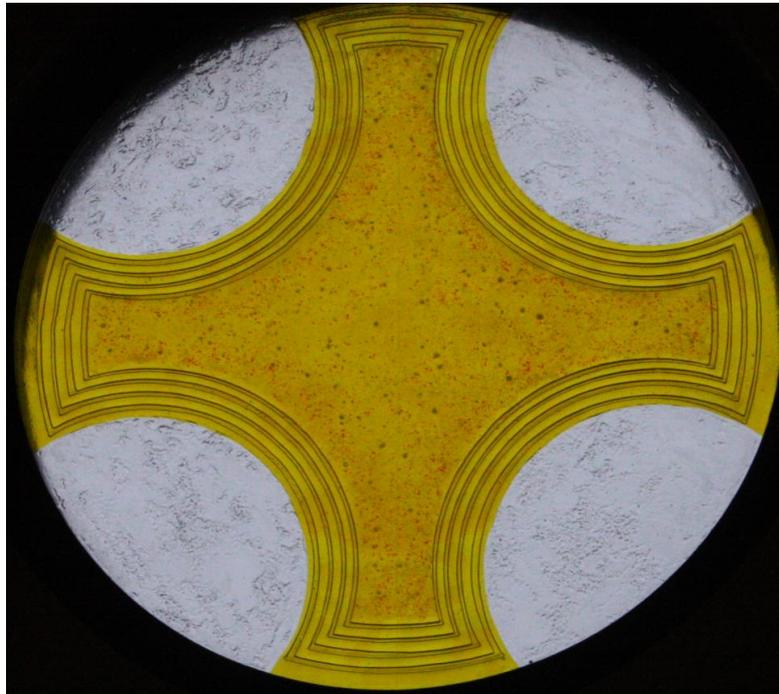


THE AUGUSTINIAN

The Parish Magazine for the R.C. Parish of Springfield



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Welcome

Welcome to the third edition of the Augustinian. I hope and pray that this will help us to grow in our faith and unity as a parish community. First of all let me remember with gratitude all those people who extend their hands together to make this project reach in your hands. With this I am sure the effort of the communication group to converse in a better way with the wider community will be fulfilled.

As we all know that a parish community is the small version of the big structure of the Catholic Church. And the Catholic Church is always noted for its faith in the lord, unity in diversity and mutual support for its members. This is the same that we are striving in this small community under the patronage of St. Augustine of Canterbury.

Let us pray and work together, so that, our church will be a place where everyone will be able to forget anything that hinders them from expressing their faith and may worship together as a united community. Let us pray together that Jesus the divine healer may heal those wounded and suffering members of our community. At the same time let us not forget the fact that we all do have that Christian responsibility to care for the wounded and suffering members of our community until they all will be able to re-join us in full strength and courage.

As we are immediately preparing for Christmas, let us uphold the GOOD NEWS brought by the Son of god for us. The child born in the manger is our saviour and the good news of salvation is open to all. Let us bring this good news to all those who have not heard of it. Or to those who close themselves to this good news. We are all mandated by the risen lord to proclaim this good news to the ends of the earth and let us do that first within our families, neighbourhoods and in our wider communities of our immediate living.

May this Advent be a time of gaining strength in order to proclaim this good news. The birth of Jesus is the light to those who still remain in the darkness of fear and sin. So let us all pray together that, all our efforts as a parish community gain more strength every day, so that we will be united in spreading the good news and the light of Christ in our communities. Invoking the blessings of the child Jesus upon all those who read this.

Yours in prayer,

Fr. Sabu Pariyadan RCJ



Called to Serve

As I reflect on my own vocation to the permanent diaconate, now in my twenty-seventh year, I can see the working of the Holy Spirit.

The seed of the vocation was laid one Sunday in the early 80's. I was attending Sunday Mass with my family at our Parish Church at the time in St. Ethelburga's, Barking. On this occasion, the Parish Priest introduced a visiting Deacon who spoke about his work in a prison as a chaplain. This started me thinking and praying about the vocation to the Diaconate. A period of discernment took a number of years. It involved first talking to my wife and daughter. A married Deacon would not be able to carry out his ministry without complete support of his own family. During this time, we moved to a new parish. The parish priest at the time, Fr. Leslie Knight, who was assistant priest in my old parish, asked had I done anything. The answer was a 'No'. He encouraged me to write to the Bishop. This began a period of intense discussion, study and prayer. Finally, I was asked to attend an interview with Bishop Thomas and his advisors. A further interview was arranged with my wife and me to find out if I had complete support of the family. I was accepted for training which began in 1986.

During a three-year period of study and with the Parish Priest's support, he explained to the Parish every part of my training. It was so essential, as a Deacon has to work closely with the Priest in carrying out his ministry together in whatever way the Priest sees his gifts and talents can be used for the good of the parish.

On the day of ordination, the candidate kneels before his Bishop who presents him with the book of the Gospels saying "receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you are. Believe what you read, teach what you believe and practice what you teach". The Deacon who proclaims the gospel at Mass has 'to believe what he reads' so that he can teach to others what he believes and practice what he teaches. The Deacon receives a faculty from the Bishop to

preach the homily – to break the word of God. This he shares with the priest who he works with in making God's word come alive in the community. The Deacon has to remind himself daily through his prayers and examination, the importance of living the word of Christ by what he preaches and the way he lives the Christian life.

The Deacon as a Minister of the Altar is an 'outward sign' in a public way, of the service and pastoral work he shares with the priest. As ordinary minister of Holy Communion he is assisting in the giving of the Body and Blood of the risen Christ. He is able to take communion to the sick and the housebound in union with the extra-ordinary ministers of the parish. He is able to prepare couples for the blessing of Marriage, administer the Sacrament of Baptism and conduct funerals.

As a minister of Charity, the Deacon has to remind himself that in the likeness of Christ, whom they represent, they are called to works of Charity. This part of my ministry has been enhanced when my Bishop asked me join the Chaplaincy team in the Prison which I spent five very challenging and rewarding ministry. This is a very humbling ministry where you spend time listening, praying and teaching those in need of help and love.

The ministry of the Deacon is 'complimentary to that of a priest and not a substitute for it'. The Council Fathers of the Second Vatican Council did not restore the permanent diaconate because of a shortage of vocations to the priesthood but a calling of service to God's people in the Church.

As I reflect on my own ministry that it can be often a ministry of the Cross which one accepts despite your unworthiness. Every time you fall you have to get up and keep on serving where the Lord calls you. There is only one Deacon, Jesus Christ and yet he has called all to serve.

Deacon Kevin Lyons

Come and follow me

"Come, and follow me" these words have really struck me this week as I have been praying and reflecting on the Gospel. What do they mean for each one of us as we hear them said? Are they able to make a difference within us and change our lives?

In the Gospel, Jesus calls the disciples and His gaze upon them draws them in and they leave everything and follow him. They have never met him before and I have always thought what must have been going through their minds. There is this man walking along the shore and he all he says is "Come and follow me". This is enough for them to go and follow him. Matthew writes only a couple of lines but imagine the choice they are to make. They could have quite easily said no and carry on with their daily lives but they don't. Jesus calls them in and as we hear they leave everything and follow him. This decision of theirs completely changes their lives and over the next three years they spend with the Lord they will witness miracles, hear Jesus preach and see the one who called them die on the cross for our salvation.

Matthew uses the word "immediately". There is no hesitation. They simply go. As they go with Jesus through Galilee they go to the synagogues. This is the place of worship for Jews and Jesus goes to them. He isn't hiding away from anyone and does everything publically for all to see. From the moment Jesus begins his ministry he is curing people and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God. This is our call as we continue to share the good news in our current world.

As I shared with you when I arrived in the parish, I had a great sense of God calling me to the priesthood when I visited Lourdes, working with young people at Walsingham House or spending time in prayer. The one thing that was clear for me during my time of discernment to answer the Lords call, was that I wasn't always able to listen and I was filling the quiet with things to do. During my time here these last couple of weeks, Fr. Philip and I have gone here there and everywhere. While visiting people in their home, going to the hospital, attending funerals, school Masses, to name but a few things we have done, I did have to find to stop,

listen and pray. We can get caught up in what is going on around us but do we notice what is going on within us. Our time with the Lord is special and important because it is in this time when we come to Mass, spend time in Adoration, say the rosary or start our day with a prayer that we invite Christ into our own lives.

I wonder if you might agree with me and notice in your own life when there are times when we rush around and go here and there without making a time to stop, listen and pray. In the book of Kings 1 there is a description of where God is present. There is a fire and God isn't there, there is an earthquake and God isn't there but in the gentle breeze that follows God is there. It is in this quiet or stillness that we can hear God and listen to what he is trying to say to us. This may not come across as a voice but maybe people around us suggest different things or point us in the right direction.

Christ reaches out to the disciples to follow him and he wants to do the same with us. He wants to walk alongside us in our difficulties, he wants to be there when we experience joy and he wants to enter into our lives when we receive him in Holy Communion. While I was discerning whether that priesthood was something that I'm being called to do, I was in London during Pope Benedict XVI visit. The day was busy, full of energy and lots of people around. God was definitely present but it was during the moment of prayer and stillness that I was able to open my ears, eyes and heart to Christ. Pope Benedict said during Adoration "ask the Lord Jesus what he has in mind for you". These words have remained with me and I offer them as something for you to use in your own prayer.

Like the disciples do we say our yes to the Lord? I know I haven't always done that and it takes a great amount of courage to do so. We are told in the scriptures "Do not be afraid". This appears in the bible 365 times. That is one for everyday apart from the leap year when we panic! God wants us to trust in him and his word and let the good news change our lives.

Now for the majority of us we may feel that we have our vocation or know what we are doing with our lives. This however doesn't stop us

from being able to share the good news and also grow in our relationship with Jesus. He calls each and every one of us to live a good Christian life built on foundation of God's love. Jesus starts his ministry by saying "repent". This encourages us to have a change of heart and turn to the Lord when we need strength and guidance. He is there listening to us as we are there listening to him.

So as we leave Mass today let us find time to stop, listen and pray and reflect as Christ says

to us "come follow me". As I make my way back to Oscott to continue my studies know that I will keep you in prayer and I ask that you may keep me in prayer. I will finish with the lyrics of a hymn I heard in Lourdes and they are quite fitting. As you hear them, maybe sit quietly and reflect and see what the Lord has to say to you.

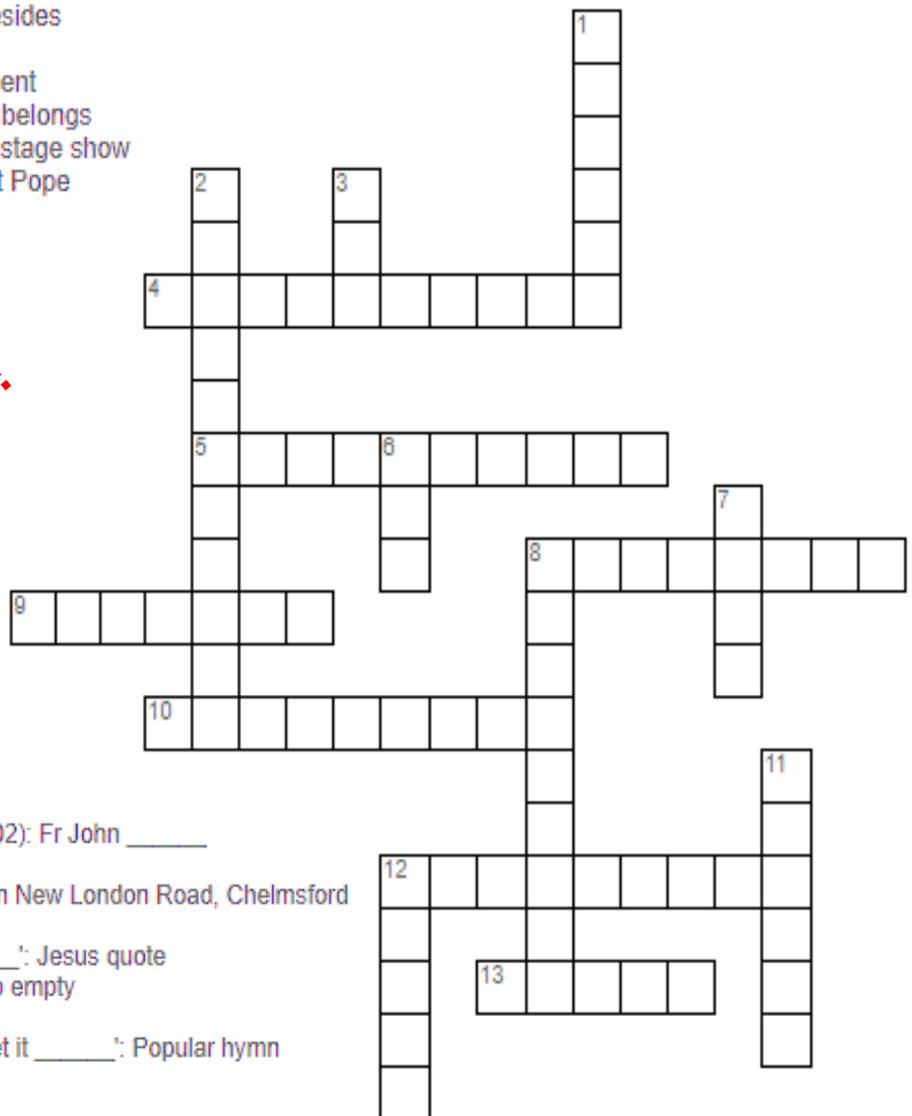
"Do not be afraid I am with you, I have called you each by name, come and follow me, I will bring you home, I love you and you are mine."

Michael Barwick

Across

- 4 'Lord Hear us... Lord _____ Hear us!'
- 5 The place where the Eucharist resides
- 8 Sacrament of Holy Matrimony
- 9 The first book of the New Testament
- 10 The Diocese to which this parish belongs
- 12 'Jesus Christ _____': A popular stage show
- 13 The apostle who become the first Pope

**PARISH
CROSSWORD!**
(Answers on page 15!)



Down

- 1 Parish Priest of Springfield (1997-2002): Fr John _____
- 2 Patron Saint of Weary Travellers
- 3 Abbreviation of the Catholic Church in New London Road, Chelmsford
- 6 Colour of Vestments on Good Friday
- 7 'I am the way, the truth and the _____': Jesus quote
- 8 Mary _____, who found Jesus' tomb empty
- 11 The river where Jesus was baptised
- 12 'This little light of mine, I'm going to let it _____': Popular hymn

Knights of St. Columba Council 302

The About Town Quiz in September was enjoyed by all those who attended; it is open to all so look out for a notice for next year's. Our visit to the Romford Dog track this year was undertaken in conjunction with BCCS. Our Annual Dinner in February held at Little Channels Golf Club was attended by 60 Knights and their wives, widows and friends with guest speaker Fr Michael Corcoran MHM, General Superior of Mill Hill Missionaries. A great evening was enjoyed by all. A new Fund Raiser for us in February was a cake sale at Blessed Sacrament. The best looking cake was made by Bro Jack Brittain in the shape of a hedgehog. A profit of £300 will support a family in Nepal.



Our Annual Lecture in October was a great success. Broadcaster and author, Emma-Jane Kirby, spoke about her report on the refugee influx on the Italian island of Lampedusa and book "The Optician of Lampedusa". She described the response which the report had generated and how the book had come about to an audience of 75 people. The impression made was shown by the fact that, from the collection afterwards, we were able to send £500 to her chosen charity, "Médecins sans Frontières".

A Christmas card and gift voucher was given to all widows. Our Provincial Annual Mass at Brentwood in November was attended by Brothers, wives, widows and family members from Chelmsford Council. We held a weekend retreat on in September, at Worth Abbey, with nearly 30 Brothers, friends and wives, led by Brother Gildas, of the Norbertine Community.



As part of our Youth work, the Canon Manning Trophy was awarded to Rebecca Kimberlin (pictured above) in recognition of her work and commitment in preparing and leading the music at the 10.45 Mass at New Hall.

A cheque for £2,300.00 was presented to BCCS as a result of sponsorship from all Chelmsford and Maldon parishes, following our walk round Canvey Island (its not all fun). The new Director of BCCS, Bernadette Fisher, spoke to us about their work before accepting the cheque. Once again, thank you for your continued support.

In Action, Brentwood News was delivered and Christmas and Easter Posters and "Keep Christ in Christmas" stickers were delivered to Parishes of all denominations in the Chelmsford area. Thanks to your generosity, we were able to deliver a substantial amount of clothes, socks, toiletries etc. to Providence Row and Farleigh Hospice.

For further information please contact John Holland on 01245 476144 or Chris Thompson or Peter Whittington.

We wish you a happy and holy Christmas.

Mike Hiom

If you have been a Chelmsford parishioner for more than a year or two, you are almost certain to have come across Mike Hiom. Mike is a parishioner of Holy Name, but his service to the Catholic Community extends across Chelmsford. Over many years, he has been involved in almost every area of Catholic life. I met him organising the first Summer Fair that a new PTA organised at Our Lady Immaculate and we have worked together ever since.

He has been active in Education since his children were at school. As well as Our Lady Immaculate, he has been a stalwart of PTAs at KEGS and St. John Payne with many years as a Governor at St. John Payne, finally chairing the Governing Body. He continues to work with St. John Payne, and other causes, as quiz setter and questionmaster and SJP's annual quiz winner is awarded the Hiom Cup.

He was Grand Knight of the Chelmsford Council for three years and is now the Immediate Past Grand Knight. He was Social Secretary before being Grand Knight and is now Chancellor (our Welfare Officer) but he works on all our Committees. He prepares the articles that keep readers of all our Parish magazines and "Brentwood News" up to date with what Knights are doing.

He was one of the volunteers that slept in Church Halls with the homeless over several winters, a project which lead to the foundation of CHESS. He continues to work with Marriage Care as their Chelmsford Treasurer. His service to Chelmsford Parishes was recognised in March when he was presented with the Bene Merente medal by Fr. Abbott Hugh and Deacon Kevin.



HCPT Group 26

For the sixth year in a row, I was fortunate enough to spend a week in Lourdes with some fantastic disabled and disadvantaged young people at Eastertime.

Ten HCPT Group 26 helpers (of which I am one) took seven children away on pilgrimage this year, who all loved their week. All of us helpers come from different walks of life, but we have become a close group of friends as the majority of us travel every year. Recently, we celebrated a wedding between two of our helpers, which was a joyous occasion! We all aim to give the children that we take the best week away we can.



The Group 26 newlyweds!

I am a one-to-one carer in the group, meaning I have responsibility for a disabled young man across the week. This year, I looked after a young man with ADHD who I had taken to Lourdes three years ago. I bonded with him back then and after a very difficult year at home and at school, I was asked by my group leader if I would take him back to Lourdes again. Of course, I was more than happy to do so and he loved it even more a second time around! The week's pilgrimage was a chance for him to not worry about anything that was going on in his home life and enjoy himself.

While we were out there, we did lots and lots of activities. We went to the zoo, the caves, the fort, the park, had a teddy bear picnic, played on the prairie and even celebrated Christmas! Alongside all of this, we followed the story of St. Bernadette across the town and prayed in the grotto, which is a beautiful place. We also went to several masses, but those said in Lourdes aren't like those in our parish! They are full of singing, dancing and bright colour and this is best illustrated in the Trust mass, where all of the groups in the wider HCPT charity are present. It is a spectacle that you won't see anywhere else, with thousands of pilgrims and disabled children enjoying the celebration.



The domain in the sun

To take seven young people away is a huge effort by our group. From Irish dancing nights to carol singing to parish collections, we raise thousands of pounds every year to enable children from all disabilities and backgrounds a chance to experience the joy of Lourdes. All of the helpers give up a lot of their time throughout the year fundraising and planning (as well as booking a week off work for the actual trip!) Thank you to all of you for your generous donations in the 2017 appeal at church, all monies of which go towards the cost of taking a child to Lourdes. All helpers pay for their own fare.



The class of 2017!

And... planning for next year's trip has already begun! Preparation for a week away like ours comes with a lot of responsibility. As I am now back from university, I am actively involved in meeting the parents and carers of the children that we are taking to Lourdes in 2018. This means visiting where they live, learning about their needs, medication, capabilities etc. and then reassuring the parents that firstly we would be able to look after them and then be able to give them an amazing experience in Lourdes.

I keep going back to Lourdes every year and every year it continues to surprise me. Although most of what we do is the same year-to-year, the young people that we take change and because of that the whole experience is different. Watching a young person develop throughout the week and come out of their shell is very rewarding on a personal note. The children make the week away worth all of the hard work that we do as a group. Roll on Easter 2018! **Ben Hitchen**



THANK YOU FOR ALL OF YOUR SUPPORT!

日本のクリスマス - A Japanese Christmas

"Japan is a strange place," a colleague happily commented to me recently. "We go to Shinto shrines *and* Buddhist temples but we also celebrate Halloween and Christmas." I smiled politely back while I bite back the retort, "Japan *thinks* it celebrates Christmas." You see, Christmas in Japan is like looking at a picture of a cat draw by someone who may have heard very good descriptions of one but has never actually seen a real feline. You know you are looking at a cat, but the more you look at it the more you realise it's like the artist doesn't really understand point of a tail or whiskers. However, they love the idea of cats.

And Japan does *love* Christmas... or at least the idea of it.

It's just that most Japanese people don't know or understand anything beyond the commercial side which leads to a warping of the holiday. While many countries have taken the Christmas and added their own traditions, in Japan it feels like they've missed the point. Christmas decorations go down on Christmas night or 26th December (if you are lucky) otherwise it's on Christmas Eve which, I think we can all agree, is slightly defeating the point. And before you're tempted to point out that this is because New Year's is Japan's big holiday and therefore the decorations need to go down this early to make way for the New Year, this is how Japan handles all western holiday's they adopt. The 25th is over and so is the entire holiday is over so let's finish enjoying our KFC and move onto the next holiday.

KFC? Yes, the traditional Japanese Christmas meal of choice. In the "distant" past of the seventies, Japan had no idea what a Christmas dinner was let alone what it should comprise of, that and turkeys are still rare in Japan today. KFC saw an opportunity and launched a campaign which went along the lines of, "Come to KFC for Christmas! It's chicken and that's *kinda* like what American's have for Christmas dinner." The campaign was so successful that KFC still has a strong association with the season and it's still the place to eat on Christmas Day. If you live outside a large city and you want to grab yourself a traditional Japanese Christmas dinner, you may find yourself at the end of a line going down the street.

In Japan the focus of the season has been shifted to Christmas Eve, during which the long standing festive tradition is still maintained of... going on a date? "Like Valentines Day?" I hear you ask. Yes, just like Valentine's Day (which, by the way, in Japan is more about girls (never boys) giving chocolates to their friends and people they are grateful to). My brother and I were made uncomfortably aware of this when walking around together in Shinjuku (a district in Central Tokyo) surrounded by couples on dates.

A few couples may exchange gifts, but the ones who really get presents are young children. You may not see anything odd in that, but they are the *only* ones who get a present. Many Japanese people are surprised that I not only give my parents presents, but my siblings, uncles, aunts, nieces, and even my good friends. This is unheard of amongst the Japanese. The spirit of gift giving really hasn't crossed over. Christmas isn't a time to show love and appreciation to those in your life, but a chance for a child to demand a present.

That's a Japanese Christmas in a nutshell: Presents, but only if you are a small child, dates, KFC, Santa and lights. I have a friend, who taught English at a hospitality college. As a topic for an English conversation class, she tried to ask them about the deeper meaning of Christmas. Her students didn't understand what there was beyond the commercial aspect. She tried to explain that Christmas is a time to spend with people you love. "Oh, you mean your girlfriend/boyfriend?" they asked. No, not like that, but that's as far as their comprehension could manage.

It is perhaps unfair to expect any more though. Christmas has been adopted in Japan because it seemed fun, from what they've seen of it. It lacks the centuries of history we benefit from. Our Christmas has grown and developed into the holiday we have today for over a millennia. The roots of love and charity are firmly in place. That's what the holiday is to us: love. We give to show our love. We spend time

with our family because we love them. But more importantly, our Christian roots give the holidays purpose. We celebrate for a reason and they shape the traditions around the holiday and that can't be manufactured. The cat doesn't have ears because they look cute any more than we put up Christmas trees because we like the colour green, but if you don't know any better, then why can't the cat have sparkly heart-shaped tail? Does it matter? Perhaps not, but at that point is it still a cat?

I'll leave you with one last story. In my first year as an ALT in Japan I was eating lunch with some other teachers. Christmas cakes came up and how Japan loves to put strawberries on them. "We don't put strawberries on Christmas cakes." Another teacher looked positively shocked. "Never?" she asked. "No," I replied, "Strawberries are a summer fruit and Christmas is in the middle of winter." She nodded, leaned back and thought for a moment. Turning back to me she said, "In Japan, we have greenhouses."

A French Christmas in the early 1960's

In my childhood, Christmas was a low key celebration. In those days, the working week in France was 48 hours so my dad worked on Saturdays and he went back to work on Boxing Day as he only had Christmas Day off. The factory had to maintain the boilers working as it was not worth letting the fires die down then have to rekindle.

The run-up to Christmas involved an evening walk into town to look at the displays in the shops' lighted windows, but there were no glitzy lights in the streets or decorations. One year, we had access to a "catalogue des armes et cycles de St Etienne", one of the few published in France.

One Advent, I received one-to-one tuition from our Parish priest in order to do my First Communion on Christmas Day, the day before my sixth birthday. It seems incredible now that my Parish, an 11th Century Roman (read Norman) church, had 3 priests. It is now shut to worship and its intensely prayerful atmosphere, 9 centuries of it, is lost to the faithful whilst the "historical monument" is preserved for the nation.

Although a lot of French people celebrated Christmas by going to Midnight Mass, then holding a "reveillon" meal in the early hours of the morning, it was not the case in our family. We woke up on Sunday morning and went to Church fairly early, sitting near the front in the half-empty church.

On our return, my father, who loved music, would put on Handel's Messiah, a laborious process on a series of 33-turns per minute records, whilst my mum cooked dinner. Dad always helped in the kitchen. We were allowed into our sitting/dinner room and could then marvel at the beauty of the tree and the colourful presents around it.

After the unwrapping (we were told straight away by my parents that the gifts were from themselves and our grand-parents/god-parents and warned that this was a secret), my mother would put the meal on the table. She was a good cook and would do us a starter, a main course and a dessert, trying to introduce new foods, too expensive for ordinary fare but not always welcome by us children. There was no traditional Christmas dish in France, apart from the Christmas Log. The meal finishes early and we would clear up, and go for a walk, weather permitting. We did not own a car.

In the late afternoon and early evening, we would sit around the table and play together with the new games that we had received. I was always a bad loser, but the memory of the family fun far outweighs the frustration that I might have felt at losing...

In those days, the working week in France was 48 hours so my dad worked on Saturdays and he went back to work on Boxing Day as he only had Christmas Day off. The factory had to maintain the boilers working as it was not worth letting the fires die down then have to rekindle.

Melting Snowman Biscuits



When it's cold outside here is something delicious to make

Ingredients

- 200g fondant icing sugar
- 6 white marshmallows
- 6 large cookies
- 24 mini chocolate beans
- 6 pretzel sticks
- tube black writing icing

Method

1. Put the icing sugar into a bowl and add cold water a teaspoon at a time until the mixture is runny, but thick enough to coat a spoon.
2. Ask an adult to snip the marshmallows in half using wetted scissors.
3. Spoon a little icing onto each cookie and attach half a marshmallow. Using a little icing, stick the other half on top at an angle. Drizzle a little more icing onto the cookie to make melting snow.
4. Break the pretzel sticks in half and place on the cookie for arms. Stick orange chocolate beans on for the noses. Stick three chocolate beans on each cookie to represent buttons.
5. Using the writing icing, pipe small blobs for the eyes and mouth. Leave to set.

The Story of the Poinsettia Plant



During the Christmas season people buy poinsettia plants to decorate their homes. There is an old Mexican legend about how Poinsettias and Christmas come together:

There was once a poor Mexican girl called Pepita who had no present to give the baby Jesus at the Christmas Eve Services. As Pepita walked sadly to the chapel, her cousin Pedro tried to cheer her up. "Pepita," he said, "I'm sure that even the smallest gift, given by someone who loves him will make Jesus happy."

Pepita didn't know what she could give, so she picked a small handful of weeds from the roadside and made them into a small bouquet. She felt embarrassed because she could only give this small present to Jesus. As she walked through the chapel to the altar, she remembered what Pedro had said. She began to feel better, knelt and put the bouquet at the bottom of the nativity scene. Suddenly, the bouquet of weeds burst into bright red flowers, and everyone who saw them were sure they had seen a miracle. From that day on, the bright red flowers were known as the 'Flores de Noche Buena', or 'Flowers of the Holy Night'.

The shape of the poinsettia flower and leaves are sometimes thought of as a symbol of the Star of Bethlehem which led the Wise Men to Jesus. The red coloured leaves symbolize the blood of Christ. The white leaves represent his purity.

The Legend of the Spider's Web

When Joseph, Mary and Jesus were on their way to Egypt, they were weary, and they sought refuge in a cave. It was very cold, so cold that the ground was white with hoar frost. A little spider saw the little baby Jesus, and he wished so much that he could do something for him to keep him warm in the cold night. The spider decided to do the only thing he could do, to spin his web across the entrance of the cave, to make, as it were, a curtain there. Along the path there came a detachment of Herod's soldiers, looking for children to kill to carry out King Herod's orders. When the soldiers arrived at the cave, they were about to burst in to search it, to see if anyone was hiding there, but their captain noticed the spider's web. "Look," he said, "There is a spider's web there. It is quite unbroken and there cannot possibly be anyone in the cave, for anyone entering the cave would certainly have torn the web." So, the soldiers passed on, and left the holy family in peace because a little spider had spun his web across the entrance to the cave.

The Traditional Mince Pie Star

Mince pies should traditionally have a star on top, to represent the Christmas Star which led the shepherds and Kings to the baby Jesus in Bethlehem.

Father Christmas and Mince Pies

Mince pies are a favourite food of Father Christmas. Children leave one or two mince pies on a plate at the foot of the chimney (along with a small glass of brandy, sherry or milk, and a carrot for the reindeer) as a thank you for filling their stockings.



History of Mince Pies



Mince pies became a regular part of Christmas celebrations as early as the 16th century (Tudor times), when mince pies were coffin or cradle shaped, rather than round as they are now. At that time, they contained quite a bit of shredded meat in addition to the usual range of dried fruits. The crusaders returned from the Holy Land with spices, and it was deemed appropriate to celebrate Christ's birthday with a pie containing spices from his native land. It was important to add three spices (cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg) for the three gifts given to the Christ child by the three Kings.

Mince Pie Superstition

It was thought lucky to eat one mince pie on each of the twelve days of Christmas (ending with the Epiphany, the 6th of January). Alternatively, to refuse one would lead to bad luck. The mincemeat mixture should only be stirred in a clockwise direction. To stir it anticlockwise is to bring bad luck for the coming year. A wish should be made whilst eating one's first mince pie of the festive season, and mince pies should always be eaten in silence!

It is considered very unlucky to cut a mince pie with a knife!

Explaining Gift Aid

An important source of income for our Parish is Gift Aid, so we are writing a little to explain how it works. Gift Aid is based on the principle that income to Charities should be untaxed. Any Charity which receives donations from income on which tax has been paid can recover that tax. Dioceses are registered Charities and they can all recover tax under the scheme. All that is necessary is a taxpayer, a Gift Aid declaration and a way of linking the donation and the donor.

The Parish can reclaim the tax through the Diocese's administration arrangements. This includes most special collections – there are one or two small exceptions, though if we have a collection for a special purpose, we have must give it to that cause. The scheme works as follows.

The taxpayer needs to complete a Gift Aid declaration to go to our Gift Aid organiser (Dee Davey). It tells HMRC that you want the Diocese to claim the tax that you have paid and lasts as long as it is in force. It allows the tax on any identifiable donations which you make to be reclaimed. You do not need to say anything about your personal circumstances except to confirm that you are a taxpayer and have paid tax on the donations. The taxpayer does not need to be a parishioner, so if you are not a taxpayer but your partner is, and is happy to donate to the parish, we can still recover the tax.

When you make a donation, we need to be able to identify who made it. If you have a Standing Order, include your name as the reference so that we know who has made the contribution and link it to your declaration. If you use the Gift Aid envelopes, the number on the envelope does the same. The parishioners who count the weekly collection, will record the donations enclosed in each numbered envelope but they do not know which parishioners have which set of envelope numbers. If you remember your Gift Aid Envelope number you can use it on an otherwise blank envelope or write your number on the back of a cheque if you don't have a spare envelope with you.

At the end of each year, Dee will assemble all the donations and total them by name. The list goes to the Diocese as our claim for the year. The Diocese compiles regular claims, submits it to HMRC, and, when the cash is received, distributes it to parishes, less a deduction to cover their administration.

We can also claim donations that are not linked to the donor under the Small Donations Scheme. This is limited to tax on £8,000 per Mass Centre (and needs to be linked to the Centre) and has to be less than £20 for each donation, and in cash (i.e. not by cheque or card). If you are going to donate of more than £20, it is important that you have a Gift Aid Declaration and record your donation.

If you are getting a service for your money, such as coffee, a raffle ticket, a coach to Walsingham etc., we cannot recover the tax on the payment. Strangely, you are not regarded as getting a service for Mass offerings, for which a service is exactly what you are getting. Tax can be recovered on collections towards the things that a Parish would pay for. A collection purely for an individual, such as a leaving presentation, cannot be claimed.

The Gift Aid Scheme is a key part of our Parish finances. In many years, we would make no repayment of our debt without it. If you pay any income tax and make donations to the Parish, please complete a Gift Aid Declaration and let us claim the tax.

If you pay tax at the higher rate, then you can personally recover the difference between the basic rate and higher rate of tax on all your donations through your own tax return.

Finally, just a word of advice. For second collections, we claim Gift Aid if you have given your contribution in an envelope with your name or number on it. If not, we do not include second collections in the Small Donations Scheme claim (there are several complications). If you want us to be able to claim for your second collection contributions, you need to give it in a way that we can track. It doesn't have to be an official envelope; there should be envelopes in the porch at Church.

OUR PARISH VISION

1. A dynamic worshipping community - where people come for the first time and immediately sense the presence of God
2. A community where everyone is growing in their understanding of the Catholic Faith
3. A community where everyone is growing in the life of prayer and their relationship with God
4. A community where pastoral, spiritual and practical care is given to those in need
5. A community where more people are actively involved in the Mission of the Church.

OUR PARISH PRAYER

Loving Father,

You so loved the world that you sent us your only Son, that we might believe in Him and have eternal life.

May we encounter Jesus Christ anew this day and live the Good News with joy.

Through the power of your Holy Spirit, Help us to "go out to the whole world and proclaim" our faith with confidence.

Give us the courage to witness to the joy of the Gospel by our words and actions.

Help our parish to become more welcoming and missionary, so that you may be known and loved by all people.

We make this prayer through Our Lord Jesus Christ Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God for ever and ever,

Amen

EDITOR'S NOTE

For a number of reasons, we have only managed to get one edition this year, but here it is. Apologies if you were waiting with bated breath, but we should be able to do more regular editions in the future. Thanks to all those who have contributed in any way by providing copy, advice or assistance. A particular thank you to Ben Hitchen for doing the formatting and layout (one of the number of reasons) and to New Hall for their help in printing it. I also wish you a Happy and Holy Christmas and New Year.

Chris

Answers to the crossword

Across: 4. Graciously 5. Tabernacle 8. Marriage 9. Matthew 10. Brentwood 12. Superstar 13. Peter
Down: 1. Harvey 2. Christopher 3. OLI 6. Red 7. Life 8. Magdalene 11. Jordan 12. Shine