise it shall—the sap of Spring;  
 O Jesus, rise in me.*

*My life is like a broken bowl,  
 A broken bowl that cannot hold  
 One drop of water for my soul  
 Or cordial in the searching cold;  
 Cast in the fire the perish'd thing;  
 Melt and remould it, till it be  
 A royal cup for Him, my King:  
 O Jesus, drink of me.*

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



# In retrospect: from the *Cathedral Chronicle*

## Varia

The work on the marble screen at the west end of the Cathedral, which has been delayed owing to an accident at the works of Messrs. Farmer and Brindley, has now been resumed, and the screen (of the Grand Organ) will shortly be completed. The six marble columns have been erected on the gallery, and all the other marble work is ready for delivery. The fixing of the capitals and the upper part of the screen will not take much time, as it is all straightforward work, and unless anything quite unforeseen occurs the scaffolding which has for so many months hidden the west end of the building will disappear, and this further addition to the beauty of our great church will be seen.

*from the March 1924 Westminster Cathedral Chronicle*

.....

## Pastoral Letter of Cardinal Bernard Griffin for Lent 1954

We have each to share in the mission entrusted to the church by Christ. The means of fulfilling this duty must vary within the spheres of our ordinary daily activity. But because the outlet to our apostolic endeavours may be restricted – professionally, locally, parochially, even domestically – we must not lose sight of the universality of the Church's mission. Catholic means universal. Any narrowness of outlook or of sympathy is utterly alien to a truly Catholic mind. Anything that is good or true in humanity comes from Christ. But in the Church alone can mankind find fulfilment.

For this reason Catholics must always take an active interest in current affairs and be alive to contemporary needs and preoccupations. They cannot dissociate themselves from the world to which they must carry the teachings of Christ. They must feel deeply with all that is good and true in the aspirations of their fellow creatures. In the spirit of their Master, Who came 'not to be served but to serve,' they must enter even more fully than they do at present into the whole life of the community, accepting the duties and responsibilities of public life and co-operating to the full in the field of voluntary endeavour. To all this must Catholics give themselves in a spirit of selfless generosity, with no other motive than the glory of God and the service of men. 'Your light must shine so brightly before men that they can see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in heaven.'

Whatever our role in life, wherever we are and whatever we do, we are witnesses to Christ. This is the inescapable consequence of our baptism which imprints upon our souls a sacramental character, marking us forever as member of Christ's Church. This is the privilege of our faith and it bears with it an immense responsibility. We are either true witnesses or false witnesses. A Catholic whose life is a contradiction of his faith is a cause of grave scandal, leading others away from the truth. On the other hand the Catholic who lives a fully Christian life gives witness to the truth. Indeed his personal sanctity leads others to Christ. We know from experience that the example given by good Catholics is at the root of nearly every conversion to the true Faith. The precepts of the Church and her moral teaching are to be regarded, not as a burden, but as a sacred responsibility. In following these precepts we have the means of showing to others the love and wisdom of our Lord. To ignore or even to minimise any single obligation of the Christian life is a betrayal of the truth entrusted to us by Christ. It is a betrayal of Christ Himself and rightly earns the contempt of non-Catholics. People will be attracted to the Church, not by Christianity watered down and on easy terms, but by seeing the full Christian ideal lived with complete sincerity. Our essential witness to Christ is not one of argument or controversy, even though at times these may have their place. Our witness to Christ is our personal sanctity.

During Lent let us strengthen our union with Christ by frequentation of the sacraments. By confession and by the reception of Holy Communion we win the grace to live according to the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and to carry out the mission which He has entrusted to us. Our mission field lies about us, in our homes and in our public life. Wherever we are we must reflect His truth to a world in which He abides for all time but which does not know Him as we do. 'As God's favoured children, you must be like Him. Order your lives in charity which Christ showed to us, when He gave Himself up on our behalf, a sacrifice breathing out fragrance as He offered it to God.'

*Given at Westminster on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes and appointed to be read in all the churches and chapels of our diocese on Quinquagesima Sunday in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and fifty-four.*

*from the March 1954 Westminster Cathedral Chronicle*

## Tales of the English Martyrs

St Margaret Clitherow, martyred Good Friday, 25 March 1586: At 8am the Sheriffs called, and with them she walked barefoot, going along through the crowd to the Tolbooth. There, turning from the Protestant ministers, she knelt and prayed by herself. Forced to undress, she laid herself on the ground, clothed only in the linen habit, her face covered with a handkerchief, her hands outstretched and bound as if on a cross. The weighted door was placed on her; at the first crushing pain she cried, 'Jesu Mercy' and after a quarter of an hour passed to her God.



## The Month of March

### The Holy Father's Prayer Intention:

#### For New Martyrs:

Let us pray that those who risk their lives for the Gospel in various parts of the world might imbue the Church with their courage and missionary drive.

### Friday 1 March

*Ps Week 2*

ST DAVID, Bishop, *Friday abstinence*  
Patron of Wales

\* World Day of Prayer

**6.15pm** Stations of the Cross

### Saturday 2 March

Lent Feria

**4pm** Low Mass (Blessed Sacrament Chapel)

### Sunday 3 March

*Ps Week 3*

**3rd SUNDAY OF LENT**

**12pm** Solemn Mass (Full choir)

*Palestrina* – Missa Aspice Domine

*Tallis* – In ieiunio et fletu

**4pm** Solemn Vespers and Benediction

*Victoria* – Magnificat octavi toni

*Allegrì* – Miserere mei Deus

**4.30pm** Mass for the Deaf Service  
(Cathedral Hall)

### Monday 4 March

Lent Feria

(St Casimir)

### Tuesday 5 March

Lent Feria

**5.30pm** Chapter Mass

### Wednesday 6 March

Lent Feria

**1.15pm** Lunchtime Concert

### Thursday 7 March

Lent Feria

(Ss Perpetua and Felicity, Martyrs)

### Friday 8 March

*Friday abstinence*

Lent Feria

(St John of God, Religious)

**6.15pm** Stations of the Cross

### Saturday 9 March

Lent Feria

(St Frances of Rome, Religious)

### 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



St John of God in Milan

*Lassus* – Magnificat primi toni  
*Brahms* – Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen  
Organ: *Franck* – Cantabile

### Monday 11 March

Lent Feria

### Tuesday 12 March

Lent Feria

### Wednesday 13 March

Lent Feria

**1.15pm** Lunchtime Concert

### Thursday 14 March

Lent Feria

**7.35** Morning Prayer, **8, 10.30am** Mass in the Crypt

**12.30pm** Mass, 5pm Evening Prayer,

**5.30pm** Mass in Cathedral Hall

**7.30pm** Bach St John Passion (ticketed)

### Friday 15 March

*Friday abstinence*

Lent Feria

**6.15pm** Stations of the Cross

### Saturday 16 March

Lent Feria

### Sunday 17 March

*Ps Week 1*

**5th SUNDAY OF LENT**

**12pm** Solemn Mass (Full choir)

*Byrd* – Mass for five voices

*Palestrina* – Tribulationes civitatum

*Palestrina* – Peccavimus cum patribus nostris

**4pm** Solemn Vespers and Benediction

*Palestrina* – Magnificat quarti toni

*Poulenc* – Timor et Tremor



**Monday 18 March**

Lent Feria

**5.30pm** Vigil Mass of St Joseph**Tuesday 19 March****ST JOSEPH, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Patron of the diocese****8, 10.30am** Mass in St Joseph's Chapel**5pm** Second Vespers**5.30pm** Solemn Mass; attended by the

Society of St Augustine (Full choir

*de Padilla* – Missa Ego flos campi*Mawby* – Iustus ut palma*Ett* – Te Ioseph celebrantOrgan: *Lübeck* – Præludium in E (LübWV 7)**Wednesday 20 March**

Lent Feria

**1.15pm** Lunchtime Concert**Thursday 21 March**

Lent Feria

**2pm** SVP School Passion Play**Friday 22 March***Friday abstinence*

Lent Feria

**6.30pm** Stations of the Cross**Saturday 23 March**

Lent Feria

(St Turibius of Mogrovejo, Bishop)

**6pm** Victoria Choir sings at Mass**Sunday 24 March***Ps Week 2***PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD****11.30am** Procession and Solemn Mass

(Full choir)

*Byrd* – Mass for four voices*Byrd* – Ne irascaris*Byrd* – Civitas sancti tui**4pm** Solemn Vespers and Benediction*Victoria* – Magnificat octavi toni*Lassus* – Improperium exspectavit**4pm** Solemn Vespers and Benediction**Monday 25 March**

MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

**Tuesday 26 March**

TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

**12pm** Solemn Pontifical Mass of Chrism

(Full choir)

*Haydn* – Missa brevis Sancti Ioannis de Deo*Elgar* – The Spirit of the Lord*Mawby* – Ave verum corpusOrgan: *J.S. Bach* – Prelude in E flat (BWV 552)**Wednesday 27 March**

WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

**4pm** The Office of Tenebrae, broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 (Full choir)**5.10pm** Evening Prayer (said)**5.30pm** Solemn Mass**Thursday 28 March**

MAUNDY THURSDAY

**6pm** Solemn Evening Mass of the Lord's

Supper (Full choir)

*Vaughan Williams* – Mass in G minor*Duruflé* – Ubi caritas**Friday 29 March***Fast and abstinence***GOOD FRIDAY****10am** Office of Readings (Full choir)*Victoria* – Tenebrae Responsories*Anerio* – Christus factus est**3pm** Solemn Liturgy of the Passion (Full choir)*Bruckner* – Christus factus est*Victoria* – Passion according to John*Victoria* – Improperia*King John IV of Portugal* – Crux fidelis*Sanders* – The Reproaches*Lotti* – Crucifixus a 8**6.15pm** Stations of the Cross**Saturday 30 March***Fast as desired***HOLY SATURDAY****10am** Office of Readings (Men's voices)*Victoria* – Tenebrae Responsories*Anerio* – Christus factus est**8.30pm** The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night

(Full choir)

*Lassus* – Iubilare Deo omnis terra*Reid* – Exodus canticle*Palestrina* – Sicut cervus*Vierne* – Messe solennelle in C sharp minor*Palestrina* – Dexter a Domini*L'Héritier* – Surrexit pastor bonusOrgan: *Vierne* – Final (Symphonie VI)**Sunday 31 March****EASTER SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD****12 noon** Solemn Pontifical Mass (Full choir)*Widor* – Messe*Bassano* – Dic nobis MariaOrgan: *Dupré* – Prelude & Fugue in B major**4pm** Solemn Vespers and Benediction

(Men's voices)

*Bevan* – Magnificat primi toni*Palestrina* – Surrexit pastor bonus a 8Organ: *Langlais* – Incantation pour un jour saint*Christ's Resurrection from the tomb by Richard Challoner*

**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,

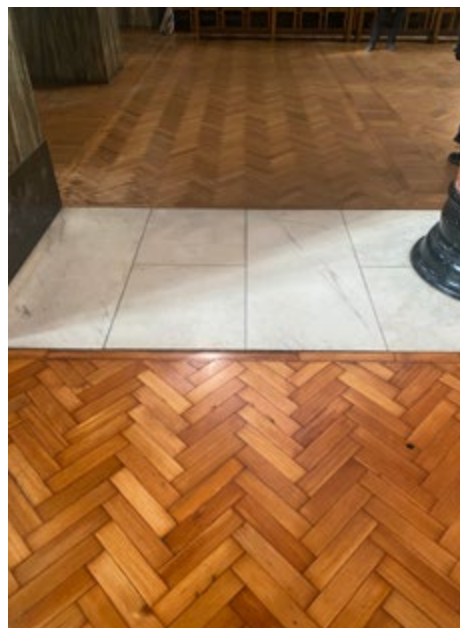
First Tuesdays 2.30-4pm

**Yoruba Association**

Hinsley Room,

Third Sundays 1.30-3pm

# Changing of the seasons



*A clear 'night and day', with the clean and bright post-work flooring in the foreground.*

Joe Allen, Friends' Co-ordinator

**With Lent beginning early, and a plethora of activity over the past few months across the Cathedral, it feels like we have been progressing seamlessly and quickly between seasons and feasts – Advent, Christmas and its Octave, Epiphany, Candlemas as I write these words, and Ash Wednesday just past. This is far from a complaint – the ebb and flow of the liturgical year picks us up and carries us along.**

I have to say, it feels rather the same with our fundraising work at the moment. In the last six months, we have seen a mosaic of St Augustine blessed and formally 'welcomed' into its new home, our £300,000 sanctuary lighting pledge come to fruition, and, in late January, the mosaic's dedication to Canon Tuckwell chiselled into the floor below. We have progressed from one project to the next, thanks in no small part to the generosity of our members and supporters, and now our attention turns to another phase in our mission.

We often look up – to the altar, main sanctuary, the sacred ministers standing below the baldacchino, dominating rood, and the vaults and domes of the Cathedral whether with mosaics or or awaiting them. But how often do we look down to the ground beneath us, and the floor on which we walk? As with every last thing in the Cathedral, there is a history and story to this most functional of features.

Speaking to our architect Suzi Pendlebury, I discovered that designing architect John Francis Bentley originally designed a marble floor, but for financial and also practical reasons, including marble making English churches even colder than they tend to be already, a pitch pine timber floor, intersected with marble at regular intervals was installed instead. As far as she knows, the flooring in the main nave is original, but has not been refurbished for quite some time. Moreover, the Covid pandemic halted the regular routine of polishing and maintenance.

The wear and tear of recent years, alongside damage over the previous years, has made refurbishment as well as maintenance a priority to conserve over 1,800m<sup>2</sup> of original timber block floor. A first pot of money was provided by a donor for the Blessed Sacrament and Lady Chapel areas, and the impact is both plainly visible, and greatly valued in verbal feedback. Restoring the floor throughout to good condition has now begun, and The Friends are keen to see this continue.

So, we are picking up the gauntlet of fundraising for the refurbishment and restoration of all the flooring in the Cathedral. To achieve this, circa £125,000 project for the benefit of the entire Cathedral, we will be running several campaigns, including a two-week Big Give to coincide with Easter, running from noon on Monday

25 March to noon on Monday 8 April. With a matched pot of £25,000, we are hoping to raise a total of £50,000 – which will give substantial headway allowing work to continue immediately. Further information and donation links will be circulated in due course at [www.TinyURL.com/CathedralFriends](http://www.TinyURL.com/CathedralFriends) and all the usual Cathedral and Friends communication channels.

Bringing the look and the state of the flooring up to scratch and providing a sure base for future maintenance, this new project will serve the Cathedral for years to come.

## What is a Big Give?

The Friends run Big Give campaigns at least once a year. The premise is that thanks to a 'matched pot', your donations are doubled at no extra cost to you. So, if you donate £10, it is doubled to £20, and if you are eligible for Gift Aid, becomes £22.50. These campaigns are therefore a doubly beneficial and effective opportunity to contribute to the life of the Cathedral.

## Events:

We are busy here at The Friends not just planning fundraising campaigns but a varied schedule of events, too. At the present time we are pleased to give notice of two quizzes to take place in the coming months: Thursday 25 April and Thursday 6 June, both from 6:30pm. Ticket reservations (at £20pp including fish and chips) can be made now by emailing [friends@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:friends@rcdow.org.uk) – an Eventbrite ticket link will be publicised in due course, alongside our other plans for summer and further on through the year.



# Easter: What it means to me

Mark, Year 6

**Easter is a time of great celebration as it marks the Resurrection of Jesus on that day over two thousand years ago. Before Easter comes the season of Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday, (this year it falls on 14th February which is also St Valentine's Day!) where last year's blessed palms are incinerated to ashes, which are then used in Mass, where we have a cross of those ashes placed on our foreheads. Ash Wednesday starts the 40 days of Lent.**

Lent is a time of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving as we remember Jesus fasting in the desert for 40 days and 40 nights while being tempted by Satan. During Lent, we do many things as a school community. We make our Lenten promises by writing them down, and try our best to follow them throughout all of Lent. We gather together for a special assembly where we place all of our written promises into special envelopes, they are then placed into together in our School Hall during Lent.

We also have our Penitential Service where Fr John, Fr Vincent, and Fr Chinedu come into our school and they help us receive the sacrament of reconciliation as we tell them our sins and they grant us absolution. During the Penitential Service, the Priests all tell us individually which prayer to say, this is called our penance. We then go into our School Chapel to say our penance.

We also support the Catholic Children's Society (CCS), who help children who need support with money, food, and other essential items such as beds, clothing, and other necessary items which those children need to be safe, happy and warm. We donate to the CCS every year in Lent and each person in the school gets a Lenten box to put the donations in and we give all the money to the CCS.

One of the main things that happens in the school in Lent is the Passion Play. Every year, Year 5 acts out the story of Easter from start to end. We have many props and costumes that we use to make the re-enactment of Jesus' last days on Earth as real as possible. We have readers who explain everything that is going on perfectly. Last year, I was in the Passion Play and I played the part of Judas. The Passion Play is planned out from the betrayal of Jesus and the sorrow that is felt to the joy of the Resurrection, so it almost seems real.

This year The Passion Play will be performed by Year 5 in Westminster Cathedral in the week before Holy Week on Thursday 21st March at 2pm. Come along and see for yourself what we do at St Vincent de Paul School to recognise and reflect on this important time.



**A. FRANCE & SON**  
**INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC FUNERAL**  
**DIRECTORS**

*We have been entrusted with  
funeral arrangements by  
Westminster Cathedral  
for many years*

**Holborn:** 45 Lamb's Conduit Street,  
London WC1N 3NH

**King's Cross:** 166 Caledonian Road,  
King's Cross London N1 0SQ

**Hendon:** 14 Watford Way,  
Hendon Central, London NW4 3AD

**Tel: 020 7405 4901**

**www.afrance.co.uk**

**info@afrance.co.uk**



# Chorister Opportunities at Westminster Cathedral Choir School

**WCCS is open to boys who love singing and want to be part of**

- A world-famous choir
- One of London's top schools
- A great, fun-loving and committed team

Boys join WCCS in Year 4 (or occasionally in Year 5). Up to 100% bursaries available.

**It's simple to find out more about chorister life at WCCS**

Book onto one of our [zoom](#) sessions for prospective families, which take place throughout the year.



---

'Being a WCCS chorister has been a blessing for my son. He loves the music and the school is so friendly and kind. WCCS has opened up a world of opportunity for him.'

**WCCS Parent**