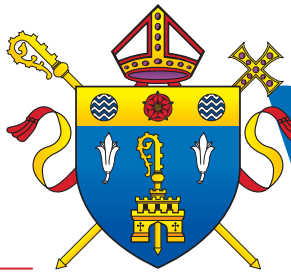


# The Catholic VOICE of Lancaster



The Official Newspaper to the Diocese of Lancaster  
Issue 285 + December 2016

**INSIDE:** p09 Miraculous healings  
p14 'The Virgin Eye' book launch



Three-fold lily-sceptre of virginity / sovereignty

Saxon crown and throne denote Mary's Queenship and the date of the founding of the Shrine 1061

Arch denotes rainbow, sign of the covenant between God and every living creature (cf. Gen. 9:12f)

**O**ur Lady is depicted in traditional style seated on a simple chair of state with the Child Jesus on her knee. She wears a Saxon crown in token of her ancient queen-ship and carries the lily of purity.

Read all about the first ever Diocese of Lancaster pilgrimage to Walsingham on Page 8.

Pillars of the House of God, the Church

Seven rings for the sacraments

Christ, the Word made Flesh, holds the Gospels

Mary points to Christ

Christ extends his arm in a double gesture of blessing and protection of his mother

Seat of Wisdom

Toadstone which is the East Anglian symbol of evil (cf. Gen. 3:15)

# Our Lady of Walsingham

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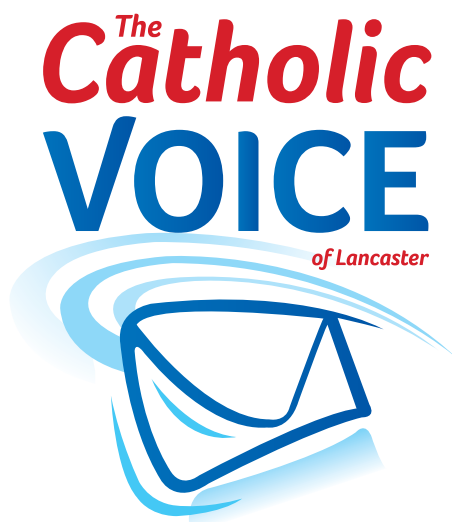
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### EDITORIAL

**F**or many, Christmas will mean exchanging expensive gifts with family and friends and spending lots on food and drink for the table and endless round of parties. For others it is a time of continued scrimping, tensions or loneliness. The contrast is stark - though probably some will fall between the two extremes.

We may drop money into the Salvation Army collection tins as we hurtle around the shops listening to their brass bands playing our favourite carols and perhaps we will give to other worthwhile charities too. But do we do stop and compare what we give to what we are spending on our own needs and enjoyment? The contrast will probably be stark here too!

The Catholic Voice is not suggesting for one moment that Christmas and the associated festivities should not be enjoyed. On the contrary, Christmas should be celebrated as befitting the birth of our Saviour. And we have been given the good things in life to do exactly that. Rather, we constantly need to remember that God became Man to save us all and not just those to whom good things have been bestowed.

The Church puts before us the four week season of Advent to prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ (*traditionally prayer, fasting, almsgiving and reconciliation*). This preparation is about preparing ourselves spiritually to make us worthy to celebrate on Christmas Day. The Catholic Voice asks that we use Advent to get our own personal 'house' in order and try and get things into perspective - our focus should be on the coming of our Saviour and how we follow Him rather than on the size of the turkey and the number of gifts. The High Street would have us believe that the commercial season of Advent started in September and that orders for food and gifts were imperative if our Christmas is to be enjoyed! Yet another stark contrast.

If we want the lasting peace of Christmas to rest in our hearts let us use the season of Advent well!

The Catholic Voice wishes everyone a very Happy and Holy Christmas - and thanks most sincerely all those people who have contributed in any way to the success of the publication in 2016.



**Christmas – make merry and be glad! A time of contrasts**







## Congratulations Sister Reina

**A**t Hying Monastery on the 8th October 2016, we had the joy of welcoming a new sister into the Bernardine Cistercian Order of Esquermes. Irene Kartika, a novice, made her First Profession during Mass and took the name Sr. Reina, a name which means peace. The Vows were received by our Prioress General, Sr. Mary Helen. Sr. Reina took the traditional monastic vows of Obedience, Conversion of Life and Stability.

Sr. Reina joined us in January 2013, having found out about us through the community website, www.hying.org. The Mass was celebrated by Fr. Michael McKenna, MHM, our chaplain and the homily was given by Fr. Peter Craddy, O.S.C.O. The celebration continued with afternoon tea and cake. We ask you to pray for Sr. Reina as she continues on her Bernardine journey.

*Sr. Michaela Toulmin*




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# More blessings, graces and mercy... once again received in Lourdes



**No matter how much training we do before Lourdes, no matter how many checklists you tick off, no matter how many times you check that your passport and prayer journal are in your bag...I never think we are prepared for what Our Blessed Lord has in store for us during our week together.**

Life is so busy and it can be easy to go with the flow. But, what flow? Pope Francis' encouragement for us to go on Pilgrimage in this year of Mercy has really opened many hearts and pulled so many people back to the Lord. And this in turn has enabled us to see the face of our Father who welcomes each of us with open arms, freeing us from our burdens.

Jesus is the ultimate face of mercy, and it has reminded me that the flow we need to be in is the flow of Christ. To be merciful like him. To accept and be respectful of those around us, in every challenge each person faces. Every person that we meet is facing personal struggles and we can be that face of Christ to others; we can be the hands of Christ. St Teresa of Avila says that "Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours." It is so beautiful and what an honour that God calls each of us to be like him to serve others.

Our Lady time and time again guides us to her son so we can reflect His light to others. We can do this in every moment and every conversation and have done

this during the time we spent in Lourdes this year. I am so proud to be part of the youth service and I have learnt so much from so many people from the different teams that make up our pilgrimage – the medical team, the Brancardiers, the van men...to name just a few. From our wonderful pilgrims and assisted pilgrims, you brought us as young people, so much joy by being able to spend time with you, talking about life and sharing experiences.

We are so blessed also to have our priests who walk with us spiritually on our journey. Thank you all and a special thank you to our team of young people, even though the number was small this year they did an amazing job. Thank you to Fr John Millar who led the youth this year teaching us about St Bernadette and how our Lord is so loving to all. Thank you to Daniel, one of our Diocesan seminarians, and to Kate and Charlotte our volunteer leaders who helped and supported every minute of the day (*and night*).

Thanks be to God for you all and for all He does for our Diocesan family every day, in the joys, and in the hard times too.

For me this year in the Gospels Matthew 11:28 has reminded me to hand everything over so our Lord can help me (*and you*) with our pains, our hurt and he is with us every step of the way. Our blessed Lord will give us peace and happiness and we will find rest in him.

You are all in our prayers, here at Castlerigg Manor. *Patricia, Keswick*

Keep an eye on our website, [www.castleriggmanor.co.uk/yatm-events](http://www.castleriggmanor.co.uk/yatm-events) as dates for the 2017 pilgrimage to Lourdes will be released soon.



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# Surrendering it all to God

**H**i, my name's Sophie and I'm a recent Primary Education graduate from the University of Cumbria (I did 2 years beforehand at Lancaster University). I'm originally from near Manchester, but spent the last 5 years in Lancaster where I was a regular at the university chaplaincy.

However, now I lead a somewhat different life...I'm a Catholic missionary with NET Ministries Ireland. NET is a Catholic youth ministry that encourages young people to love Jesus and embrace the life of the Church. I come from a family who would have called themselves Catholic – I went to Catholic schools, we occasionally went to Mass, I received my Sacraments of Initiation but it wasn't until I was in my final years of secondary school that I truly and personally encountered Jesus for the first time. My time at university was great and I had some wonderful experiences, and it was there that I was able to develop a relationship with Jesus. I also experienced the spiritual highs and lows of being a Catholic at university; having to defend Church teaching at 3am in the flat kitchen, trying to explain a new-found love for Jesus to family or finding faith when life seems to be falling apart.

However, I made some incredible Christian friends who helped keep on the right track and held me accountable to going to Mass and keeping prayer as part of my routine. During my final year at university, I was praying hard about what I was supposed

to do after I qualified. I was set to graduate with good grades and references so obviously the presumed route would be to get a job in a school, complete my NQT year and start my teaching career. Yet, for some reason this didn't appeal to me. I am passionate about education and one day I hope to have a job in a school, but I knew it just wasn't the right time for me to start yet. I know that when I get busy, and stressed, that I forget to pray; I can turn away from Jesus, and I wanted to have my heart rooted in Christ before beginning my career. I couldn't ignore the niggling feeling that God was calling me to give a period of my life specifically to Him, to bring Jesus to other young people, to give youth the same opportunities to grow that I had received.

So, months later, after graduation, applications, interviews and training, and plenty of prayer, I'm now settled in to my new mission field and I love it! NET has completely exceeded any expectations I may have had beforehand. We have had so many great adventures as a team such as hiking in the mountains, helping lead a Youth 2000 retreat, putting on a praise and worship night and making friends in our community, particularly with the priests and religious. Soon we will be going into schools to give retreats, which includes delivering talks, activities, dramas, music and prayer ministry. Not only are we carrying out ministry but I'm growing in my knowledge of the Catholic faith and Church teaching, and in love

for the gift of the Sacraments from the Church. I'm being stretched and challenged in ways I never expected; missionary life is a radical way to live out the call from Pope Francis for youth to be counter-cultural, as a team we strive to call each other on to holiness.

One of the areas I've had to grow in most is surrendering to God – I am learning to give everything to Jesus. A striking moment for me so far was on training during a prayer evening, we were encouraged to write on a piece of paper everything that we wanted to surrender. At first it was difficult to admit to myself how much I love to be in control and how little I allow God to lead my life, so I asked Jesus to show me all of the areas I need to surrender to Him. A few minutes later my paper was full, I had written down my weaknesses, my strengths, my future, my vocation, relationships with my family and friends and my possessions. I then went and nailed this surrender to a cross placed in the middle of the room, my heart beating fast as if Jesus was asking me to give Him my heart too in surrender. I remind myself of this encounter every day, there's nothing in my life that's too big or small for Jesus to handle!

Pope St John Paul II once said to young people *"It is Jesus that you seek when you dream of happiness; He is*

*waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you; He is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is He who provoked you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is He who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is He who reads in your hearts your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle."*



Serving with NET Ministries has shown me the truth of these words, that while I love adventure, only Jesus is going to satisfy the restlessness in my heart. He has called me to this mission and I am so excited to live out the plans that He has in store for me this year, and for the rest of my life!

*Sophie, 23, Waterford - Ireland*

If you would like to find out more about our ministry or if you would like to join us in our mission to bring the Good News to young people, you can visit my page on the NET website: [www.netministries.ie/sophie-benson](http://www.netministries.ie/sophie-benson)

## BEING A YOUNG CATHOLIC TODAY! ++++

**"3 Million?! I didn't realise there were 3 million young Catholics in the world!"**

**This was the usual response when I told my friends and family back home about my experience of going to Krakow this summer to celebrate World Youth Day. And to be honest, when I actually saw 3 million people all around me, I didn't realise there was this many young Catholics in the world either!**

As a young person, it can be so easy to feel like you're the only Catholic of your generation when you go to mass at home. But experiences like World Youth Day, or going to Lourdes or Youth 2000 events, or even just going to Castlerigg, remind you that you are by no means alone, that you are part of something that spans the Earth; that the Catholic Church is very much alive and full of youthful energy!

In that field in Krakow, Pope Francis told us how sad it makes him to see young people who have given up on life by the age of 25. This is perhaps a consequence of the society we live in, which bombards us with consumerism and materialism; telling us to have as much of whatever we want whenever

we want it. But ultimately, this leaves us dissatisfied, wanting more. This is what our Catholic faith offers us, truths that don't spin like a weather vane with whichever way the social or political winds of the day are going, but truths from the Gospels, from God, which are just as relevant today as they were in the time of Jesus.

This was the message that Pope Francis gave us in Krakow. He asked us if we wanted to change the world; to replace despair and hatred and greed with what Jesus offers us in the Gospels- mercy, hope and love. Hearing 3 million people, in hundreds of languages, with flags waving and hands clapping; respond to that question with a resounding 'YES!' - tells me that there is still a lot to be hopeful for in this world, and the Catholic Church may have a lot of work to do, but also has a long future ahead of it with its young people, but we must go out and be that mercy, that hope, that love in the world. St Teresa of Avila said: *"God has no hands on Earth but yours, no feet on Earth but yours."* This is what motivates me in my faith.

*Harry, 19, Preston*



**"God has no hands on Earth but yours, no feet on Earth but yours."**

”



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# A First Visit to Lourdes



**O**ver the years I have spoken to many people who have been to Lourdes, mostly young adults who have gone as helpers on our Diocesan pilgrimages. Some have gone more than once and clearly found it a very worthwhile experience. As a retiree, I went for the first time this September, not as part of an organised pilgrimage but with my husband. I went with an open mind.

We drove down through France at a leisurely pace stopping first in Arras in the north where we stayed in a thriving Diocesan Centre in the heart of the town.

When we arrived in Lourdes late afternoon

it was almost eerily quiet where our accommodation, a Dominican Convent, was situated. Parking was not an issue, we parked directly outside, but gaining entry to the convent was not as easy. We rang the bell several times to no avail, even though we could see through the window what looked like a body lying on a chair, two feet and a woollen hat protruding from either end of a rug. In the end we gave up and went into the deserted bar nearby and bought ourselves a coffee.

Half an hour later we returned to find one of the sisters entering the building. We received a warm welcome. As we entered the door, "the body" on the chair stirred. It

was a young Afro Caribbean man who looked dazed, quite who he was or what he was doing there, was not apparent. We didn't see him again.

Later in the evening the town came alive as we wandered down to the Sanctuary, passing a noisy group of German pilgrims enjoying a beer in the previously deserted bar adjacent to our convent. We had been warned about the vast array of souvenir shops on the streets approaching the Sanctuary. Piles of plastic bottles for Lourdes water, some in the form of Our Lady (*her blue crown formed a screw cap*), candles galore, pictures, statues, t-shirts, medals, even infant bibs, in either pink or blue, with a picture of St Bernadette kneeling before the Grotto.

Crossing the bridge over the river to enter the Sanctuary, bags were checked at the entrance and the atmosphere noticeably changed. You knew you were in a holy place, a place of prayer and of hope.

The Grotto itself is the main focal point and we headed in that direction. My childhood image of a river flowing below the cave, where Our Lady appeared to Bernadette, was shattered as we approached. There is no river in the Grotto, it is channelled very much to the right. Instead the heart of the grotto is cordoned off, rather like an altar, which indeed it is, as in front there are rows of benches and regular services are held there. At other times pilgrims are directed to file through the Grotto to touch the rocks, worn smooth and shiny over the years. Joining the line of pilgrims was not a joyous experience, many looked troubled and sad. They had clearly come to Lourdes seeking solace and help and I sincerely prayed that they would find it.

We had been asked to bring back some Lourdes water for several people and I had envisaged filling the small containers they had given us directly from the shores of the river, adjacent to the Grotto. No, there is a row of taps next to the river where pilgrims queue and are supervised while they fill their containers, some of which hold a litre or more. It did feel very clinical.

The highlights of our visit were undoubtedly Sunday Mass in the huge basilica and the night time torchlight procession. Both were very well organised and choreographed. On Sunday the

basilica was almost full of pilgrims from all over the world, which in itself was quite a spectacle. There were large screens strategically placed so that you could see what was happening on the altar. The music and the choir were brilliant and the singing, readings and prayers were in several languages so everyone felt included. It was a memorable experience.

If we are to reverse on our dwindling congregations in Europe then it is vital that our Liturgies are well planned, rehearsed and delivered. This was a prime example.

Similarly, the torchlight procession, which is a nightly event and attended by at least a thousand people, was well orchestrated. Pilgrims gathered quietly in the dark and were unobtrusively directed into an orderly line for a prompt nine o'clock start. All carried a candle. It was an impressive sight to see the long line of pilgrims snaking their way around the Sanctuary, singing traditional hymns to Our Lady and reciting decades the rosary in different languages, obviously a very well rehearsed routine. You could not help but smile when candles were raised in unison as we sang "Ave, Ave, Ave Maria".

It was moving and impressive to see so many nurses assisting the sick, all dressed in traditional white nurses' uniforms, even down to white shoes and stockings. The outfit was often completed with a navy cloak or jacket. They looked so professional and clearly wore their uniform with pride.

While my husband queued to bathe in the Lourdes water, an exceedingly cold experience which I declined, I sat under the trees on the far side of the river enjoying the autumn colours in the mellow sunshine, admiring the imposing mountains that encircle Lourdes and listening to the sounds of the river and the French singing drifting over from the Grotto opposite. In 1858, Bernadette Soubirous, the 14 year old daughter of a humble miller, could never have envisaged the outcome of her apparitions. Belief in them is a matter of faith but, whether you believe or not, you could not fail to be impressed with the care and dedication of the many volunteers who are the mainstay of Lourdes, a place of prayer and of hope which brings comfort to many.

Emma McGrath, Preston



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Thursday 8th December

Feast of the Immaculate Conception

7 pm, Sung Mass and Consecration to Our Lady

### CHRISTMAS EVENTS

Saturday 24th December Christmas Eve

9.30 pm Confessions

10 pm, Christmas Carols

10.30 pm, High Mass

Sunday 25th December Christmas Day

10.30 am, Low Mass with hymns

Tuesday 27th December

Feast of St. John the Evangelist

Blessing of wine in honour of St. John after the

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# West Cumbria on Pilgrimage

**The Deanery of Our Lady and St Benedict went on our 'Year of Mercy' Pilgrimage to enter through the Holy Door at Lancaster Cathedral led by Canon Paul Swarbrick. VF.**

We gathered to reflect on the Door of Mercy, the door of our hearts through which Jesus enters our lives and then on our return home how we can enter the doors of people's hearts around us in the ordinary everyday events and challenges, reaching out to the lost and marginalised in our communities.

Pilgrims, on entering the Cathedral spent time in adoration of the Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament, receiving His mercy in the Sacrament of Confession and then offering thanks and praise and receiving many graces in Holy Mass.

After lunch, there was a time of reflection on the lives and witness of the fifteen Lancaster Martyrs and a Cumbrian Martyr. Each pilgrim in turn read the name of the Martyr and a short

description of their life and the harrowing events of their ultimate offering of their life for the faith. Edmund Arrowsmith, Ambrose Barlow, Edward Bamber, James Bell, John Finch, Richard Hurst, Thurstan Hunt, Robert Middleton, Robert Nutter, John Thules, Thomas Whittaker, John Woodcock, Edward Thwing, Roger Wrenno, Lawrence Bailey all who were executed in Lancaster and Christopher Robinson executed in Carlisle. There was a strong sense of emotion among the pilgrims but also gratitude and a desire to honour these men by building on their witness to Christ in our homes, communities, parishes and in our workplaces...

We spent time in each other's company, praying together, being drawn to the many focal points including those of the relics and the high altar in the Cathedral all of which was leading us into a deeper relationship with the Lord. We then took our leave, strengthened to witness to our faith, in a renewed way.

*Paul Briers*



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# Diocesan pilgrimage to Walsingham



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In this extra-ordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, the Diocese embarked on its first official pilgrimage to England's National Shrine of Walsingham, Norfolk, led by Bishop Michael Campbell OSA.

We were very privileged on arrival at the shrine to have Holy Mass in the Slipper Chapel itself. The Chapel is the only one remaining of the wayside chapels which in 1896 after many years following the reformation from which nothing of the original shrine remains, it was restored for Catholic use.

The Rector Mgr Armitage, on welcoming the diocese, shared the true story that during the reformation, the statue of Our Lady of Walsingham was taken to London, burnt and destroyed. When people began to return to Walsingham it was not known what the statue looked like. However, when the Act of Dissolution was passed, the document giving sanction to destroy the shrine, was stamped with the seal of Walsingham and it was this very seal many hundreds of years later, that had the outline of the image of Our Lady of Walsingham and from this the statue was recreated to what we know of today.

It was also interesting to note that in medieval times there were four places of importance in the whole of Christendom; they were Jerusalem, Rome, Compostela and Walsingham.

It was a very special time of grace when the pilgrims entered through the Holy Door. We walked in procession along the Pilgrims Walk praying the Rosary and bringing many intentions to the Shrine.

Mass was celebrated in the Chapel of Reconciliation joining with children from a local High School and many pilgrims from many different cultures all coming together to give thanks to God for the gift of his Mother.

We are blessed to have such a beautiful National Shrine!  
*Paul Briers*

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# Miraculous healings

**W**hen the editor of the *Catholic Voice* invited me to do a series of articles on the Syro Malabar community, taking my brief seriously, I decided to go along to the next 'Second Saturday Conference' in Birmingham, that Fr Matthew Choorapoikayil had told me was the next day. I was so welcomed by the Syro-Malabar community and the Carmelite sisters, who kindly chatted with me on the bus, until conversation gave way to praying three (yes three) decades of the Rosary. After this Johnson offered us all coffee and croissants in preparation for the day's fast (the adults are encouraged to fast throughout the day's gathering).

The day was so joyful. Mass was led by

Archbishop Kevin McDonald from Southwark and celebrated in the Latin Rite. He asked the community to earnestly discern what their role is in promoting the renewal of faith in this country.

Then we separated into English and Malayalam streams. An Indian priest from Uganda preached about his own experience of seeing Jesus in the broken, in people especially with mental health problems. 'Jesus is hiding in the broken and rejected'. He also shared his team's experience of the ill-health/poverty consequences of the use of contraceptive chips and of limiting family size by abortion. He mentioned how one man's physical immobility arose from having a

skull tattoo which indicated belonging to the lord of death. He advised against any tattoo, even a sign of the cross, because to mark the body denotes ownership by that symbol. He reminded us how observant Jesus is and how much he cares for each one of us.

In the afternoon Brother Sabhu held a healing service. He would get a sense that God wanted to heal a particular condition and he then ministered to the people who came up in response. One that particularly struck me was a woman who wore a belt to support her back and experienced constant pain and constricted movement over many years. She was able to bend and stand up easily after the prayers.

Most moving for me personally was the Eucharistic procession. I have always longed to reach out (*like the haemorrhaging woman*) and touch the stole when the celebrant (*in persona Christi*) passes holding the monstrance bearing Our Lord. But English inhibitions have always held me back: you just don't do that. The Syro-Malabars have no such inhibitions. I saw them reach out and touch the monstrance as Our Lord passed. 'Wow – can you do that?' I asked myself. But then I remembered how the crowds would have muttered about the woman, but how Jesus understood. I summoned my strength to reach out. As I did peace descended. I had all but touched Our Lord – only the glass separated us. What peace he gives. There is no peace, like His peace.



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# Miraculous healings continued..



Four days later I was invited to a prayer opportunity with Brother Sabhu, followed by the Mass, healing and adoration. It was all in Malayalam and I didn't understand a word, except for occasional translations by my kind new friend Sheena, and the Scripture passages which she noted down for me. St Ignatius Church had a beautifully adorned altar, with statues of Our Lady, Jesus and St Alphonsa beautifully arrayed in flower garlands and a huge Rosary. Fr Matthew was sporting a glorious gold vestment with fluorescent pink cross and sleeves. It made me think my home parish vestments are a bit tame, but maybe the parish embroidery team can work on something a bit more jazzy.

Everything seemed to appeal to the senses, the flowers, the beautiful chants in Malayalam, the scent of incense. The priest does the consecration facing the tabernacle as in the Tridentine Rite, and they also receive on the tongue. Most women seemed to have head scarves. Lay people including women are involved in the liturgy.

Most of the people there were Indian, many of the women in gorgeous saris. I felt I was on holiday without having to pay

for an expensive airfare. I saw one other white British man on sticks. As I went in to queue up for prayer everyone was praying the Rosary. I joined in and waited my turn.

When I went to move my car – which was illegally parked, just momentarily you understand – I saw the white man sat on the steps of the Presbytery, his sticks tossed to one side. He had a broad grin on his face and explained he had just been healed. I asked Peter to share his story.

He explained that he had worked in the hospital as a porter for 34 years, and how it wasn't work for him, but pure joy. But, he explained *'I had to retire from the job. I got to the stage where I couldn't keep my balance, and there was a danger of dropping patients. I'm riddled with arthritis, angina, cancer in one kidney, spondylitis in neck and spine. I've been like that for the last 8 years. I couldn't walk without a walking frame (or sticks). And recently it was just deteriorating. I have been stooping more and more over my frame.'*

*'James and his wife invited me to the service. I went in to see Brother Sabhu and we chatted, and he laid his hands on me. I felt some tingling, and found myself able to stand up straight for the first time in 8 years.'* Peter looked so happy. During the talk he gave his testimony: *'I felt in bondage to my frame. I was always looking down. Now I feel free. I can stand tall again. I was bent over. Now I'm back to my normal height which isn't something I've felt for ages. It feels great to be free.'* I asked him to what he attributed his healing. *'To God of course. No one else can do it.'*

I wonder if his faith also had something to do with it. He said: *'I not only believe in miracles. I expect miracles. It might sound a bit presumptuous, but I know God can work miracles in the blink of an eye.'*

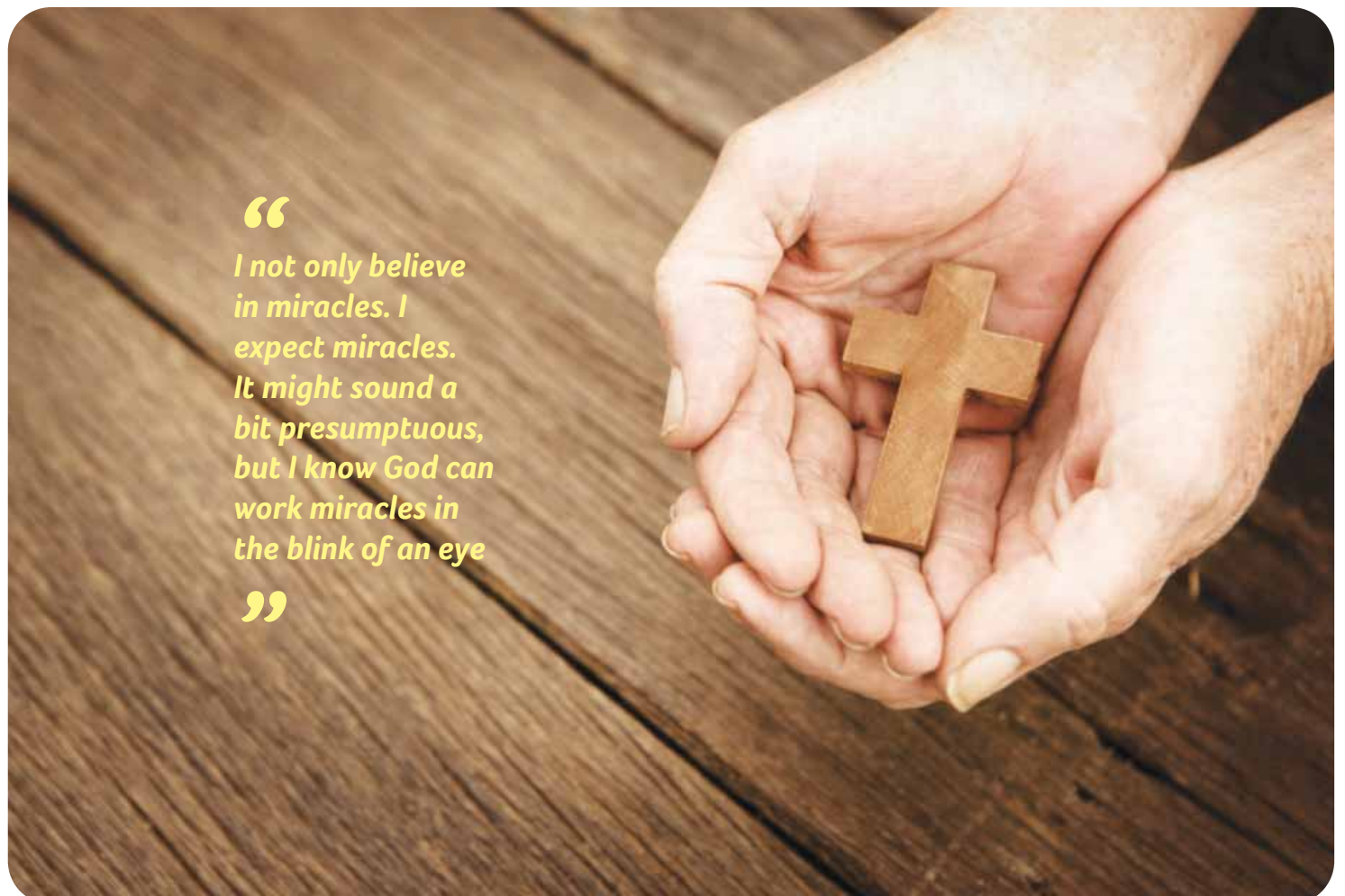


I phoned Peter the next day and asked how he was. He says he is standing tall. People in his Church can't believe the difference. He said *'I can't believe how much I stood up in service last night. Normally I would lean on the pew. I must have stood for 3 hours. Normally without support I'd last ten seconds.'* This healing was sustained a month later. I asked him about his impressions of the service: *'I couldn't understand a word except 'Praise Jesus'. But it didn't matter. I have never seen an altar dressed so beautifully. The singing, not only the music ministry but the singing of all the people, it just lifted me. I do love to sing in church. They're holy people. We can learn a lot from them.'*

If people are interested in attending the Second Saturdays, call St Ignatius to register interest. Then turn up on the morning of the Second Saturday. The coach goes at 6.30am.

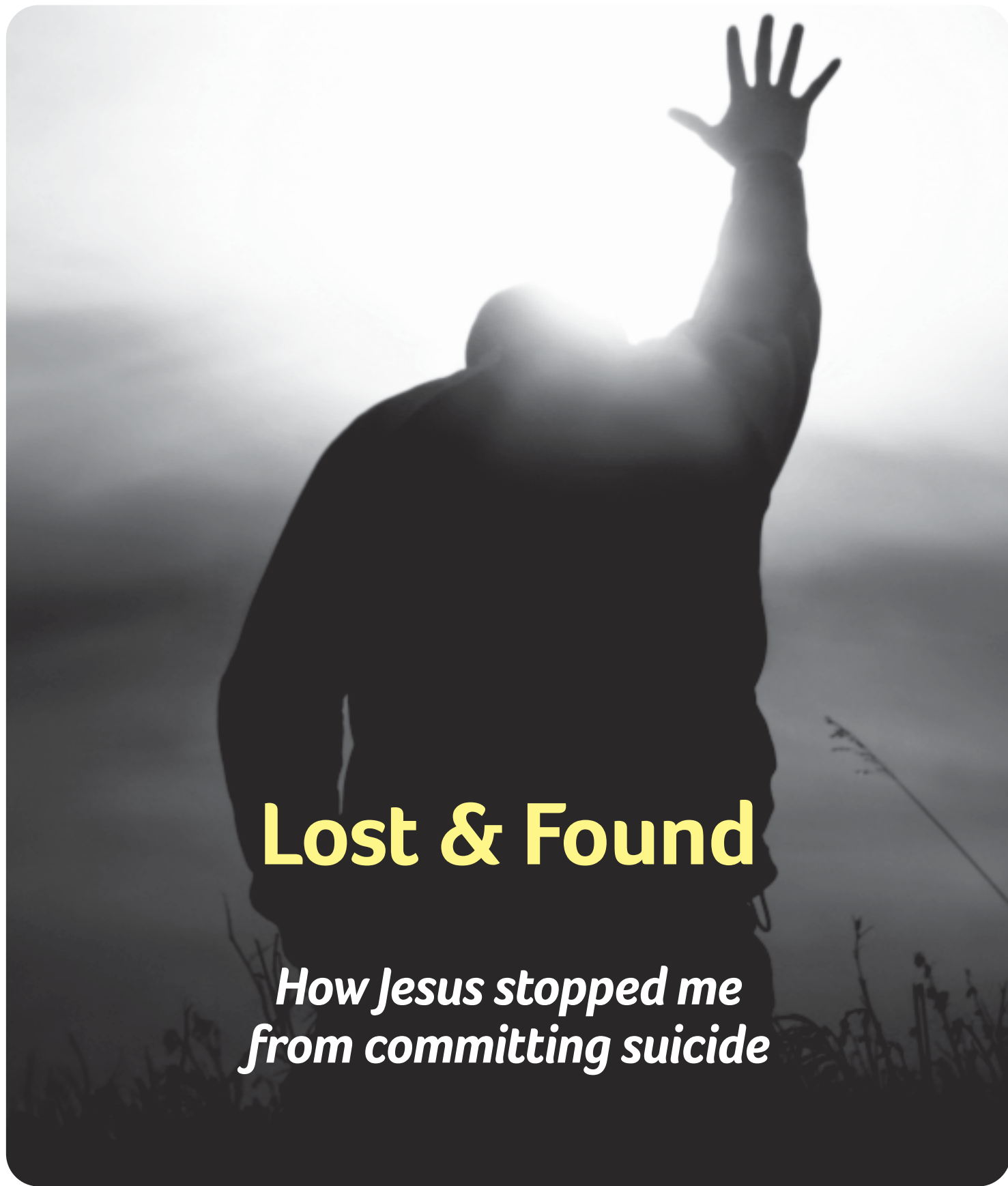
And keep an eye open for retreats and English events at St Alphonsa's parish in Preston. You will be blessed.

*Katherine Daniels*  
(Editor of *The Virgin Eye: Towards a Contemplative View of Life* by Robin Daniels.  
Available from Amazon, Christian retailers  
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“  
*I not only believe  
in miracles. I  
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It might sound a  
bit presumptuous,  
but I know God can  
work miracles in  
the blink of an eye*  
”





# Lost & Found

## How Jesus stopped me from committing suicide

**A**s I was talking to Peter he said, 'you think that's a good story, I'll tell you an even better one about Jesus saving my life.' I phoned back the next day and Peter related what had happened. 'I'm what's known as a cradle Catholic. I did Church things. Then in my twenties I turned my back on God. I didn't want to know.'

'I listened to two lies – one my own and the other from the Father of Lies: I worked every hour and convinced myself I was doing it for my family. But the thing is I never saw my family for months. The second lie that I kept believing was, 'you cannot be forgiven you've gone too far'.

I got depressed. I used to travel to work on a bike. It was 4 miles and I could do it in those days in 9 minutes. I was so down one night on returning home I was going to jump in the lake – commit suicide. I was a dead man walking. I wasn't only depressed I was oppressed.

'There was a tramp on the footpath. Had he said "stop" I'd have gone past. But he didn't; he jumped into the road in front of me. I nearly went over the handlebars. I shouted

at him, "What did you do that for?" He said "I haven't eaten in 3 days". Well at that, I put my hand in my pocket and all I had was 30p. At that time you could buy chips for 20p, so I gave it to him, and he took my money.

'I should mention that this chap looked like he hadn't seen soap and water for 30 years. His clothes were manky. The smell coming from him was atrocious. What he looked like on the outside was how I felt on the inside.

'Then he reached into his jacket and tried to put a book in my hand. He pressed it upon me. There was no way he would let me pass unless I took it. I just wanted him to buzz off. In the end I took the book to get rid of him.

'I went home. I took the book out and it was called Philosophers of Our Time. There were about 12 stories in it. I opened the book at random, as I thought, and it was this page which said 'The Confessions of St Augustine'. That confused me because I thought St Augustine was a great saint. I never knew he was a great sinner. When I read it I nearly fell on the floor. I had no idea of all the things he'd done. I thought "I haven't done half the things he's done. That gives me great hope".

'That was the lie: I believed I was beyond God's forgiveness: that was what was depressing me the most. Next day I went to church and confession. The real healing was when I unburdened myself in the confessional. I went in a broken man and came out more whole than ever. Then I went to Mass. In the Mass I thought 'this is where I belong'.

'I firmly believe that was Jesus in the tramp. I can take credit for nothing, only turning my back on God. I may have turned my back on God but He never turned His back on me. I would have ended it within the next day or two. I praise God all the time. I'm so grateful that I didn't believe the lie that I could not be forgiven. I think that's why a lot of people commit suicide. They think they can't be forgiven.

'I feel like the lost sheep that wondered off. He carried me back on his shoulders and brought me home. It's all God's doing, it's nothing to do with me. It's given me a sympathy for anyone who turned away from Church. Since God rescued me and brought me back to life – because I was a dead man walking – I have no fear of death because I think if He's rescued me he won't let me go.'

*Katherine Daniels*

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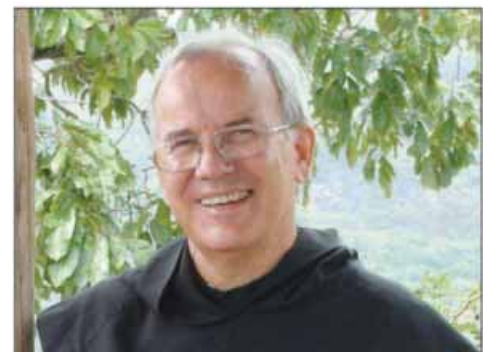
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Pray therefore, the Lord of the harvest said, that he send labourers into his harvest. St. Luke 10:2

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The Closing Mass for the Year of Priestly Vocations.

**Promoting Priestly Vocations**

**B**ack in 2014 Bishop Campbell issued the Diocesan Vocations Framework. The Framework document gave our Diocese a clear vision statement that Vocations must surely be a priority for all the baptised in the Diocese of Lancaster. This was emphasised by Bishop Campbell in his Pastoral Letter for Good Shepherd Sunday 2014 which reminded us:

“...please join me in creating and nurturing an atmosphere of priestly vocations in our parishes, schools, colleges and all our associations and activities, through prayer and proactive encouragement of our young people. Through the ministry of new home-grown priests for tomorrow here in our Diocese of Lancaster may those words of the Lord be a reality for the next generation of Catholics. “I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full...”

Hours and offer humble prayer to the Lord of the harvest. This need for prayer was again spoken about by Bishop Campbell in his pastoral Letter this year on Good Shepherd Sunday when he said, “I ask you, dear brothers and sisters, to join me in praying insistently and often, that when the Lord of the harvest calls on young people to be shepherds and his ministers in the Priesthood He may find a generous response.” Please keep on praying.

During the Year of Priestly Vocations a team came together representing the different vocations in the church: priesthood, religious life, marriage and lay consecrated people. This team visited each of our High Schools to deliver Year 11 assemblies and Year 10 vocations days. I am thankful to the head teachers for allowing us to come to their schools and work with their pupils during the Year of Priestly vocations. I am also grateful to the pupils for their engagement and interaction with us. We look forward to visiting our schools again in this academic year.

**Please pray for our Seminarians**

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**Think PRIESTHOOD**

Clearly from these words, every Catholic in the Diocese has a responsibility in this regard so as to ensure that, with the support of everyone in the Diocese, the Vocations Framework and action plan will become a reality. In response to Bishop Campbell’s Vocations Framework the Vocations Team set about producing a three year action plan to promote vocations in our Diocese. The first year of the plan was a build up to the Year of Priestly Vocations, the second year was the actual Year of Priestly Vocations and we have just started the third year of the plan.

On the build up to and at the beginning of the Year of Priestly Vocations the aim was to become fully immersed in and engaged with the people in the Diocese of Lancaster in promoting priestly vocations.

The reason for this was because we can no longer afford to wait to see if anyone enquires about priestly vocation, instead we needed to be fully active in promoting and encouraging vocations across the Diocese. This was to be achieved in four main areas, firstly through prayer, secondly through outreach work in the schools, thirdly through preaching in parishes and finally by engagement in various events across the Diocese.

I am grateful to our priests and people who over the last year have said the prayer for vocations at the end of all weekend Masses and also for holding a parish Holy Hour each week praying for vocations. Praying is an essential part of vocations and is something that we as the people of Lancaster Diocese can do together. We are all responsible for promoting vocations and we do so chiefly by persistent and humble prayer. I ask that each parish continues to hold a Holy Hour each week to pray for priestly vocations and I encourage everyone to attend these Holy

On the 27th September Bishop Campbell brought the Year of Priestly Vocations to a close when he celebrated the closing Mass at Lancaster Cathedral. This Mass was well attended by a number of our High Schools and also many parishioners from around the Diocese. At the opening of the Mass Bishop Campbell thanked the schools and parishes for their engagement during the Year of Priestly Vocations. Over the last year there have been many different activities that have taken place to promote priestly vocations in our Diocese and I am thankful to everyone for their participation. I ask that you please continue to support this important ministry in our Diocese in any way that you can, so that we can help men in our Diocese hear the Lord’s call to the priesthood. It is important that we do not feel discouraged; the Lord is still calling men to the priesthood in our Diocese and we need to continue to cast the net. I was recently at an international conference in Rome called by the Congregation for the Clergy during which Pope Francis address the delegates during at a private Audience this is what he said:

“I know well that your task is not an easy one and that, sometimes, despite a generous commitment, the results can be scarce and we risk frustration and discouragement. However, if we do not close ourselves in complaining and continue to “go out” to proclaim the Gospel, the Lord stays with us and gives us the courage to cast out the nets even when we are tired and disappointed for not having caught anything”.

Together let us cast the net far and be bold in promoting priestly vocations in our Diocese. *Fr Darren Carden*

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# Am I Fit for Heaven?

## - Stephen Talbutt, Seminarian

**H**aving a bit of spare time when on placement in Ansdell, I decided to go for a bike ride down the seafront to Blackpool tower, it was a grey wet and rainy day but as the parish is very busy I decided to take the opportunity to get out for a ride whilst I could.

The journey down towards Blackpool was great, the miles sped away, the bike gliding effortlessly through the puddles on the road. This is great I thought, I'm making excellent time! I must be getting fitter. It was only when I arrived at the Tower and turned around to head back to Ansdell that the wind and rain hit me full in the face. On the journey down the wind was on my back pushing me towards Blackpool, but on the return journey I was cycling right into the gale force wind. Driving rain drenched me and every mile seemed a hard slog the relentless force of the wind pushing me back. On the way back to the church whilst battling the wind this scene played out in my imagination.

I had died and I met St Peter.

**St Peter:** Hello Stephen, welcome, I'm here to guide you to the gates of heaven.

**Stephen:** Wow! "Hello St Peter, am I dead? What do I need to do? Where do I go?"

**St Peter:** Yes Stephen your Heavenly Father has called you home. Can you see this big hill, the gates of heaven are right at the top, here is a bike for you to ride there. Only I must warn you! It's very steep and slippery, don't fall off or stop or you'll slide back down the hill and fall into the ravine at the bottom of the hill.

**Stephen:** Oh my! What happens if I fall into the ravine?

**St Peter:** You don't want to do that Stephen, over the cliff is Hell, nasty place that! You don't want to go there! Once there, there's is no way back!

**Stephen:** ???!?!?!?

**St Peter:** Don't worry Stephen, I'm sure you are fit enough for the trip to heaven, I'm sure your journey in life gave you plenty of opportunity to exercise.

It seemed to me a great analogy of our Christian journey in life.

It's easy to glide along in our world embracing its worldly ways of individualism self-centeredness and apathy, paying heed to its message that I need to look after myself and my own, and don't care about anyone else, don't bother about injustice, hate, pain and suffering, I'm alright Jack and that's all that counts. It's only when we turn and try to live our Christian values that we are fighting against the evil wind of the world, every step a struggle to live the Good News, the world trying to drive us back to its own ways.

It struck me that in this life we need to get fit for heaven. To use the cycling analogy, when we cycle downhill there is no struggle, it's easy, and we don't need to put any effort in. But if we want to get fit we need to cycle uphill! It's harder, we need to exert a lot of effort, the benefit being that we get fitter and it's easier to climb the hill next time.

It's the same in our spiritual life, our Christian life, if we don't put in the effort we won't increase in spiritual fitness. So then how do we get spiritually fit? Observing the precepts of the Catholic faith as laid out in the catechism of the Catholic Church are a good start.

1. You shall attend Mass on Sundays and Holy days of obligation and rest from servile labour.
2. You shall confess your sins at least once a year.
3. You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.
4. You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the church.
5. You shall help provide for the needs of the church.


These precepts are the very basic necessities that as Catholics we must observe, this is the exercise routine that put us on the path to spiritual fitness. But the real way to grow in spiritual fitness is by living Christ's teachings and growing in relationship with our creator. If we aren't being challenged by our faith we probably aren't paying attention and living it. The Christian ideal is not an easy option by worldly standards, but living and being true to our faith is the only way to get fit for heaven. So when our time comes for us to go home to our Creator lets pray that we are fit enough to make that final journey. *St Sebastian, Pray for us*



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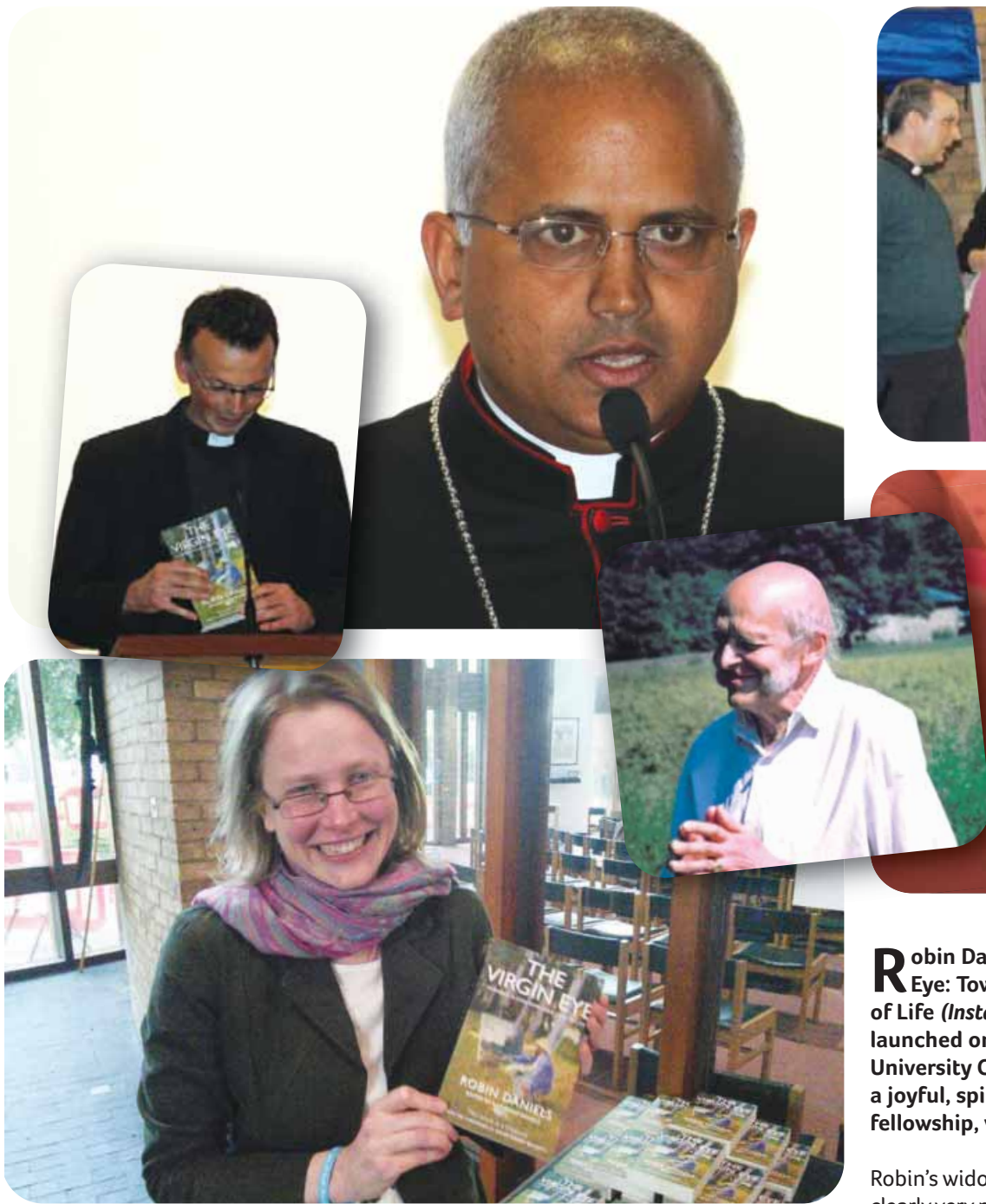
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# Launching 'The Virgin Eye' by Robin Daniels

**R**obin Daniels' last book, *The Virgin Eye: Towards a Contemplative View of Life* (Instant Apostle, 2016) was launched on 21 October at Lancaster University Chaplaincy Centre. It was a joyful, spiritual celebration in fellowship, words, pictures and music.

Robin's widow, Katherine Daniels, was clearly very moved to see her late husband's work being so well received. The launch was attended by 80 people, including the new Syro-Malabar Bishop of Preston Bishop Joseph Srampickal, the Emeritus Bishop of Shrewsbury Brian Noble, as well as friends, colleagues, religious, clergy and academics from the University.

The evening was introduced by Fr Philip Conner, who told us of an old Jewish folktale that before a child is born he has a fresh perception of how things are which is covered by a veil as the child enters the world. He encouraged us to recover our pristine child-like sight, like Bartimaeus – who sees the Lord, and then follows Him on the road to Jerusalem.

The keynote speaker was the Syro-Malabar Bishop of Preston Fr. Joseph Srampickal who spoke compellingly of the need to keep in balance the three elements of the Triad (*the book's central structure*) of God, Self and Others if we are to grow in the spiritual life. Bishop Srampickal shared: *'I came to the understanding that every suffering in life, when surrendered to God, is a step in the right direction.'*

Teresa Onions, Director of Pastoral Care UK, spoke next. She shared a peak experience in the Annapurna Sanctuary in Nepal when *'the veil between heaven and earth was thin'*. *'But Robin would warn that peak experiences are few and far between and if we only live for them, most of life will be missed. Robin with exceptional resolve and profound awareness invites us into the 'ordinary' with virgin eye, to see afresh the extraordinary in the regular, the routine and the mundane, and guides our vision towards*

*the discipline of appreciation. In so doing, he enables us to live each moment – not just the peaks – with great gratitude. And when our vision, our hearts and our spirits are full of this we bring the eternal into the temporal every day, every moment.'*

Lastly Katherine shared her experiences of the man she loved (*and still loves*): his being, his own person, his gratitude, his gift of encouraging others and of listening, his discretion and total control of speech, his disciplined life and silent acceptance of suffering, his doing little acts with great love.

How words can gladden the heart, in this often cold world. Robin has given us a beautiful book that inspires, enriches and encourages us to live each moment, fully aware of our preciousness to God. He shows us a resignation to accept our lives day by day and an awareness of our drawing closer to the Lord. Whilst reading the book I felt as if I was reading prayers, feeling fed, upheld and graced. This is a book to keep at hand, to delve into and absorb the obvious blessings. Every page has its own message. It has been a privilege to write a few words in appraisal and I know many people will find *The Virgin Eye* down to earth and easy to relate to. I have read it and received. It is a must have for your book shelf. Robin's words to the Lord at the closing of his book sum it all up for me. *"May Love for you and my neighbour each day grow deeper and wider. May I enjoy Your presence and at all times render thanks giving"*. Thank you Robin for your inspiring book, may you rest in His peace eternally. *Judith Nixon*

The *Virgin Eye* is available to order from bookshops and online at [www.mindfulnessforchristians.com](http://www.mindfulnessforchristians.com)

Katherine is leading a day on 'Stress' at Tabor (Preston) on 8 December. Teresa Onions and Katherine are offering a day at Rydall Hall on 2 February, on *'Seeing God in the Ordinary.'*

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# Gifts and Grace

## by Julia Beacroft



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Julia Beacroft is a catechist and pastoral volunteer who lives in Torquay. Her first book 'Sanctifying the Spirit' is now available to buy. Please visit [www.sanciobooks.com](http://www.sanciobooks.com) for more information or order from AMAZON.

I always think that buying presents for people can be quite tricky. The questions of what to get – will they like it and will it fit? – are some of the most common worries which we encounter.

Yet we can receive such joy and satisfaction when we do get it right and the recipient is thrilled with their gift. Christmas, as we know, is the prime time of the year for carrying out this ritual and the December shopping crowds bear testimony to this.

### Stunned into silence

Some years ago, when my adolescent son was indulging his latest mania for skateboarding, he begged his father and I to buy him a new skateboard for Christmas. We weren't averse to the idea and there was little doubt as to how thrilled he was to receive it.

To our surprise, he later produced a video of himself and his friend performing their 'tricks' at the local skateboard park. As a family, we were enthusiastically invited to watch the wonders of 'Kickflips', 'Heelflips' and the mighty '900'. We settled down expectantly to watch, but it's fair to say that we were all stunned into silence by the fact that neither boy showed any aptitude whatsoever. In fact they were hopeless!

Eventually my daughter started to

giggle and this, in turn, led to every one of us howling with laughter. Fortunately my son took all this in good part and has never been allowed to forget his skateboarding video to this day.

Gifts come in many ways, shapes and forms. There are those which we give to others, there are our own natural gifts and talents and there are the gifts of the Spirit. However, it's vital to remember that all gifts are important – whether they're talents and abilities, material or spiritual ones.

When we receive a present, it means that someone has been thinking of us, which is a sign of love. If we are gifted in any other way, this is a special grace bestowed on us by the Lord.

### Sanctity

In my son's case, he apparently had no special talent for skateboarding, but he treasured his Christmas present and made good use of it. In the same way, we should remember the great gift of our Lord Jesus Christ, who came to us at Christmas over two thousand years ago, in the most humble of ways. I pray that we too can make full use of this great gift.

St Therese of Lisieux believed that there is sanctity in doing ordinary things extraordinarily well. But for those of us who aren't perfectionists, maybe there's the same sanctity in just trying hard. *Even at skateboarding...*

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# Christmas Mass Times

**Preston St Wilfrid**  
**Christmas Eve**  
 7.30pm Carols  
 8.00pm First Mass of Christmas  
**Christmas Day**  
 7.00am Mass  
 10.15 Mass  
 No 4.30pm Mass

**Lytham St Peter**  
**Christmas Eve:**  
 Carols at 7.30pm followed by The Christmas Vigil Mass at 8.00pm  
**Christmas Day**  
 Mass at 10.30am



**St Annes-on-the-Sea Our Lady Star of the Sea**  
**Christmas Eve:**  
 6.30pm Family Vigil Mass  
 12.00 Midnight Mass  
**Christmas Day**  
 9.30am Mass  
 11.00 Mass

**Blackpool St Bernadette**  
**Christmas Eve**  
 5.00pm Children's Christmas Mass  
 7.30pm Carols and Readings  
 8.00pm Candlelit Sung Christmas Mass  
**Christmas Day**  
 10.00am Christmas morning Mass

**Preston Our Lady & St Edward**  
**Christmas Eve**  
 5.30pm Carols  
 6.00pm Christmas Family Mass  
 11.30 Carols and Readings  
 12.00 Midnight Mass  
**Christmas Day**  
 10.00am Mass of Christmas Day



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Shrine Church of St Walburge, Preston  
 Mondays – Fridays: 9.00 am & 12 noon Low Mass (except First Fridays & Holy Days 9.00 am & 7.00 pm)  
 Saturdays: 10.30 am, Low Mass  
 Sundays: 10.30 am, Sung Mass

Sunday 11th December at 3.00 pm  
 Third Sunday of Advent  
 St Mary's, Hornby

Sunday 22nd January at 3.00 pm  
 Third Sunday after Epiphany  
 St Mary's, Hornby

Mass is also celebrated every Sunday at 8.30 am at St Mary Magdalene, Leyland Road, Penwortham and 11.30 am at St Catherine Labouré, Stanfield Lane, Leyland.  
 Local Representatives: Bob & Jane Latin Telephone: 01524 412987  
 Email: lancasterlms@gmail.com  
 Website: latinmasslancaster.blogspot.com

**Whitehaven St Begh**  
**Christmas Eve**  
 5.30pm Carol singing  
 6.00pm Christmas Vigil Mass  
 8.30pm Carol Singing  
 9.00pm Midnight Mass  
**Christmas Mass**  
 8.00am Mass at Quay St  
 10.00am Family Mass

*Please note, no evening Mass on Christmas Day itself*

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**Ansdell, St Joseph**  
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 11:30pm Carols & Reflections followed by 12:00am Midnight Mass of the Nativity of the Lord  
**Christmas Day**  
 10am Family Mass (No 5:05pm Mass)  
 Monday 26 Dec – Fri 30 Dec  
 Daily Mass at 10am  
 Saturday 31 Dec – Vigil Mass 6pm  
 Sunday New Years Day – Mass 12:15pm (No 9:15am or 5:05pm Mass)



**Kendal & Sedbergh Holy Trinity and St. George**  
**Christmas Eve:**  
 6.00pm, 11.30pm  
 Carols and Midnight Mass  
**Christmas Day**  
 10.00am  
**St. Andrews Anglican Church**  
**Christmas Eve:**  
 8.00pm

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