

PARISH PARTNERSHIP

OUR LADY OF LOURDES, WANSTEAD
ST ANNE LINE, SOUTH WOODFORD
ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY, WOODFORD GREEN

TheWord

ISSUE 14 - LENT 2022

IN THE BEGINNING

Mike Eggleton, Editor

I have used the opening words of John's Gospel – some may feel rather cheekily. However, John's Gospel has always been my favourite and indeed did inspire the title of this publication. It came to me as an idea just over five years ago and my thoughts were that it would be a parish publication for parishioners (and clergy) at St Thomas of Canterbury where I was at the time.

Having since moved to St Anne Line I did not expect to be producing another version but a conversation that I got into a few weeks ago with a parishioner of Our Lady of Lourdes gave me the inspiration to think of this as something we could do within our three parish partnership churches. Since then we have had the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and during Lent will be going on to have further Ecumenical meetings to look at Laudato Si, the encyclical by Pope Francis. (See Diary Dates for details).

It seems, therefore, appropriate to widen the scope of this publication even further to include all churches within the Woodford Christian Unity group. I would like to see this publication flourish and expand. So would invite everyone to send in articles for consideration. Such articles could be, for example, one's experience of faith, details of community based action, perhaps some ecumenical thoughts and above all I would like to see some thoughts from the youth in our parishes. You can write a full page article or just send in a few words, thoughts, comments.

So please if you have anything you feel you would like to write or something you feel should be included then send it to ParishPartnershipNews@groups.io

Our next publication will be around the time of Pentecost which would mean a deadline to receive articles of around 22nd May.

Although I hope we can publish this magazine on each church website you are also encouraged to sign up for direct mail by contacting ParishPartnershipNews@groups.io

THE TEMPTATIONS OF JESUS

Fr Austin OFM, St Thomas of Canterbury

Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" (Luke 7:20). "Are we to wait for another?" He had doubts about Jesus but not about himself!

What are we to make of the temptations of Jesus? Were they real temptations? If they were, then he was seeking to understand his own identity and considering different ways of spending the rest of his life. If they were not, then the whole scene was only a charade.

It is not at all to doubt his divinity, if we take the temptations seriously. He was divine, but his human mind was human: that is, limited. The three Gospels that tell of his temptations link them with his baptism in the Jordan. He came to the Jordan as an unknown carpenter, and the Holy Spirit came and "rested on him. Mark says the Spirit "drove him out into the desert" (1:12). To see how he was going to spend the rest of his life, he had to have time to think, to pray and struggle.

A temptation may come from the outside, but unless it goes to the inside it is not a temptation. The first temptation was to be a material provider. This is a good thing to be. How do you tempt a good person? – With goodness, because he will not take an evil bait. It's not so difficult to be a material provider, and in fact most people can do it for themselves. But if Jesus had given in to this temptation, the work would have absorbed him completely, distracting him from his real task.

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Mike Eggleton

The next temptation was to power. This is always a subtle one, and very easily rationalised. Any kind of power will do. It was said of someone that he entered the priesthood in order to do good, and did well instead. Jesus avoided this trap too. The most distinctive thing about him throughout his public life was his refusal of power. In the end he made himself utterly powerless on the Cross. It is very moving to see that that choice was not automatic, but conscious and deliberate.

The third temptation, which cannot have occupied his mind for long, was to become a celebrity. Some scholars suggest that this gospel passage was a summary story; that is, it describes a process that went on throughout his life, rather than a single occasion. Whether or not that is likely, it is certainly the case that these temptations are ever-present for the disciples of Jesus, the Church.

Most of us would find it easier to buy groceries for someone than to sit for hours and listen to their pain and confusion, or their anger... As for power and glory: that is a long story! We can imagine we are defending the power and glory of God when in reality we are only defending the worldly power and pride of the Church.

The Church's identity does not consist in titles and honours and regal dress, but in following the poor man of Nazareth, till we understand profoundly and embrace wholeheartedly the way the Cross.

MY EXPERIENCE OF MEDITATION

Gwen Hindley, Our Lady of Lourdes

The reason I joined a meditation group was because, in recent years, I was becoming more dissatisfied with my prayers. Coming from an Irish background I was brought up to pray regularly. However, the same prayers, rosaries, Novenas etc were repeated time and time again and the words had become so over familiar that they had lost their meaning. I was also aware that I was always talking in prayers and rarely listening. Lastly I was finding it increasingly harder to banish distractions while praying. Wanting to change all this I thought that meditation might be a way forward.

I have now been attending meditation sessions for about four months. The first few sessions were very different to what I had anticipated and there were times when I wanted to give up! I was convinced meditation would not help me with my original issues and I had made a mistake thinking that it might. I had expected a 'guided' meditation where, as a newcomer, I would be led step by step until I became confident. I hadn't realised that it would be 'guided' meditation but the Holy Spirit would be my guide! At the first few sessions after an opening prayer and a reading everyone closed their eyes and meditated for about thirty minutes. I closed my eyes too but what was I to do? I went over all my worries yet again; even said a few decades of the rosary to pass the time but that was it. Fortunately, an experienced member of the group sensed my concerns and loaned me a series of CDs, which helped me to a better understanding of what Meditation really is. As I played these over and over again at home, I became aware that my preconceptions were totally wrong.

While desperately wanting to succeed, I was worried that my personality might prevent me from coping with the requirements of meditation. Firstly, to meditate, one must be still in mind and body. During my lifetime I've always been physically busy and my mind has never been empty. It was always like a whirlwind racing from one thought to another. I've also been a great worrier, constantly reliving the past and rehearsing the future, no time for an empty mind. How could I possibly learn to meditate? To make matters worse, because of COVID it was decided, quite sensibly, not to meet as a group but to have our meetings on Zoom instead. Since I'm not confident with modern technology, this was an additional problem and I couldn't see how it could work at all. But it has!! - much to my surprise.

Many things have helped me on my journey. The members of the group reassured me and talked about their own challenges in the early stages. They told me that five minutes of meditation was better than none, to start with small steps and keep practising. It had worked for them. So I decided to persevere. By this time, it was clear that I wasn't going to be able to learn meditation on my own. I'd need the help of the Holy Spirit to be my guide. So before each session, I prayed for assistance.

I also realised that I would have to put my worries and anxieties to one side and just concentrate on the present. This was a new concept for me, so I had to learn to have a greater trust in God. My next problem was the constant distractions as thoughts still crowded my mind. I found that the answer to this was to use the mantra; to say a certain word over and over again, and it helped my mind let go of all invading thoughts. The mantra we use in our meditation is Marantha. It is Aramaic and means 'Come Lord'.

Even the sound of the word is calming. I focus my whole attention on the word, say it non-stop in a loving way and I find my mind becomes still. I'm able to stay in the present. I'm still in the very early stages of my journey. Do I meditate for 20 minutes, twice a day as is suggested? Sadly, not yet. Perhaps 5 or 10 at the most. The group sessions on Zoom are really helpful. The fact that three or four people are meditating together with me seems to give me strength and support and the 20 minutes fly by.

My next step is to be able to meditate by myself for that length of time. Since I started meditation, my prayer life has improved. I say fewer prayers but I am able to pay full attention to each word and every thought is from

the heart. My relationship with God has grown deeper and my faith is stronger. I thank God for my experience of meditation and for the people who have helped me.

UNITY

Mike Eggleton, St Anne Line

For me, the last two weeks of January have been very significant. They started off with the week for Christian unity from the 18th to the 25th of January. This was interspersed and to some extent overlapped with Synodal meetings organised by the Diocese of Brentwood between the 24th and 27th of January. Then from a personal point of view, I had a three and a half day retreat online with the World Centre for Christian Meditation (WCCM) from January 27th-31st.

Now, it seemed to me a remarkable coincidence or one might say, even divine providence, that these things should all happen at around the same time and run into each other overlapping each other. What came to me was that these all had a common theme, and to put that very simply, the common theme was being together.

The Christian Unity services where the clergy and parishioners of Methodist, Church of England and Roman Catholic traditions came together to pray and worship the one Christian God. Then the Synodal discussions which were held by the diocese in order to gather opinion to feed back in the process going back towards Pope Francis. Finding common ground amongst different Catholic traditions and ideas. Unity, to look at things in the church, what was good, what was not so good, what needs to change and what we can do together.

Then the online retreat on Christian meditation, which was for me a sort of gathering of ideas where there was once again Christian unity. This was emphasised because there were people from diverse Christian religions, perhaps of other religions, possibly even no religion. Moreover, the participants in this online retreat, were from different countries throughout the world. We had people from the UK, from America, the Philippines, France, Italy, Venezuela, Australia and perhaps elsewhere – from all over the world, and speaking different languages. Even when the language was the same, e.g English, there were different cultures because we had people from the UK, America and Australia, to give just a few examples. So to me, this was like the epitome of being together. Here we were all focused together on one common theme.

So I began reflecting on what Pope Francis could be thinking about in his setting up of the Synod, and how this is really reflected in Scripture. If we look at Galatians 3:28, we can see how Paul talks about the fact that there will be no Greek, no Jew, no male, no female, no slave, no free man, etc, etc. We can also look at the Nunc Dimittis, which we recite every evening as part of our night prayer. It quotes from Simeon in the temple when the baby Jesus was presented. "My eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared for all nations.

The light to enlighten the Gentiles and give glory to your people, Israel". So again, no distinction. Jesus is for all people, God is for all people.

If we look at the Pope's encyclical, Fratelli Tutti, he talks about celebrating diversity - not to emphasise our differences and fight over them, but to actually respect the differences of each other. We look at what we can learn from those differences and what can enhance us. A large part of Fratelli Tutti discusses the parable of

DIARY DATES

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

Tuesdays from 22 February
Christian Meditation 11am-12noon at Our Lady of Lourdes Pastoral Centre. If you would like to join please contact us beforehand at christianmeditation@groups.io This is in order for us to monitor numbers for Covid safety. Doors will be open for ventilation, so please wrap up well. We are still asking that masks should be worn. If you are exempt please advise us.

Friday 4 March
2.15pm World Day of Prayer at St Mary's Woodford

LENTEN LUNCHESES

Friday 4 March (and each Friday in Lent until 8 April)
12.00pm to 1.30pm in the Becket Centre, St Thomas of Canterbury. There will be a choice of home-made soups with French bread and butter, coffee/tea and biscuits, all for £5. All the proceeds will go to Mary's Meals. We hope that you will come and join us.

LAUDATO SI

Thursday 10 March
7.30pm-9pm at Woodford Methodist, led by Fr Bartholomew Blaj

Wednesday 16 March
7.30-9pm at St Mary's Woodford, led by Revd Oseias da Silva

Thursday 17 March
7pm at Becket Centre, St Thomas of Canterbury, Woodford Green

Wednesday 23 March
7.30-9pm at St Anne Line, led by Revd Dr Elizabeth Lowson

the Good Samaritan from various angles and leads us to an understanding of an answer to the question – Who is my neighbour?

Pope Francis spoke of his encouragement after meeting the Grand Imam, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb. He spoke of their observation that East and West “can be enriched by the others’ culture through fruitful exchange and dialogue”.

Even in the time of St. Paul, there was already much disunity amongst Christians. Paul's letters address this trying to bring people together, not to drift apart but to focus on the truth.

So for me those two weeks in January were really a time of awakening and realisation. We can look at the book of Revelation, where in chapters 21-22, it talks about the Heavenly Jerusalem. Towards the end of chapter 21 it talks about the Heavenly Jerusalem - “The nations will come to its light, and the kings of the earth will bring it their treasures, its gates will never be closed by day, and there will be no night there. And the nations will come bringing their treasure and their wealth”. So this isn't saying one specific group of people will come and everybody else will be locked out. All nations will come and the gates will never be closed.

We had a number of Christian Unity services during the last two weeks of January, and in March, we are going to have three sessions on the Pope's encyclical, *Laudato Si*. There will be meetings at each of the three aforementioned churches, the Woodford Methodist Church, St. Mary's Woodford and St. Anne Line. These will be on the dates of March 10th, 16th and 23rd.

Perhaps this is one way to start the process of working together. If the services on Christian Unity and the discussions on *Laudato Si* can start working towards this, then I think this is something wonderful for us. To engage with each other and to put aside our differences, not to discount them, but to put them into proper perspective as being secondary to the main focus of coming together, to worship God, to look after his world, to protect it and improve it - for us, for our children, and grandchildren, and all generations for ever.

THE FAST THAT I CHOOSE

Br Chris Dyczek OFM, St Thomas of Canterbury

God chooses what penance or fasting he will bless, not to fit in with an old religious routine, but to celebrate the friend of God who makes compassion a new beginning. This should be a break from anger and intimidation which had piled up fears and isolation on our fellow humans. At the heart of this new beginning, God asks us to look at the individual nearby who we realise has been carrying the burdens of others, and move into a friendship relationship to support them in love. Perhaps we have seen paintings and carvings of the Man of Sorrows. A poem of gratitude to him for his life was written by an anonymous contributor to the Old Testament, who we refer to as Second-Isaiah, a young scribe whose sad job was to copy sections of the miserable critic Isaiah, and who turned that job around, slipping his own poems into what he had to copy. He provided readers with a tender alternative to whinging and self-pity.

'He grew up before the Lord like a young plant, like a root out of dry ground', meaning Jacob as the new Israel blessed by God. "He had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; as one from whom men turn their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isa. 53:2-3). But now is a time in our lives, in our journey of renewal, when we should start to esteem him, the young loving child. I think of Arthur, a six year old boy in Solihull, who saw his alcoholic birth mother go on a stabbing spree which took her into prison and left him in the hands of his natural father Mr. Hughes and his step mother Emma, who had children of her own. She hated the very idea of making space for the child of her partner, in a house which brought him close to her own children. We learned last year about the two grandmothers, one on the jailed mother's side, the other on the father's side, who wanted to bring kindness and love into the young daily life of Arthur.

But those grandparents were kept at arm's length by a bond of hatred that held sway between Mr. Hughes and Emma, who together targeted the boy with unremitting spite. God says, this is the only fast that is worth living out, a fast from malice and spite. We have received the gifts of compassion which can replace the harsh isolations. Perhaps those grandparents would have gladly taken their grandson into their homes. One of them reported what was happening. She reported his bruises to the council's emergency team. A safeguarding representative from his primary school even made a referral to the social services, but they spoke of "no concern." Other family members had been alert too. Stepmother Emma had a stepfather herself, John Dutton, who also made a referral, certain that Arthur was 'in danger.' Mr. Hughes' brother Daniel, as the boy's uncle, wanted his photos of the bruises and harm done to be taken seriously. But he was warned by the police that if he went to see his nephew, he would be breaking lockdown and would be arrested. Stepmother Emma was ready to lie blatantly about the young Arthur, picturing him as a destructive child, ruining her home. This is the most startling part of the story, since she made two hundred audio recordings of the pleas for help which he made, as she tormented and tortured him. Arthur pleads to get help from another uncle, because he was being deliberately given no food or drink. Emma even sent mocking photos of Arthur's injuries to Hughes, the boy's father. More details have now been provided to the Press of the bright, smiling child as he became

'malnourished, gaunt and broken' (Times, 3 December 2021) soon before Emma then murdered him. His parent, Hughes, had told her, "Just end him."

If we stop in shock, thinking of such a death, we may be fasting in the good, prophetic sense. We turn our inner lives away from complacency and from stony-heartedness. The biblical poet makes the right comment for our pondering: "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole" – that is, an image which should make us come to our senses, and we then could become wholly caring and gently merciful. "With his stripes we are healed," (Isa53:5), healed of cynical TV-watching moods which separate us from real people's lives. The next verse of the poetry could be listened to, in the emotional, deep music used by Handel in his Messiah, as a setting for our changes of heart, for our visits to those who struggle to stay sane. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." In front of our TVs, and laptops and mobile phones, are we seeing not real lives, just mockeries of life? God's voice now continues... "By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil...; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa 53:11-12).

We can recommend listening earnestly to both the music and the text of Handel's Messiah, for the uplift it brings to movements of empathy and concern, which are genuine streams of new life within our spirits. From these depths of self-discovery we draw on impulses we would otherwise neglect. It is by allowing God to strengthen his resilience within us that we realise the greatness whereby we spring out of our casual feelings and reach out sincerely to the Other who can welcome our love. We start to recognise the face of Christ in troubled human lives around us, and start to reflect its loving beauty as able to refresh those lives.

WALK AGAINST HUNGER

www.cafod.org.uk

Are you ready to change your life and transform someone else's this Lent?



Challenge yourself to walk 200k this Lent and help stamp out hunger, one step at a time.

You can walk, roll, skip or stroll your way to 200k. You can boldly go it alone and take it on 5k a day for 40 days, or you can smash the target all at once as a team.

There are 200 million children in the world whose lives are at risk from malnutrition. So, this Lent, challenge yourself to conquer 200k, and help give hunger its marching orders.

[SIGN UP NOW](#)

FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT - 21 February to 6 March 2022

www.fairtrade.org.uk



FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT 2022 will be a show of solidarity with those on the frontline of the climate crisis. COP26 didn't deliver the change needed to stay within 1.5, nor did it secure finance to directly support farmers and workers on the frontline, but the Fairtrade Foundation believes there is hope if we all act together.

Fairtrade Fortnight is an opportunity for individuals, communities, and businesses around country to stand with farmers in low-income countries like Honduras and Uganda who are impacted daily by climate change. Together, by keeping the pressure on government and businesses, we can all ensure farmers benefit from fairer prices, fairer trading practices and the resources needed for tackling the climate emergency.

Fairtrade's [Choose the World You Want Festival](#) will return for a second year and features a series of virtual events designed to engage, inform and educate people around the urgent message of Fairtrade and climate change, the future of our food and those who produce it. The online initiative will bring the movement together and feature panel discussions, performances, workshops and collaborations between the Fairtrade Foundation and retailers, chefs and high-profile names in the world of food and sustainability.



The climate crisis is the biggest threat to the livelihoods of millions of small-scale farmers and agricultural workers in low-income countries worldwide. Without a fairer income, farmers and workers are unable to invest in the types of mitigation and adaptation techniques needed to protect the environment, and their businesses.

This represents a vicious cycle of poverty in which steps towards environmental protection and decarbonisation are likely to be beyond the reach for those who aren't even able to earn a living income because the price they receive for their produce is far too low. COP26 fell short of what farmers and workers need but together we can still make a difference.

The power is in our hands. And buying Fairtrade can help. There are over 6,000 Fairtrade products from coffee and tea to flowers and gold, so when you shop, look for the FAIRTRADE Mark.

[Find out more about buying Fairtrade here >>>](#)

WEB RESOURCES

Mike Eggleton

Parish Partnership Plus

Parish websites

Our Lady of Lourdes, Wanstead www.ourladyoflourdeswanstead.com

St Anne Line, South Woodford: <https://saintanneline.com>

St Mary's, South Woodford: <https://stmaryswoodford.org.uk>

St.Thomas of Canterbury, Woodford Green: <http://www.stthomaswoodford.org>

Woodford Methodist Church: <https://woodford-methodist.org.uk>

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Pray with the Pope – 'Click to Pray' prayer app – available on Android and iOS.

Pope Francis at the Vatican: <http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Pontifex>