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# Oremus

## Westminster Cathedral Magazine

An early date for Easter moves our celebration of the Annunciation into the second week of April

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This depiction of the Annunciation of the Lord comes from a 13th century Armenian Gospel Book.

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# Assisted Suicide Yet Again

The Catholic Union

**A parliamentary committee has not recommended any change to the law around assisted suicide in England and Wales despite an in-depth investigation. Following a year-long inquiry from the House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee, the final report has made no recommendations to Government, and has instead left it to further discussion. It has also refused to endorse calls for a vote on the matter in Parliament.**

The Catholic Union submitted evidence to the inquiry, based on the results of a survey into assisted suicide which found that 88 per cent of responders did not want to see the law changed. Catholic Union President, Baroness Hollins, also gave evidence and is quoted in the report.

While stopping short of making any recommendations, the report describes access to palliative care and end of life care as 'patchy' with two thirds of hospice budgets reliant on fundraising. It says the Government 'must ensure universal coverage' of these services, including hospice care at home. Crucially, the report finds that while advances in palliative care have been made across the world, progress has been less in countries where the state provides assisted suicide.

The report also highlights a 'pressing need' to provide better mental health support for people along with guidance for those living with a terminal diagnosis. The Union concludes that efforts to oppose assisted suicide must now focus on other jurisdictions, including Jersey and the Isle of Man, where proposals for a change in the law are being considered.

Baroness Hollins comments: 'There is a lot that needs to be considered when it comes to end of life care. A good place to start would be upholding the commitment to universal access to palliative care in the Health and Care Act. The report recommends that this is in place before there is any consideration of changing the law. The fact that there are very few recommendations is in some ways quite helpful, as it requires people to read and consider the evidence rather than just reacting to the recommendations.'

Bishop John Sherrington, Lead Bishop for Life Issues, writes:

Given that Parliament has already rejected any changes to the law on assisted suicide in 2015 and 2021, I welcome the decision of the Select Committee not to recommend the legalisation of assisted suicide. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales opposes its legalisation out of concern for the good of every person

in society, the protection of this good in law, and the spiritual and pastoral care of the sick and dying. The act of assisted suicide violates the dignity inherent to every person's life, which is to be cherished and cared for at all stages until natural death.

As highlighted in the Committee's report, experts have noted that there have been major problems in safeguarding the vulnerable and those without full mental capacity when assisted suicide and/or euthanasia has been introduced in other jurisdictions.

Recognising the distress and suffering of those who are sick and vulnerable, I welcome the Committee's recommendation that the accessibility and provision of palliative and end of life care needs to be improved - something the Catholic Church has consistently called for. For Catholics and many others, consolation and support in times of terminal illness can be experienced through prayer, the sacrament of the sick and the caring and compassionate presence of loved ones as a person prepares for eternal life.

As Pope Francis has written: 'human compassion consists not in causing death, but in embracing the sick, in supporting them in their difficulties, in offering them affection, attention, and the means to alleviate suffering.'

## Treading the Boards with Faith

**The Catholic Union's next 'Pub Talk' will take place on Tuesday 30 April with actor and writer Alex Macqueen. He is rarely off our screens, small and big, and has appeared in *The Inbetweeners*, *Peaky Blinders* and *Downton Abbey*. He has kindly agreed to talk about being a Catholic in the acting world.**

The Pub Talk will take place in the upstairs room of the Windsor Castle pub on Francis Street, behind Westminster

Cathedral. It will commence at 6.00pm and will be free to attend, but you are advised to book early as tickets will be limited. Open to everyone, the event provides an informal opportunity for networking and discussion, and the chance to hear from a guest speaker.

Alex comments: 'I'm really looking forward to chatting about the making of *The Thick Of It* and my eccentric foray into politics as the Rt Hon The

Lord Nicholson of Arnage CBE! It'll be a great opportunity to reflect on what it foreshadowed, especially in the current climate'. Catholic Union Director, Nigel Parker, says: 'The Union has been focusing on faith in the workplace, indeed this will be a large part of the Catholic Union's Catholic Manifesto in advance of the General Election and it will be very interesting to see what insights Alex can share with us.'



# Fr John writes



It has always struck me that on Good Friday, as soon as we have announced the death of the Lord in the proclamation of the Passion reading, we immediately lay claim to the fruits of his Resurrection in an anticipatory way in the Solemn Prayers. In them we seek to embrace the whole of humanity in all its varieties and needs, thus claiming that what has happened on the Cross is effective for

all, for all of time. As we pray during Eastertide in the *Regina Caeli*: *O God, who by the Resurrection of thy Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, hast vouchsafed to give joy to the whole world, grant that by the help of his Mother, the Virgin Mary, we may attain to the joys of everlasting life. Through the same Christ our Lord.*

So Eastertide, though it will undoubtedly be marked by folly and sin as at any other time of the year, calls for us all to enter into a deeper awareness of and, indeed happiness at what God has done. This thought came to me in a conversation with Canon Roger Taylor of the Cathedral Chapter, who has written about his own vocation story on page 12. As Promoter of Vocations, he said that happy priests fulfilled in their work are really the best sort of advertisement for the priesthood, a reminder that I and my colleagues always need to have before our eyes, in the same way that thanksgiving has to be for all Christians the foundation of the spiritual life.

You will see that the Cathedral Choir has just launched its first CD under the direction of Simon Johnson as Master of Music, offering an experience of a full Cathedral Holy Week. The culmination, of course, is in the Easter Vigil, of which Peter Stevens has written a careful explanation for us. This year we have a good group seeking Baptism and Reception into full Communion with the Church; several others, already baptised, will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation later this month. Whilst they all reach the end of their intensive formation, please remember those still journeying: the children looking towards First Holy Communion, with their families, and young people seeking Confirmation at Pentecost. Regulars at the Saturday Vigil Mass also know of the work done here to assist couples preparing for marriage, a vocation fundamental to the Church's life. Pray for them, too, to respond wholeheartedly to God's call.

The Dean and the College of Chaplains wish you all the blessings of the sacred Easter season and give thanks for the happy privilege of ministering to you at the Cathedral.

*Fr John Scott*

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# The Easter Vigil at Westminster Cathedral



*The Chrism Mass in Holy Week brings together the whole diocese in anticipation of new life received through the Sacraments*

Peter Stevens Obl. OSB, Assistant Master of Music

**The Easter Vigil is the climax of Holy Week, but also of the whole liturgical year; indeed, it commemorates the high point of the entirety of salvation history. All of time can be divided in two, on either side of Christ's Resurrection. The magnitude of what is celebrated on Holy Saturday evening cannot be overstated; and so the Church invites us on Easter night to renew our baptismal identity as Christians in the most solemn and important liturgy of all.**

The Easter *Triduum* began with the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Maundy Thursday evening, a service which ends in silence with the watch at the Altar of Repose until midnight, as we remember the Lord's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday both begins and ends in silence. And so, on Holy Saturday evening, we gather in silence and in darkness, recalling on one hand the sudden darkness and the desolation that accompanied Christ's death, but also anticipating the hope-filled silence of the empty tomb. The bells have been silent since the Gloria on Maundy Thursday, so only the sound of distant shuffling indicates that the solemn Vigil has begun. As the procession of choir and clergy leaves the sacristy and makes its way – carefully! – down the south aisle of the nave, the congregation numbering nearly two thousand people can be heard standing up, sounding almost like a distant drumroll. Once the procession has reached the back of the nave, the first of the four parts of the Easter Vigil liturgy can begin: the Service of Light.

A small fire is lit just inside the west door of the Cathedral and solemnly blessed by the Cardinal Archbishop. A large and beautifully decorated candle, the Paschal candle, represents the Risen Christ; the Greek letters of alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, are traced on the candle, and between

these letters the digits of the calendar year are traced around the arms of a cross. We live in an in-between time; the boundaries of our existence have been blown open by the Resurrection, but for now we remain in a world affected by time, suffering, death, and decay. Although we must wait patiently for Christ's return at the end of time, our waiting is joyful and rich with the hope that comes from the Lord's Resurrection.

Five grains of incense, representing Christ's five sacred wounds, are inserted into the candle. These symbols of his suffering remind us that the wounds of the Passion did not disappear from Christ's Body after his Resurrection, but he lives as sacrificed, carrying forever the wounds he suffered for all humanity. It is impossible to look at the Paschal candle without seeing that it bears the marks of the Passion; a sobering reminder that the Lord's victory came only after a hard-fought battle between death and life, and the wounds of the Victor remain as signs of his love.

The Paschal candle is then lit from the blessed fire, and held up high, just as the Cross was held up the previous afternoon; the deacon or priest bearing the candle sings *Lumen Christi*, and the people respond *Deo gratias!* The procession makes its way slowly forward through the still-dark nave. Once the candle has reached the very centre of the building, the sung dialogue is repeated again at a higher pitch. There then follows one of the most spectacular moments of the liturgical year. Each member of the vast congregation carries a candle. Those nearest the centre have their candles lit from the Paschal candle, and then pass the light to their neighbours. A great wave of light spreads out across the Cathedral's nave until the building is filled with the warm glow of candlelight. Darkness turns to light; a new and everlasting day dawns; Christ, who is the True

Light, enters our war-torn world. The Cathedral's soot-blackened domes overhead appear to contain shadows and shapes from the gently flickering light, as the procession continues its way to the sanctuary. There, *Lumen Christi* is sung for a third time, at an even higher pitch than before. (This joyful ascent finds a beautiful parallel later in the service.) Finally, the deacon or priest places the candle on a stand, and asks for a blessing from the Cardinal Archbishop. He censes the book and the candle before singing the Easter Proclamation, or *Exsultet*, which ecstatically explains the significance both of the candle and of the night itself.

The *Exsultet* completed, we move into the second part of the Easter Vigil: the Liturgy of the Word. In all, the Church provides nine readings for this part of the service, seven of which are taken from the Old Testament. We go back to the very beginning of Creation, to the opening words of Genesis: *In the beginning...* The familiar stories of God's care for his people take on a new meaning on Easter night; the presence of the Paschal candle, placed next to the ambo, reminds us that the Scriptures are to be read – on this occasion, literally – in the light of the Risen Christ. Each reading is followed by the singing of a prescribed text, reflecting the action we have just heard. The first reading, the story of Creation, which has just been powerfully mirrored in the Service of Light, is followed by *Iubilare Deo*; God's promise to pour clean water over His people and *put a new spirit* in them, in a prefiguring of Baptism, is followed by *Sicut cervus*, speaking of mankind's thirst for God. Between these readings, we hear of the journey of Moses and the Israelites through the Red Sea. This reading is followed immediately by a responsorial canticle from the Book of Exodus, containing the first mention in the Bible of the act of singing. The Israelites sing because they have been freed from slavery, and they celebrate their deliverance by singing; on Easter night, the Church sings because Christ has passed over from death to life, leading his people from slavery to sin, and freeing them from the bonds of death. At the Easter Vigil we learn again the reason behind all singing in the Christian liturgy: we have been redeemed, and so we sing.


Following the completion of the final Old Testament reading and its accompanying canticle, the Cardinal intones the *Gloria*, the great hymn of praise sung by the angels at the Lord's Nativity, and now sung once again as he completes his work of redemption. Immediately, the Cathedral bells are rung; servers carrying hand bells ring them with unbridled enthusiasm for a full minute, while the organ erupts in a jubilant cacophony; all the lights in the building are suddenly switched on, and the whole Cathedral is flooded with light in an uninhibited expression of joy. Over the course of the *Gloria*, servers light the candles on the High Altar, and many other candles around the sanctuary and the Apse.


Following a collect and the reading of an epistle, for the first time since before the start of Lent, the word Alleluia is sung. This being Easter, however, it is sung seven times in all (think of the seven days of Creation, the seven Sacraments...), beginning with three pairs of Alleluias, each one sung by a priest and repeated by the congregation, with each pair sung to a higher pitch than the last. The verse *Confitemini Domino* is sung before one final Alleluia. After the proclamation of the Gospel and the homily, we move into the third part of the Vigil: the Liturgy of Baptism.

With the prophetic words of the Old Testament still fresh in our minds – the people of God being led through the waters to freedom; the pouring of clean water; the gift of a new spirit within us – we come to the baptismal font. As Christians we are never alone; in the Communion of Saints we are at one with those in Heaven, as well as with those on their way there, in Purgatory. And so, as we approach the moment of Baptism, we ask for the prayers of the saints to accompany us, and especially those about to be baptised, on our journey. The *Litany of the Saints* is a powerful expression of the unity of the Church, and the cumulative effect of its singing, shuttling between cantors and the whole assembly, is overwhelming, as a great cloud of heavenly witnesses is summoned and their prayers are sought. The water is blessed, and the Paschal candle is lowered into it as a sign of Christ's descent into death and his rising out of the tomb. Alongside those about to be baptised, the whole congregation renews their baptismal promises, and the baptismal water is carried through the Cathedral and used to sprinkle the congregation. The *Vidi aquam* is sung as this takes place. We are reminded of the water flowing from the right side of the temple in the Book of Revelation, and its parallel with the blood and water flowing from the side of Christ, whose body is the New Temple – solemnly proclaimed in the Passion only the previous day – is striking.

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From this point, the fourth part of the service – the Liturgy of the Eucharist – follows the familiar pattern of the Mass. Yet this time we approach it with fresh eyes: having traced salvation history from the very beginnings of Creation earlier in the Mass, we have passed through the waters of Baptism on our way to the Altar, accompanied by the Saints whose prayers we have invoked. As the culmination of the entire *Triduum*, the Easter Vigil helps us to see the Mass as something that looks back and yet also looks forward; it is the crucified and risen Lord whom we meet in the Mass, the Eternal One who entered time, who gave himself in the Eucharist on Maundy Thursday, who died once for all time on Calvary, and who will return again at the end of time.

The chants of *Mass I* are specific to Eastertide, and their first appearance of the year at the Easter Vigil is a wonderful musical marker of the season, in a similar way to hearing the first Christmas carol of the year. The Communion chant for this Mass is known to congregations around the world and widely used as a Gospel acclamation throughout the year. Its liturgical origin, the sacred moment of Holy Communion on Easter night, is a reminder, perhaps, of St John Paul II's famous

paraphrasing of St Augustine, that 'we are the Easter people, and Alleluia is our song'. At Westminster, the chant is sung towards the end of Communion, following a motet; the refrain is sung by the whole congregation between verses sung by the choir.

The solemn blessing at the end of the Mass is followed by the Easter dismissal, with its joyful double Alleluia – the first time that a service has had a formal conclusion since the three-act drama of the *Triduum* began on Maundy Thursday night. The procession travels the full length of the Cathedral's nave, the widest in Britain, on its triumphant – if slightly exhausted – journey back to the Sacristy.

The Easter Vigil, then, takes us back to our roots as believers. It unfolds the history of salvation, and of God's love for his people; it gives us the opportunity to renew the promises of our Baptism; and in many ways, above all in the Eucharist, it is an encounter with the Risen Christ himself. We sing in praise and thanksgiving because we have been redeemed. United with our brothers and sisters as the Church in this world and the next, we sing the praises of him who has called us out of darkness, into his own glorious Easter light.

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# John Singer Sargent – a hymn to harmony

Lucien de Guise

Few exhibitions have divided opinions as much as *Sargent and Fashion*. In an age where the rating given by a reviewer matters more than the content, it's hard to imagine anything more damning than one solitary star. Other critics have shown a surfeit of praise. The obvious solution is actually to visit Tate Britain. On the day I went, the walk inside the gallery seemed as long as the journey from Ambrosden Avenue. There were detours and temporary signposts everywhere. Let's hope it was a one-off, or less-determined visitors will never reach their destination.

Were the lost-looking hordes art lovers or fashion enthusiasts? Anything with a clothing theme seems to prosper at the moment. *Gabrielle Chanel* at the V&A had the longest queue I've seen for ages - and these were all visitors who had pre-secured their tickets. It's possible that the Tate thought it could jump on the designer bandwagon to bring in more business. If so, fashionistas might be disappointed, while admirers of bold brushwork should feel they are getting their money's worth.

The main problem with the clothing is the manner of display. Excellence in this area is how the V&A has cashed in on every style from the raw vigour of Alexander McQueen to the monochromatic chic of Chanel. Tate Britain has box-like glass showcases scattered about, looking as unexciting as Dr Who's Tardis in a 1950s high street. For clothing to make an impression, it has to look worthy of a museum display. It also has to feature a designer that visitors care about. The *House of Worth* was a massive phenomenon more than a century ago. Nowadays, only diehard historians of couture will be aware of it. My own lack of awareness extended to discovering that C F Worth was a Lancashire man. Because he made his name in Paris, I had always assumed that he was French rather than a *rosbif*.



Lord Ribblesdale looks like the ultimate English aristocrat but his attire was mocked by *The Times* when it was first displayed in 1902

Going beyond these gripes, there are some astonishing items of apparel. Not the top hat that sits shabbily close to the portrait of Lord Ribblesdale — the most imposing aristocrat of 19th century England. With riding crop in hand, he conveys such power and self-importance, he would surely not have cared a fig about fashion. Some of the individual garments could have been star attractions at the V&A's *Diva* exhibition, which ends on 10 April. Not even Bjork or Tina Turner rival the gown of the Countess of Rocksavage or Lady Sassoon's opera cloak. Everywhere around are outfits that tend to look more spectacular on Sargent's canvas than in their glass coffins.

On to the paintings. It's no wonder this American-born, Continental-raised, British-resident artist was in such demand. 'Bravura' is a word often used to describe Sargent's brushwork. It matches the drama of the subject matter. Whether the sitters were the hereditary titled elite of England or relatively louche newcomers, he gave their image a sense of drama that few other painters could manage. In a confident era of imperial glory, this was the man to deliver an appropriate result. The size of some of his works is as impressive as the assurance of his brushwork. These people dominate the room, and where the subject doesn't command the sort of attention that Lord Ribblesdale was clearly used to, the artist would manipulate the setting and clothing to do so. Sometimes the outcome was considered scandalous. Much as the Edwardians enjoyed hour-glass figures, or at least a comely *embonpoint*, some of the sitters' husbands were less enthusiastic about the extent of creamy flesh on display.

Sargent's clients were men and women of status, with a number of younger sitters who would no doubt rise to the top later. Rarely did he tackle the sort of subjects of which the Royal Academy currently has a massive display of in *Entangled Pasts: Art, Colonialism and Change*. Multiculturalism was not this artist's milieu. There is a Javanese dancer, however; not that Sargent travelled that far East, unlike many artists of his era. He waited for the world to come to him. The graceful young dancer from Java, for example, was spotted by him at the *Paris Exposition Universelle* of 1889. Nearby is a painting of the most swaggering individual in an exhibition filled with contenders. Sir Frank Swettenham had travelled from Kuala Lumpur to be painted by Sargent. He retired immediately after, but was keen to show off the fruits of empire in this painting, along with the gleaming white uniform of an imperial officer.

An artist's ability to handle white and black is often considered the supreme challenge. Sargent was so proficient, it's



*Elsie Palmer was one of Sargent's younger sitters, painted in 1890 in the chapel of Ightham Mote*



*Lady Sassoon painted in extravagant style*

easy to understand his interest in selecting the right props and backdrops for his work. In a way it was a reversal of Worth's approach. This was a designer who thought himself an artist: 'I have Delacroix's sense of colour and I compose'. What Worth had in common with Sargent was clients. They were often the same individuals, with a large number from Britain and America.

Just as Worth believed he could express a customer's character through her clothing, Sargent could genuinely use a few brushstrokes to express a lot. He painted fast - and often repainted later - but spent a long time on the preparation. His portraits are often the definitive impression that we have of individuals who dominated an era, whether in parliament or at society parties. I didn't spot his marvellously patrician portrait of Lord Balfour at the Tate Britain show. This is probably just as well, since a less imposing view of the same politician, painted by de Laszlo, was recently vandalised at Trinity College, Cambridge. I did look with some anxiety at what might have been animal fur on some of the Tate exhibits, anticipating an animal-rights commando raid.

Anyone in search of a spiritual dimension to Sargent will be disappointed.

There aren't even any prominent clerics, although an Archbishop of Canterbury portrait featured at an exhibition in 1926. He did create a fascinating crucifix composition for the Boston Public Library, of which a much smaller relief exists in the inventory of Tate Britain but not in this exhibition. It's an unorthodox composition, with Adam and Eve collecting Christ's blood. Regulars at Westminster Cathedral will be consoled by Sargent's inclusion of a pelican, symbol of Our Lord's sacrifice, that exists in our Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

Sargent often sketched roadside Calvaries and other Catholic displays on the Continent, but he seems to have treated them more as part of the scenery than eternal verities. What he excelled at was surface attraction; ideal for the Edwardian age. We can stand back in wonder at the luxury and exuberance of an era that was about to be devastated by war. It might have been useful to have included his massive multi-portrait composition of all the top brass of the Great War, which is still on display at the National Portrait Gallery, even after the recent culling of boring old white men. Their uniforms may not be 'fashion' but the British cut of their jib was admired around the world.

All those crusty generals were hardly the stuff of sensual appeal. Sargent preferred the look of youthful female sitters for that, and some of his loveliest renderings are far from the *haute couture* of Worth. Kashmir shawls were something of an obsession. The most dazzling display contains no less than eight young women with a Kashmiri wrapping. It turns out they are all the same model — his niece Reine Ormond. Painted in 1909, it is a glorious display of drapery. Whether it counts as fashion is another matter, as the fad for Paisley style had died out long before. A sister SW1 publication of *Oremus*, the *Westminster Gazette*, described the painting in 1909 as '... a harmony in grey and white'.

Harmony was what Sargent sought and generally achieved with his exceptional sense of colour coordination. He could also work in monochrome. Among his many lively and expressive drawings is a portrait of one of the Cathedral's most interesting residents, the Russian ambassador (and unusually a Catholic) Count Benckendorff, buried in the crypt in 1917. Although the count was a man of great style, he didn't make it into the Tate Britain exhibition.

*Sargent and Fashion is at Tate Britain until 7 July*



# Great Escapes: Remarkable Second World War Captives at the National Archives in Kew

Genevieve Muinzer

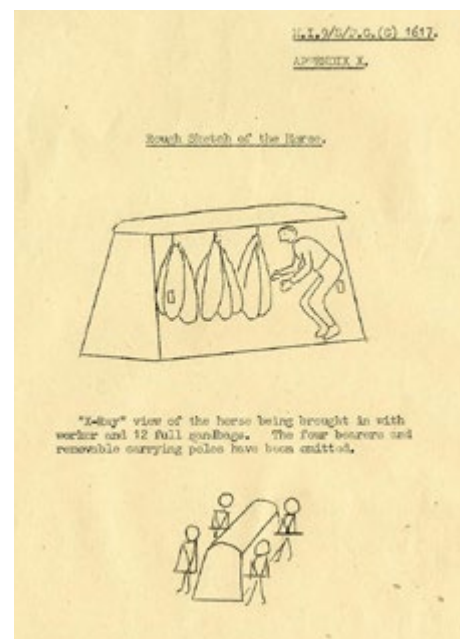
The National Archives is the repository of a superb collection of government documents that span the Domesday Book to 21st century Cabinet papers, all housed in Kew. They have just opened a poignant exhibition that will whet the interest of anyone interested in World War II escapology: *Great Escapes: Remarkable Second World War Captives*.

The idea of escape not only includes people who physically dug tunnels or climbed over walls, but also prisoners who used the power of their imaginations to transcend the horrors of their captivity. The exhibition pays tribute to the extraordinary resilience of prisoners' souls and minds when confined to internment camps and prisons during the war, suffering sub-human conditions of cruelty, hunger, and illness. After years of captivity, the exemplary bravery even of children, who withstood harsh treatment is depicted through their determination to survive by sewing, sculpting, singing, drawing, and even performing magic tricks.

MI9 was the British government's secret agency that was established at the outbreak of the war, and they sent hidden escape route information to internment camps through coded messages often hidden in missives, some of which are exhibited for the first time. What is displayed are the messages sent by the prisoners. The ordeal of imprisonment drove some of the prisoners to plan their escape, and a very few managed to do so. For example, in *The Great Escape*, vividly captured on film, the reality would be laughably different if it wasn't so tragic. Of the 76 men who dug out the 350-foot tunnel in *Stalag Luft III* with cutlery and their bare hands, only three made it home.

Of the thousands of internees, British and Commonwealth prisoners were taken by the Japanese, two thirds of them were women and children. As Margaret Dryburgh, a Presbyterian Missionary teacher and nurse observed: 'There was much talent in the camp and by organising musical evenings, choral concerts and services, we were able for a time to forget the barbed wire, our constant hunger and our sordid surroundings'. Little 9-year-old Olga Morris tried to escape from Malaysia with her family, but they were caught and interned. While in the camp, Olga recounts that one of the older prisoners started a Girl Guides company and in appreciation, the girls secretly made her a quilt from scraps of cloth and even rice packets. Many signed their names on the squares and this extraordinary piece of sewing has not only survived the war, but is on display in the exhibition, a badge of honour to young bravery and adult fortitude.

Incredibly, famous names not usually associated with suffering, but with the world of comedy also feature in the exhibition. Ronald Searle, who will bring a smile to your face with his impish drawings of St Trinian's school girls, was a survivor of the infamous Siam-Burma Death Railway. He was a Japanese prisoner of war who battled malaria, dysentery, and other debilitating infections. Despite this, and risking his life with the authorities, he had a compelling urge to draw, describing it as his 'mental lifebelt'. He chronicled life in the camp and when he returned to the UK, he had 300 drawings to testify to the inhuman conditions that he and the prisoners had endured.



Sketch of wooden horse used in escape from Stalag Luft III by Philpot, Codner and Williams October 1942

P G Wodehouse wrote a novel while imprisoned in Poland and Peter Butterworth, best known for his cheeky-chappy *Carry On* persona was part of the Wooden Horse escape. Together with Talbot Rothwell, a future *Carry On* film writer, the two *Stalag Luft III*, prisoners convinced the guards to allow them to build a theatre over a vaulting horse, the sounds of the digging being drowned out by the actors' speeches. Butterworth's German identity POW card is exhibited and it's a poignant reminder of the incredible range of his talents as he also served British Intelligence by passing coded messages back to them from the camp. Ironically when he auditioned for a role in the movie of *The Wooden Horse*, he was turned down on the grounds he didn't look like a former prisoner of war! Although he suffered from PTSD and other mental health issues, when he returned, he never discussed this with his children. His son Tyler says: 'It's where the (Carry On) humour kind of had its start, in this place surrounded by watchtowers and guard dogs'.

It's both a cracking and a humbling exhibition. The National Archive shows you that even in the most brutal and godless of worlds, mens' souls can transcend the cruelty of life to find, comradeship, art and even humour in order to survive.

*The exhibition runs until July 21.*

# Canon Roger Taylor

**I will always remember that time when the relics of St Thérèse of Lisieux came here to the Cathedral back in 2009. It was a blessed time of pilgrimage and prayer. Working as I was in our Diocesan seminary, Allen Hall, it was our privilege to lead the many pilgrims in a night vigil for vocations, and I was asked to share my vocation story.**

It is a story that at first may not seem typical. I was a late starter, not even a Catholic. A barrister by trade, I had hung up my wig and gown and spent most of my life doing something that I absolutely loved, helping to run various opera companies in London and beyond, opera having been a passion since, I think, I was 8. I was extremely happy.

One day, however, sheltering from a sudden downpour with my lunchtime sandwich, I found myself in Leeds Cathedral, and saw something that I had never seen before – Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. What struck me was the absolute stillness and concentration of all the people there. So, out of curiosity, I went along to Mass the following Sunday, went for coffee afterwards and, thanks to the intervention of a lovely elderly lady, was introduced to the Assistant Priest, the then Fr Arthur Roche. I was 35.

You will often hear non-Catholics say that on being received into the Church, they have a profound sense of coming home. I had been happy, but the Lord showed me not that my happiness was illusory, but that I was only in the foothills of happiness, because I had not known him.

Immediately I felt called to take my faith deeper. It seemed to demand a response, but time passed and life continued to be absorbing and enjoyable in so many ways. Once God has unfolded to you, though, the life he wants for you, watch out! Not only will he not let you go, but you will also yourself know that the only true happiness lies in following his call and growing into your true identity. He is at work everywhere and always, always reaching out to us, even to the most unlikely of us. Great art invites us to explore what it is to be human, and God was using the rich experiences I had had in my life to keep me asking questions, but now with him by my side. So what would I do with my life now? What was my vocation, the definite service for which I had been created? A question for us all.

One thing became clear, a strong call to monastic life; and in due course I entered the Cistercian community at Mount St Bernard Abbey. There were many difficulties. There was pain and loss, not least the loss of friendships and of people I loved, who could not accept what was happening. Nevertheless, I loved my life in the monastery and it was heartbreaking that, in time, some very difficult family circumstances arose, and it became impossible to live that more hidden vocation alongside what was happening on the outside. The bottom dropped out of my world, but somehow I still knew that God would not desert me. And he



gave me two special gifts to take away with me: first, a deep need of a prayer life, and second, the need for silence, so that we can hear what God is saying to us. I most feel his presence in silence.

I went back to the world of opera at first, but God would not leave me alone, and here I now am. I still seem to myself to be the unlikely of priests, but I count myself maybe also among the happiest. How much I loved my life in parishes, especially as Parish Priest at St Monica's in Palmers Green, before joining the Seminary for 14 or so years, as Vice-Rector and then Rector. What a privilege it was to explore the stories of many of today's diocesan priests. And, having tried to play my part in helping them, guided above all by the Holy Spirit, come into their vocation, I now have the task of promoting vocations. It needs prayer. It needs the prayers of all of our parish communities. It needs 'lovely elderly ladies,' and all of us perhaps, to give men that first 'nudge'.

I said that night of the vigil back in 2009 that so often it felt as though it was day one of my priesthood all over again, and that it was as though I was coming to it every day afresh. And it's hard to explain, but even now, when I celebrate Mass it sometimes feels as though it is indeed for the very first time; the enormity of it still has the power to shock me. No-one could be more surprised than I am that I am where I am in my life. It is all gift. It is all grace.





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# Mosaics from Vatican II to the 2000 Millennium

Patrick Rogers

After all the activity of the early 1960s, when both the Blessed Sacrament Chapel and St Paul's Chapel, together with four nearby wall niches in the north and south aisles, were all decorated with mosaics, and the Cathedral nave, narthex and entrance porches were clad with marble, there was a prolonged lull in the Cathedral decoration which really only came to an end, as the millennium itself drew to a close.

There were good reasons for this. The Second Vatican Council was held from 1962-1965 and underlying themes were simplicity, Christian Unity and World Poverty. In a symbolic gesture in 1964 Pope Paul VI himself publicly donated his silver tiara to the poor. Secondly, Cardinal Heenan had succeeded as Archbishop of Westminster in 1963, and though he allowed the work underway in the Cathedral to continue, he believed that these things should end. Many of the Cathedral treasures, including a gold crown made by Omar Ramsden for a statue of Our Lady, were sold for the relief of the poor at this time, raising £18,000 which Heenan sent to Peru. In the words of the new Administrator in 1964: *'it is time to turn our minds to the plight of men and women in undeveloped countries ... One way of decorating the Cathedral would be a wholehearted participation on the part of those who worship in it in the Freedom from Hunger Campaign'*. Lastly, there was simply no money available. After 60 years the heavily subsidised *Westminster Cathedral Chronicle* was forced to close in 1967 and by 1975 the Choir School also faced closure.

Any decoration had to be funded by private donors. The Baptistry was clad with marble in 1969, using a bequest from two of Bentley's daughters. But the Cathedral Art Committee were unable



*The mosaic over the north-west entrance of the Cathedral.*

to agree on a scheme for the Baptistry mosaics, designed by the Italian artist, Avenali, in 1966, and it came to nothing. Thus it was that no new mosaics went up until 1982 when, to commemorate the visit of Pope John Paul II to the Cathedral that year, a mosaic consisting of superimposed lettering of various sizes, designed by Nicolette Gray, was installed in the arch over the (no longer used) north-west entrance from Ambrosden Avenue behind which is today's Cathedral Gift Shop, (although for many years it had been the normal entrance to the Cathedral). In 1895 Bentley, the Cathedral Architect, had produced a pencilled sketch for a mosaic here, showing Our Lady and the Christ Child seated with a saint on each side. This sketch was now ignored in favour of the mosaic inscription *Porta Sis Ostium Pacificum Per Eum Qui Se Ostium Appellavit Jesum Christum* (May this Door be the Gate of Peace through Him, who called Himself the Gate, Jesus Christ).

Nicolette described the mosaic in a 1987 article: *'I had never worked in mosaic before and spent a long time playing with tesserae in the Cathedral basement. The tesserae available determined the colours to be used. I wanted to superimpose some words on others to increase the richness and*



*Nicolette Gray at work in the Shakespeare Centre.*



*recession, so the immediate message Porta Sis Ostium Pacificum is superimposed upon the great letters Jesum Christum. These are very large and wide but part of the background, as God is the omnipresent background of our life – one with his Church just as the tesserae are in colour, like the brick of the Cathedral, but extending into infinite depth beyond the behind. I chose the tesserae and make-up of each letter, but the mosaic was actually made by Trevor Caley’.*

Nicolette Gray, a Catholic born in 1911, became an epigrapher, a maker of designs with capital letters, and an internationally recognised authority on lettering. After studying the history of letter-forms at Oxford, she researched Dark Age inscriptions in Italy at the British School in Rome – and then, back in England, she focused on 19th century display type design. After writing a series of articles for the *Architectural Review* she went to Art School and there learned how to carve letters in order to design and execute inscriptions herself. After the 1939 - 1945 War she taught history at Catholic schools and then lectured on lettering at the Central School of Art and Design for 17 years. Besides the Cathedral’s north-west entrance she designed the memorial of the Pope’s 1982 visit for the floor in front of the main sanctuary. She also designed and carved the inscription on Cardinal Heenan’s tomb which dates from 1976, and lies below the 12th Station of the Cross. For this work J Whitehead & Sons of Kennington, Oval, did the inlaying. For both these inscriptions Nicolette used the style of lettering devised by Pope Damasus I (366 -384 AD) for the tombs of Christian martyrs, which she thought particularly appropriate for the visit of a pope and the tomb of a cardinal.

Nicolette Gray’s mosaic for the north-west entrance of the Cathedral was made, as stated, by the mosaicist Trevor Caley and installed by Art Pavements and Decorations Ltd in 1982. Trevor Caley was born in 1943. He was educated at the Christopher Wren School of Building and Art, followed by Chelsea School of Art, where he specialised in Mural Design and Decoration. He then spent six years in the studio of the muralist and stained-glass artist, Antony Holloway, before setting up on his own in 1971. The majority of his mosaic output had been commercial, including commissions for private clients and projects in the public sector. In 1983 he expanded his company to undertake



*Trevor Caley at work in the Studio.*

large mosaic commissions for London Underground stations, such as Tottenham Court Road and Finsbury Park. His firm, Trevor Caley Associates, also restored London’s Albert Memorial mosaics (completed in 1998) and produced large mosaics for Kuwait Airport and St Patrick’s Cathedral in Melbourne, for which Caley derived designs from the Book of Kells.



*A ceramic tile mosaic by Trevor Caley at Finsbury Park Station.*

In 1997 Caley was commissioned to design a panel at the entrance to St Patrick’s Chapel here at the Cathedral. He initially envisaged an interpretation of the seventh century tall stone Celtic Cross at Carndonagh in Donegal, known as ‘St Patrick’s Cross’. This was based on the assumption that the chapel vault might eventually be decorated by a mosaic representation of the four evangelists to be found in the Book of Kells and other

Celtic manuscripts. But in 1998 this idea for the panel was changed to a second representation of St Patrick to be located only 15 feet from Arthur Pollen’s austere gilt bronze statue of the saint, installed above the altar in 1961. In contrast, and as a deliberate foil to Pollen’s stark figure, Caley aimed at a more human interpretation. He derived the face from early Byzantine mosaics, which he believed provided an appropriate balance between stylisation and natural likeness, relying also, in the absence of any reliable evidence of the saint’s appearance, on his personal intuition.



*The mosaic of St Patrick in St Patrick’s Chapel.*

He explained that ‘The design is bold for viewing from distances beyond the Chapel, yet detailed for closer observation. I have selected colours relating to the surrounding green marbles, while ambers and gold reflect the altar red and relate to the mosaic, which will eventually extend above the panel to the vault. Prominently represented are snakes which are conveniently echoed by the shape of the crozier and also intertwine into a Celtic pattern adorning the vestment. The saint is seen holding a shamrock, the symbol of the Blessed Trinity’. Caley made the panel using unglazed ceramic, together with traditional glass *smalti*, supplied mostly from Cathedral stocks. He particularly liked the non-reflective qualities of the ceramic which he believed both relieved and accentuated the glittering richness of the *smalti*. The mosaic was produced on board in Caley’s New Forest studio and installed by him in March 1999.

# Slim Pickings at Breakfast, Bartered Sausage and Authentic Plainsong

Philip Hodges

**The crypt was a gloomy place and very cold in the bleak winter months. Attached to the crypt was a tiny chantry chapel directly under the High Altar containing the tombs of Cardinals Wiseman and Manning. Over each was the cardinal's Red Hat suspended by a cord from the roof. In 1916 the hats were already falling into decay and covered with dust and looked like filthy floor cloths, a grim reminder of death and oblivion.**

Breakfast was at 7.30 and consisted of weak, sweetened tea from a battered old urn and slices of bread and margarine. I was appointed server to the Rector's table at the head of the refectory and would carry the tray of bacon, eggs, toast, butter and marmalade to him. Before eating he would noisily throw himself to his knees and make his post-Mass thanksgiving leaning on the seat of his chair. Rising, he would prop up the "morning post" against the teapot and start his breakfast. It was war time and spartan conditions were to be expected, but the comparative luxury of the Rector's table and the scant penal fare for the boys was inescapable.

When Fr Philip Moore, the newly appointed vice-rector from St Edmund's College, presided at breakfast he would make amends by cutting a sliver of bacon from his rashers and give it to one of the boys. Those boys who lived in London were visited by their parents who gave them small pots of jam or meat-paste which they were permitted to spread on their iron rations of bread-and-marge. Groups of boys would share these confections by 'contract'. I was in contract with the brothers Murray whose mother, a widow, kept them fairly well in such 'luxuries.' I was rather an unprofitable partner, since my meagre monthly postal order only ran to a 'quarter' of toffee and one small pot of jam which I was obliged to put straight into the common pool.

On Sundays this spartan breakfast was relaxed by the addition of one sausage. This sausage became a sort of currency. You paid your 'contract' debts by half a sausage which you cut from your ration and passed it to your creditor opposite in your shoe under the table. Some boys would wrap their sausage in a handkerchief (not always freshly laundered) to enjoy it cold later in the day. At a 'Speech Day' oration the Administrator, Mgr Howlett, referred to 'this brown, round, crisp sausage that made our teeth water.' He had the rich fertile imagination and blarney of a son of the Emerald Isle. A cynical priest once said that the administrator got his daily literary pabulum from the pages of the *Daily Mirror*.

Lessons commenced at 8am and continued until 9.30 when we would go to the song-school under the sacristy for rehearsal before the 10 o'clock Capitular High Mass. The probationers remained in the song school during Mass for voice training. At 10.45 we would each receive a cup of watered milk and a further slice of bread and margarine. During the winter there was a coal fire in the Song School and some of us, against all the rules, would go there and toast our bread skewered on wooden rulers. One day Terry appeared in anger in the doorway. He seized the dripping chunks of bread and carried it in a pile to the headmaster as incriminating evidence. I got the 'paddycock' for this essay into *haute cuisine*.

Lessons were resumed at 11am and at 1 o'clock we had lunch. Mr Bird, the dumpy little cook, would send up the food from the kitchen below on the rope-driven hoist. It would consist of coarse stewing beef and mashed potatoes followed by either a square of doubtful sweet pastry or a dish of rice boiled in water around which floated a pink fluid made of watered jam. One Friday Mgr Hall saw a tiny speck of meat in

our lentil soup served as a savoury course. He leaned over the hoist and, banging the woodwork wildly, he screamed, 'Mr Bird, this soup has MEAT in it!' In spite of wartime and the paucity of rations he ordered the lot to be thrown away and so we had just bread.

This was the fantastic length to which he, in his headstrong way, would go to carry out to the letter a simple disciplinary abstinence rule. It is no wonder that Catholics of my generation look back in almost disbelief at the mindless and scruple-ridden fulfilment of a man-made law. In those days the morning reception of Holy Communion demanded total abstinence from the previous midnight of any food either solid or liquid. Even whilst cleaning one's teeth care had to be taken lest a drop of water might be swallowed in the process. The results of this curious obsession with the letter of the law, instilled during the formative years, had a permanent effect in later life.

At 1.45pm we processed to the Cathedral for a brief prayer and afterwards there would be organised games, football, cricket or tennis. The playground was asphalted so the cricket stumps were hinged to a piece of wood. At 2.45pm we would wash and vest for Vespers at 3pm. From 4 to 5 o'clock would be 'first prep,' i.e., time for 'homework.'

The six o'clock tea and last meal of the day was the same fare as at breakfast. At 6.45pm we would go to 'second prep' until 8 o'clock when the junior boys would go to bed. Supper was an unknown luxury in this penitential establishment.

Several of the senior boys were good pianists and the school captain, Bernard Gilsenan, was allowed to practise from 8 till 9 o'clock. I was his 'fag' and I worshipped him as my ideal. This soft-spoken boy of polished manners



## HAVE I GOT NEUMES FOR YOU



*Learning notes called neumes, 21st century style*

and leaning used to thrill me as I lay in bed listening to his playing of Chopin. I regarded it as an honour to carry his books from the prep room to the form room above. He was later to become a psychiatrist of distinction. The dormitory, lit only by a shrouded 100 watt bulb (the wartime black-out was total) was a perfect place to listen to his playing. It reminded me of my eldest sister who would play Chopin etudes and the romantic works of Grieg. I was, and still am, haunted by such romantic pieces.

### Polyphony and plainsong

The *Moto Proprio* of Pius X in 1903 sought to proscribe the use of music which, though excellent in itself, was coming to be recognised as unsuitable

for the liturgy. The theatrical style of Mozart, Haydn, Verdi and Rossini with its sequence of aria, recitative and chorale was the standard type of music in the Catholic Church during the latter part of the 19th century, particularly on the continent.

For one thing it was excessively long and provided a platform for 'virtuosi' to display personal talent. (My father told me that whilst serving his indentures as a pharmacist in London, he would attend Mass where the name of the soloist would be exhibited prominently on the church notice board whilst other details were of minor consequence). Such music was adopted at the expense of Plainsong, the performance of which had fallen into decay apart from in the houses of the religious orders.

The Abbey of Solesmes had undertaken the task of revising the ancient chant and had supplied the notation with rhythmic signs that would restore the performance of this sublime and melismatic music to its rightful place as the norm of church usage. Its *Liber Usualis* superseded the old Ratisbon editions and it was this imprint that had been accepted by Rome for universal use.

Terry was at pains to bring the performance of plainsong to a high standard of perfection. We studied the actual notation in detail with its Latin nomenclature, its phrasing and its grouping of notes called neums. We had to observe the subtle difference between the *salicus* and the *scandicus*, the liquescent notes and the delicate 'fall' of the *clivis*, the dynamics of the *distropha* and the exact observation of the *quilisma*. He was a master of plainsong accompaniment which he always carried out extempore and saw to it that his assistants were accurately trained in this art which had received such erroneous treatment in the modern text books.

The great majority of musical text books of the time gave a standard form of harmony which was at variance with the correct modal accompaniment and it was to this that Terry would return again and again when lecturing. As a small boy I had often heard plainchant rendered so badly that it was like something to be endured rather than something to uplift the mind. So bad was the rendering of plainsong at St Marie's Church, Sheffield, that an old bass singer referred to it as 'this belly-ache stuff'. He was near to the truth.

I remember the first time I heard the solemn form of the *Salve Regina* at Vespers in the Cathedral with its soft and modal accompaniment and thinking that this surely was the 'Music of the Spheres' with its wave-like movements, its perfect phrasing and the rise and fall of its melody. This was light years from the caterwauling I had heard in the past and which had been passed off as plainsong.

The 'a cappella' style of the old masters whose work formed the great part of our repertoire was geared to plainsong as the perfect foil to polyphonic writing, for example the plainsong antiphons associated with the four-part settings of the *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis*. One can remember the superb *Missa da Requiem* by Francisco Anerio where the stanzas of the *Dies Irae* are rendered alternately in plainsong and harmony with dramatic effect.

# A Commemoration

80 years ago, on 15 March 1944, Mass was offered in the Cathedral by the Bishop to the Polish Forces, Mgr Gawlina, in the presence of the President of Poland, Władysław Raczkiewicz, and representatives of the Polish Forces. After the Mass a memorial plaque of Our Lady of Ostrabrama, presented on behalf of 317 Polish Fighter Squadron 'City of Wilno', was unveiled and blessed. The memorial is situated above the arch of the gate leading from the Lady Chapel to the High Altar, commemorating Polish airmen, exiled and fighting in this country for freedom. To commemorate the event the Consul General Mateusz Stąsiek, representatives of the Defence Attaché Section of the Polish Embassy and Artur and Danuta Bildziuk, representatives of the Polish Airmen's Association in UK, attended Mass on 16 March and laid wreaths in front of the Polish Memorials in the Cathedral.





# Praying for the Pope

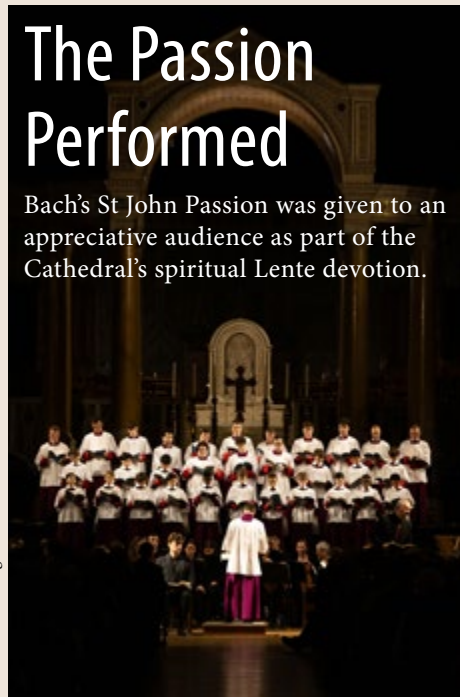
On the Fifth Sunday of Lent Cardinal Vincent celebrated Mass to mark the anniversary of Pope Francis' election, with the Papal Nuncio and members of the Diplomatic Corps in attendance.



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## The Passion Performed

Bach's St John Passion was given to an appreciative audience as part of the Cathedral's spiritual Lente devotion.



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## Praying with the Pope

In response to the Holy Father's urgent request for prayer for peace, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament took place on the afternoon of 8 March, concluding with Benediction given by the Cardinal.



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## The Passion Rehearsed

While the orchestra and choir rehearsed, the soloists took the opportunity to swap notes.



# In retrospect: from the *Cathedral Chronicle*

## Christian, Wash Thy Hands

Dorothy Hamilton Dean

Occasionally, perhaps especially in Rome, we come across something quite new to us – in appearance, design and purpose, something that is not a font or a pulpit. Or even a *cancellum*, or a narthex with which most of us may claim some familiarity. This year pilgrims will be coming to Rome, if not in the same great numbers of the last Anno Santo. Many will notice and admire the graceful vases or basins in marble or stone seen in the cortile of an early church. Why are they here and what were they used for? The pilgrims of the early centuries of Christianity could have told you what a *kantharos* was; several beautiful examples can be seen in Rome.

What is a *kantharos* and what does it mean? The Greek word seems to have meant a wide, shallow cup but later it often took the form of a graceful vase with two delicately curved handles; sometimes both vase and basin were combined, as it were, in one conception. It was, in pagan times, generally used for decorative domestic purposes as, for instance, a feature in the atrium of a Roman house – possibly as a bird-bath.

After the Peace of the Church the *kantharos* was adapted to ecclesiastical use. It is easy to picture the discomforts of those arriving on a pilgrimage and their relief and joy on finding these basins with water, from a fountain, in which to bathe not only their faces but their travel-stained and weary limbs after the hardships and privations of a journey which was often from distant lands. With the dust of travel removed, they could enter the sacred places refreshed in body and mind.



*The Kantharos of St Cecilia in Trastevere, Rome*

© Mauro Iorio



Pope Symmachus, in the early sixth century, was noted for his attention to hygiene; having built the basilica of San Pancrazio, on the Via Aurelia, he provided it with a bath: *'Fecit in eadem balneum.'* We hear again of the same Pope erecting another *kantharos* in the apse of San Paolo Fuori Le Mura fed with water from a spring. He caused notices to be put on the walls warning both priests and laymen to observe the strictest rules of modesty. One of these inscriptions has survived and can be seen in the Lateran Museum: 'There is no harm in seeking strength and purity of body in baths; it is not water but our own bad actions that make us sin.' And indeed the symbolic idea of purification, in the liturgical sense, before entering a church or sanctuary was considered of great importance. One is reminded of the prayer said by the celebrant when washing his hands in the Sacristy before Mass: 'Lord, give power to my hands, washing away all stain, and enabling me to serve Thee with mind and body unsoiled.' Another example, from the Rule of St Benedict, is the pouring of water by the Abbot on the hands of guests and the washing of their feet by the whole community: *'Suscepimus, Deus, misericordiam tuam in medio templi tui.'* Near Viterbo (Italy), on a small column in the crypt of a little church is a late sixth-century inscription whose somewhat defaced characters read: *'Christiane lava manus et ora ut remittantur tibi peccata'* ('Christian, wash thy hands and pray that thy sins be forgiven thee').

And where are these interesting survivals to be seen? A pilgrim who comes to Rome today might ask. The writer can mention several that have survived the vandals who would destroy precious antiquities. There is a lovely one of Greek design just where one would expect to find it, in the court leading to the church of Santa Cecilia, one of the most beloved of Rome's ancient churches. Old prints show this placed beside the wall of the *clausura* of the Augustinian nuns, a very strictly enclosed Order. There is a tradition that this *kantharos* stood in the saint's house before her martyrdom, in the third century, when her house was a centre of all that was beautiful in pagan Rome, a circumstance which

led indirectly to her death, for Cecilia's Christianity was not the sole reason for her martyrdom – it was as much envy of her riches, and her faith was a good excuse. So, when pilgrims cross the court on their way to visit her church and perhaps to hear Mass on her feast, let them pause for a moment to appreciate the white marble vase that is now surrounded by a marble pavement, and let them think of the pilgrims of long ago who found rest and refreshment here.

There is a striking *kantharos* in the cortile of the Terme Museum that was once the Baths of Diocletian; it stood formerly in the piazza Ss Apostoli and marked the boundary of the parish. A 'thing of beauty,' it stands well in the spacious cortile where in May the ancient red walls of the bath are draped with Banksia roses and wisteria which fill the air with sweetness.

Perhaps the most elaborate *kantharos* was in the atrium of old St Peter's which was called the Paradiso, where the water flowed from the bronze petals of a gigantic pine cone. There are very old drawings that show the plan of this wonderful structure with its four bronze peacocks and exquisite ornament of dolphins and flowers and the canopy surmounted by the monogram of Christ. Here once again we meet Pope Symmachus, who, concerned as he always was with the health and comfort of pilgrims, was responsible for this *kantharos* in the Paradiso. He is said to have brought the pine cone (11 feet high) from a ruin in ancient Rome; Pope Honorius III describes it for us, how it was surrounded by columns of porphyry supporting a dome of gilt metal and, after more detail, tells us: 'In the centre of the piece stands the pine cone.'

This wonder of the sixth century was destroyed in the 17th, but the pine cone and two of the bronze peacocks are preserved in the Giardino della Pigna in the Vatican garden. This is all that remains of the *kantharos* of the Paradiso at old St Peter's, which Dante is said to have included in the three things that most impressed him in a visit to Rome.

*This article appeared in the April 1954 Westminster Cathedral Chronicle.*

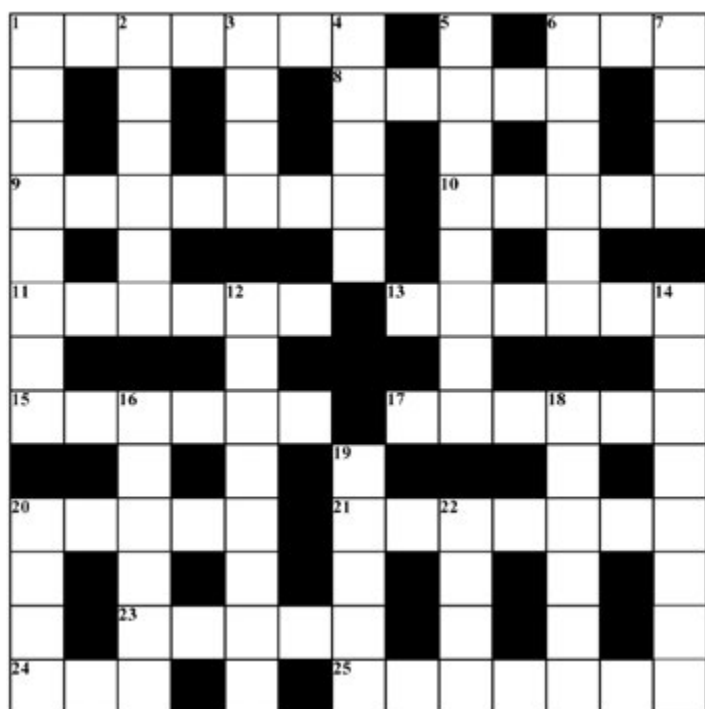
## St Gregory's Day

**St Gregory's Day is the feast day of the Cathedral Choir School, and it is always preceded by a short retreat for the choir boys. This year the Abbot of Buckfast gave the exercises, which were much appreciated. The school Mass on the feast was said, as usual, in St Gregory's Chapel, adjoining the Baptistry. It was a happy thought of the Cardinal Founder of the Cathedral to dedicate the choir school to St Gregory, for besides being the Apostle of England, as the Venerable Bede calls him, he is the patron of the Church's music, the chant being named after him.**

The feast of St Gregory is also held in much honour by the guild of Servers who so devotedly assist at the services in the Cathedral, and their General Communion takes place in St Gregory's Chapel on the Sunday within the octave of his feast. We would point out that this Guild of St Gregory is a body of gentlemen who assist at the Cathedral functions on Sundays and holidays, and at the weekday evening services, and who are privileged to attend in choir at the recital of the Divine Office, a privilege which is much appreciated by the Guild.

There has just been made for the Guild of the Blessed Sacrament a very beautiful banner for the Guild processions in the Cathedral, which in design and workmanship equals anything of the kind we have seen in recent years. As in the old days, the work has been a work of love on the part of two members of our Guild. Mr Alberto Sangorski has produced a design both bold and dignified, and has kept in mind the Byzantine style of the building in which the banner will be used. The needlework has been beautifully executed by Miss C Applegarth and equals anything from the embroiderer's hands to be found in the Cathedral sacristy. We thank these two workers for this addition to our treasures, for it will add dignity to the processions of the Blessed Sacrament in which it will be used, and whatever brings additional honour to the Most Holy Sacrament must ever be a source of joy to our hearts. We hope that the banner will be used for the first time on the feast of Corpus Christi this year.

*from the April 1924 Westminster Cathedral Chronicle*



Alan Frost April 2024 – No. 120

## Clues Across

- 1 Cardinal and famous Spanish Inquisitor (7)  
 6 & 19 Down: Area of S.E. London originally known as Hatcham (3,5)  
 8 The O2 one in London is on the Greenwich peninsula (5)  
 9 Letter, especially as written by St Paul (7)  
 10 Late pop singer Leonard -----, hit with 'Hallelujah' (5)  
 11 See 14 Down  
 13 Cockney slang for 'hair'; north London Borough (6)  
 15 Cardinal and English Saint with statue outside the Brompton Oratory (6)  
 17 Pallas -----, goddess in Greek mythology (6)  
 20 'Present' in school register in Latin (2,3)  
 21 Queen's Park -----, west London Championship Football Club (7)  
 23 Place of relief in the desert (5)  
 24 Son of Noah, gave name of the land that became Egypt (3)  
 25 Cruel device used to punish Christ at the pillar in his Passion (7)

## Clues Down

- 1 Congregation of Brothers and famous RC College in Manchester named after St Francis (8)  
 2 ----- Spark, author of The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie and Memento Mori (6)  
 3 Cornish Saint (9th.c) giving name to town in west Cambs. [his bones rest there] (4)  
 4 Massachusetts town famous for its trial of witches (5)  
 5 Famous one from Venice performed at The Globe Theatre (8)  
 6 Prophet and advisor to King David (6)  
 7 Architect of St. Paul's Cathedral (4)  
 12 Close call by young lady? (4,4)  
 14 & 11 Across: Stevenson novel (and film) read by generations of schoolboys (8,6)  
 16 One of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (6)  
 18 Cathedral in Devon dedicated to St Peter (6)  
 19 See 6 Across (5)  
 20 Type of cross with a loop (4)  
 22 Emperor who set fire to Rome and blamed Christians (4)

## ANSWERS

Across: 1 Ximenes 6 New 8 Arena 9 Epistle 10 Cohen 11 Island 13 Barnett 15 Newman 17 Athene 20 Ad Sum 21 Rangers 23 Oasis 24 Ham 25 Scourge  
 Down: 1 Xaverian 2 Muriel 3 Neot 4 Salem 5 Merchant 6 Nathan 7 Wren 12 Near Miss 14 Treasure 16 Wisdom 18 Exeter 19 Cross 20 Ankh 22 Nero

## The World Itself Keeps Easter Day

John Mason Neale

*The world itself keeps Easter Day,  
 And Easter larks are singing;  
 And Easter flowers are blooming,  
 And Easter buds are springing.  
 Alleluia! Alleluia!  
 The Lord of all things lives anew,  
 And all His works are living too.  
 Alleluia! Alleluia!*

*There stood three Marys by the tomb  
 On Easter morning early  
 When day had scarcely chased the gloom,  
 And dew was white and pearly.  
 Alleluia! Alleluia!  
 With loving, but erring, mind  
 They came the Prince of Life to find,  
 Alleluia! Alleluia!*

*But earlier still the angel sped,  
 His news of comfort giving;  
 And "Why," he said, "among the dead  
 Thus seek ye for the living?"  
 Alleluia! Alleluia!  
 "Go tell them all, and make them blest,  
 Tell Peter first, and then the rest."  
 Alleluia! Alleluia!*

*But one, and one alone, remained,  
 With love that could not vary;  
 And thus a higher joy she gained,  
 That sometime sinner, Mary.  
 Alleluia! Alleluia!  
 The first the dear, dear form to see  
 Of Him that hung upon the tree.  
 Alleluia! Alleluia!*

*The world itself keeps Easter Day,  
 And Easter larks are singing;  
 And Easter flowers are blooming,  
 And Easter buds are springing.  
 Alleluia! Alleluia!  
 The Lord of all things lives anew,  
 And all His works are living too.  
 Alleluia! Alleluia!*



Mary Magdalene meets the Risen Lord, supposing him to be the gardener

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



# Firm Foundations

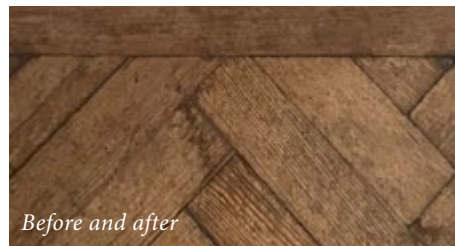
Joe Allen, Co-ordinator

It isn't just our Christian lives which need firm foundations, but our churches too. In last month's *Oremus*, the 'monthly album' and Friends' article (pp 19 and 26 respectively) introduced our latest fundraising project. Whilst a £125,000 price tag isn't our most expensive project in recent times, it is in other ways our most ambitious – with maintenance not just planned for one area, but the entire Cathedral and Sacristy floors.

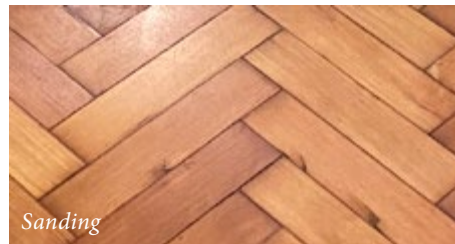
Thus far, the areas outside the Blessed Sacrament and Lady Chapels have been restored and transformed in their appearance, with good reviews all round. Once the entirety of the Cathedral floor has been likewise restored, the difference will be visible and striking yet sympathetic to the interior decoration of the Cathedral. The wear and tear to the original timber flooring will be gone, future maintenance will become much easier, and the flooring will remain firm in its foundations for decades to come.

With our Cathedral building standing to gain so much from this project, we are beginning our first campaign towards the £125,000 goal. From 12 noon on Monday 25 March to 12 noon on Monday 8 April we will be holding an Easter Big Give to raise £50,000.

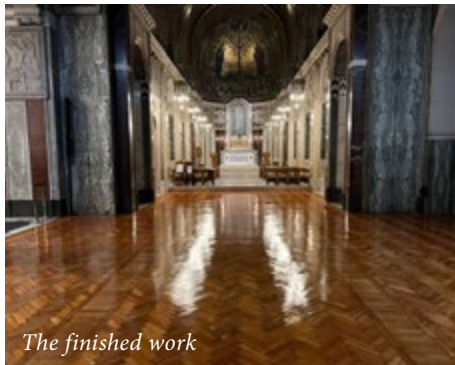
Every single pound makes a difference, and we thank you in advance for your generosity.



*Before and after*



*Sanding*



*The finished work*

© Suzi Pendlebury and Joe Allen

## Upcoming Events

For full details and booking head to [www.TinyURL.com/CathedralFriends](http://www.TinyURL.com/CathedralFriends) or email Joe Allen at [friends@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:friends@rcdow.org.uk)

- 1. Quiz Night with Fish & Chip Supper.** 6:30pm, Thursday 25 April. Tickets at £20 must be booked in advance.
- 2. Catholic History Walk with Joanna Bogle** from St Paul's Cathedral to St Mary Moorfields. 3pm, Friday 3 May. Tickets £10, in advance and on the day.
- 3. Catholic History Walk with Joanna Bogle** from the Rosary Shrine to Hampstead Heath. 3pm, Friday 31 May. Tickets £10, in advance and on the day.
- 4. Quiz Night with Fish & Chip Supper.** 6:30pm, Thursday 6 June. Tickets, at £20 must be booked in advance.
- 5. Annual General Meeting,** 6:30pm, Wednesday 12 June. Details to be circulated in due course.
- 6. Visit to Corpus Christi Church Maiden Lane.** Friday 28 June, 6:15pm. Tickets £10 (in aid of Corpus Christi and the Cathedral) in advance and on the day.
- 7. Save the Date: Autumn Outing to Richmond:** Thursday 17 October. Details, along with other autumn outings, socials, and trips, to follow in due course.

*Check back in next month's Oremus for details of our summer social, and the opportunity to go and see Notre Dame de Paris by walking 10 minutes from Westminster Cathedral.*

## What is a Big Give?

theBigGive

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. For this campaign, we have a matched pot of £25,000 meaning that are aiming to raise £50,000 overall.

## How to donate?

You can donate by scanning the QR code or heading to the website at <https://bit.ly/BGFriendsEaster24>. Donations cannot be accepted apart from through the Big Give website, but we can assist with instructions by contacting [friends@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:friends@rcdow.org.uk).



## Tales of the English Martyrs

Bishop Goldwell of St Asaph, Wales: on Queen Elizabeth's accession, finding himself unable to discharge any episcopal duty, he returned to Rome and was chosen Superior of the Roman house of his order. He assisted at the Council of Trent and helped to found the English College with the endowments of the former English Hospice. Prevented by ill health and great age from returning to give his life in England as he desired, he died in Rome, April 3, 1585, aged eighty-five, the last of the ancient English hierarchy, and no unworthy representative of his saintly predecessors.

St Asaph Cathedral from the East



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## The Month of April

### The Holy Father's Prayer Intention:

#### For the role of women:

Let us pray that the dignity and worth of women be recognised in every culture, and for an end to the discrimination they face in various parts of the world.

### Monday 1 to Friday 5 April

The Cathedral opens at 9.30am and closes at 6pm;

10am Morning Prayer

10.30am Mass

11.30 – 12.30pm Confessions

12.30pm Mass

5pm Evening Prayer

5.30pm Mass

### Monday 1 April

Monday within Easter Octave

### Tuesday 2 April

Tuesday within Easter Octave

### Wednesday 3 April

Wednesday within Easter Octave

1.15pm Lunchtime Concert

### Thursday 4 April

Thursday within Easter Octave

### Friday 5 April *No Friday Abstinence*

Friday within Easter Octave

### Saturday 6 April

Saturday within Easter Octave

*Usual timetable resumes*

4pm Monthly Low Mass

(Blessed Sacrament Chapel)

### Sunday 7 April

2nd SUNDAY OF EASTER

(or of Divine Mercy)

12 noon Solemn Mass (Cantor)

4pm Solemn Vespers (English) and Benediction

4.30pm Mass for the Deaf Community (Cathedral Hall)

### Monday 8 April

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

### 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 during Holy Week and the Easter Octave, please consult the Cathedral diary on the website.

\* Live streamed via the Cathedral website



The Annunciation by Van Eyck

### Tuesday 9 April

*Ps Week 2*

Easter Feria

2pm Memorial Mass, Loughlin Hickey RIP

### Wednesday 10 April

Easter Feria

1.15pm Lunchtime Concert

### Thursday 11 April

St Stanislaus, Bishop & Martyr

*Choral services resume*

### Friday 12 April

*Friday Abstinence*

Easter Feria

### Saturday 13 April

Easter Feria

(St Martin I, Pope & Martyr)

6pm Visiting Choir at Mass

### Sunday 14 April

*Ps Week 3*

3rd SUNDAY OF EASTER

12 noon Solemn Mass (Men's voices)

*Lassus* – Missa Congratulamini mihi

*Palestrina* – Angelus Domini

*Guerrero* – O sacrum convivium

Organ: *J S Bach* - Prelude and Fugue in C (Bwv 545)

4pm Solemn Vespers and Benediction

*Guerrero* – Magnificat primi toni

*Byrd* – Hæc dies

Organ: *Buxtehude* – Prelude, Fugue and Chaconne (Buxwv 137)

### Monday 15 April

Easter Feria

### Tuesday 16 April

Easter Feria



**Wednesday 17 April**

St Alphege, Bishop & Martyr  
**1.15pm** Lunchtime Concert

**Thursday 18 April**

Easter Feria  
**8am-6pm** NHS Blood Transfusion Service  
 (Cathedral Hall)

**Friday 19 April**

*Friday Abstinence*

St Alphege, Bishop & Martyr



*The modern church of St Alphege in Greenwich sits on the site of the saint's martyrdom*

**Saturday 20 April**

Easter Feria  
**2pm** Parish First Holy Communion Mass  
**6pm** Vigil Mass with Adult Confirmations  
 (Bishop McAleenan)

**Sunday 21 April**

*Ps Week 4*

**4th SUNDAY OF EASTER**

•World Day of Prayer for Vocations  
**12 noon** Solemn Mass (Full choir)  
*Poulenc* – Mass in G  
*Palestrina* – Angelus Domini  
*Palestrina* – Et introeuntes  
 Organ: *Tournemire* – Choral-Improvisation  
 sur le “Victimæ Paschali”  
**4pm** Solemn Vespers and Benediction  
*Victoria* – Magnificat octavi toni  
*Howells* – Regina cæli  
 Organ: *Schmidt* – Prelude & Fugue in D  
 “Hallelujah!”

**Monday 22 April**

Easter Feria  
**5.30pm** Vigil Mass

**Tuesday 23 April**

ST GEORGE, Martyr, Patron of England  
**5pm** Second Vespers  
**5.30pm** Solemn Mass (Full choir)  
*Vaughan Williams* – Mass in G minor  
*Mawby* – Iustus ut palma  
*Palestrina* – Et introeuntes  
 Organ: *Elgar* – Imperial March

**Wednesday 24 April**

Ss Erkenwald and Mellitus  
**1.15pm** Lunchtime Concert

**Thursday 25 April**

St MARK, Evangelist  
**6.30pm** Friends' Quiz (Cathedral Hall)

**Friday 26 April**

*Friday abstinence*

Easter Feria  
**8am-6pm** NHS Blood Transfusion Service  
 (Cathedral Hall)

**Saturday 27 April**

Easter Feria  
**2.30pm** Youth Deanery Confirmation Mass

**Sunday 28 April****5th SUNDAY OF EASTER**

**12 noon** Solemn Mass (Full choir)  
*Palestrina* – Missa Papæ Marcelli  
*Taverner* – Dum transisset Sabbatum  
*Guerrero* – O sacrum convivium  
 Organ: *Widor* – Final (Symphonie romane)  
**4pm** Solemn Vespers and Benediction  
*Guerrero* – Magnificat septimi toni  
*M. Martin* – Vidi aquam  
 Organ: *Widor* – Moderato (Symphonie romane)

**Monday 29 April**

St CATHERINE OF SIENA, Virgin &  
 Doctor, Patron of Europe



*St Catherine of Siena*

**Tuesday 30 April**

Easter Feria  
 (St Pius V, Pope)

**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,  
 Saturdays 11.15-12.00noon

**Walsingham Prayer Group**

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

**Yoruba Association**

Hinsley Room,  
 Third Sundays 1.30-3pm

## Holy Saturday 1935 – The Blessing of the New Fire

Paul Tobin

For many years the celebrant of the Easter Vigil, celebrated on the morning of Holy Saturday at Westminster Cathedral until 1947, was Bishop (later Archbishop) Edward Myers, Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster and later Co-adjutor Archbishop, *sine jure successionis* (without the right of succession) as the health of Cardinal Bernard Griffin declined in the latter years of his life.

The ceremonies of Holy Saturday morning, consisting of six parts, namely, the Blessing of the New Fire, Blessing of the Paschal Candle, the Twelve Prophecies, Blessing of the Baptismal Water, the First Mass of Easter and Vespers began at 9am. Pontifical High Mass started around 11am. Here, as elsewhere, on the list of Holy Week services the estimated starting time of Mass was usually included in brackets, which resulted in a larger congregation then than at the start of proceedings. One must wonder what congregations thought when they heard the Preface of the Mass being sung with references to this most sacred night (*in hoc potissimum nocte*)



in broad daylight with the possibility of the sun shining through the windows. Those arriving for this First Mass towards the end of the blessing of Easter Water, seeing an ornamental dustbin being borne on poles by members of the Cathedral Youth Club down the nave to the Baptistry must have wondered what they had missed beforehand.

Bishop Myers, who was consecrated in 1932, officiated at the Holy Saturday Vigil from the following year until 1948 when Bishop George Craven, Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster (1948 –1967) celebrated the Vigil for some years, too. The Cathedral custom was that the Cardinal Archbishop would be present only to celebrate Mass and Vespers but not attend for the Vigil ceremonies beforehand.

In the accompanying picture, Bishop Myers is seen using a thurible that was only taken out of service last year whilst the brazier has been in use up to the present. The Cathedral Chaplains' fur *cappae parvae* have their short trains rolled up on their left side. Tradition was that the train was only let out over the foot of the coffin at their funerals, provided they were Chaplains or Honorary Chaplains at the time of their death.

Sources:

*Westminster Cathedral Chronicle* April 1935  
*Missal-Vespers* 1932. M A Magnani & Son Ltd, WC2  
*The Rites of Holy Week*, Adrian Fortescue, *Holy Week -The Text of the Holy Week Offices with a new translation* by Ronald A Knox; Burns Oates & Washbourne

Image: Acme Newspictures Inc, 220 East 42nd St, NYC

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# Year 6 adventures at PGL Marchants Hill

Nat Scott Cree, Head Teacher

**This past term, we have completed an historic first for SVP – a visit to the PGL residential centre at Marchants Hill, not far from Hindhead in the Surrey countryside and a little further away from Sayers Croft, which has traditionally been our venue of choice for residential visits.**

Thirty-one of our Year 6 pupils and three members of staff made the week-long visit from 19 to 23 February, where we enjoyed a wide-range of challenging activities (climbing, abseiling, fencing, archery, rifle-shooting to name but a few), comfortable accommodation, delicious food and of course for the time of year, mostly unpleasant and inclement weather! All of this however, adds to the overall experience and helps to form lasting memories for the children.

Primarily, the objective was for the children to grow in independence and self-confidence, whilst developing their teamwork abilities and personal resilience. Judging by the way in which many of our pupils tackled the challenges head-on, overcame fears (especially heights) and coped admirably with (mostly) unco-operative weather conditions (did I mention we had some rain whilst there?), it seems to have been a resounding success.

A significant positive of this experience is the way in which it links to our school values and in particular: responsibility, positivity, achievement and aspiration. Responsibility was demonstrated through the way in which the children needed to care for themselves and each other in the absence of their families. Positivity was shown through their approach to each experience, especially where it was something new and daunting such as abseiling down a tall tower. Achievement was clear to see from the many individual successes, e.g. pupil M who was afraid to climb to the top of the tower, but did it anyway with encouragement from classmates and was then grinning from ear-to-ear with pride for the rest of the day. As a school, we believe that instilling a sense of aspiration for the future is very important for our children and again this was evident when hearing what the children were hoping to achieve each day and even when they spoke about their wish to perhaps return to PGL to work as instructors in the future - such was their enjoyment of the experience.

When observing the various activities during the week, and the way in which some children approached them initially with apprehension, I was reminded of the positive and affirming quote from Philippians 4:13: *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."* I think that this applies to many of us when faced with something we're not wanting to do or are not sure about doing, and the words serve as a powerful reminder that no matter what challenge we may be facing, we can be safe in the knowledge that not only does Christ strengthen us, but He is right beside us always (even if the rain is pouring and the wind is howling in the middle of the countryside!).





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## Supporting impoverished groups in Pakistan through the Missionary Church

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