

As you read this issue of The Word we have not long ago celebrated the feast of the Ascension and are just about to celebrate the feast of Pentecost. So a joyful time for us as Christians. It is also a good time for reflection.

In this issue we have Pentecost reflections by Fr Austin and Br Chris. We also have an article by Br Chris that looks at mental health recovery. In addition we take a look at the recent ecumenical meetings of the three South Woodford churches to discuss *Laudato Si*, the encyclical of Pope Francis with commentary by Rev Dr Elizabeth Lowson and Rev Alan Mair. This is also the theme of the Live Simply campaign at St Thomas. As Christians we are called to care for Our Common Home. Related to this we have a CAFOD article on the Global Food System.

We hope you find something of interest here and are always looking for new contributors. If you have something you would like to share in a future issue please get in touch with us at ParishPartnershipNews@groups.io

Mike Eggleton
Editor

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Mike Eggleton

AT A MEETING . . .

Fr Austin McCormack OFM, St Thomas of Canterbury

In so many ways, we are of those communities that people dream about—one of those communities that always takes care of its own.

Neighbour looks after neighbour, sharing both troubles and joys—cooking a meal when a mother is sick or a baby is born; cutting a lawn when a friend is out of town; celebrating a new marriage or a winning team; standing by one another during times of sorrow and loss.

One of those communities where people remain year after year, generation after generation; a community where children grow up and raise children who play in the same fields, who worship in the same benches, who speak the same language and see the same view. It is a community where you can fill your days with important work without ever leaving the safety of home or the circle of friends. It is one of those communities where you can easily forget that there is church beyond the parish walls.

Pentecost urges us to look beyond our comfort zones and see beyond the ordinary. It impels us to hear new voices, to see new possibilities, to speak a new language, to remember that in God's world, the way things are today, are not necessarily the way they are meant to be.

If we are not astonished at the Christian message, it may be that we are no longer really listening, or maybe we have heard the stories so often that their rough edges are worn smooth and their radical surprise has dulled. Pentecost forces us to be amazed. It is a reminder that Christianity still carries a sharp edge of the Holy Spirit, proclaiming the mighty acts of God.

Pentecost shows us the mission field lying just beyond our parish walls, a world that is often confused and afraid; a broken and beautiful world that needs us to look outward as well as inward. It is a world waiting to be surprised by God and by the message of hope that only God's hands and feet [our hands and feet] can bring.

There is nothing wrong with finding comfort in the midst of a parish community. There is nothing wrong with creating a safe space for our children and our families. But lest we get too comfortable, Pentecost returns each year to see if, somewhere along the way, our lives have become too small or too tame; too far removed from the fire. At Pentecost, God takes us by the hand and turns our circle inside out—so that we are facing not each other, but facing the displaced waiting and hungry world.

If you're someone who's concerned about community, family, church, justice, education, culture, or civic issues, you will, no doubt, find yourself at a lot of meetings.

Pentecost happened at a meeting! One of the central events that shaped Christian history and history in general, happened not to an individual off praying alone or to a monk on a mountain-top or to a solitary Buddha meditating under a tree. Pentecost happened at a meeting and it happened to a community, to a church congregation assembled for prayer, to a family of faith gathered to wait for God's guidance.

Where Christianity is different from most other world religions is partly on this very point. In Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism, spirit and revelation break into the world very much through an individual, particularly an individual who is deeply immersed in private prayer. God speaks deeply to those who pray deeply.

Christian spirituality and Judaism have no argument with that. We agree. There's a privileged experience of God that can be had only in private, alone, in silence. To find God, to receive God's spirit, it's important that, at times, we pull away from the group, that we set off to the desert, to the chapel, to the lonely place, the quiet, to be alone with God.

Also, where Christianity and Judaism differ somewhat from some of the other world religions is in our belief that there is an equally privileged experience of God that can be had only in a group, in community, in family, at a meeting. We don't just meet God in the desert or in the deep quiet parts of our souls. In Christian and Jewish spirituality there are two non-negotiable places where we meet God, alone and in the family. These are not in opposition, but complementary, relying on each other to keep our experience of God both deep and pure.

The fact that Pentecost happened at a meeting can also be helpful in keeping us focused on why we are going to all these meetings in the first place. "When you don't know what else to do, keep going to meetings!" Sound advice! Meetings are the "Upper room", the place where we wait for Pentecost.

And what are we waiting for? Why are we in the upper room, at a meeting? Because we are waiting there, with others, for God to do something in us and through us that we can't do all by ourselves, namely, create community with each other and bring justice, love, peace, and joy to our world.

And so we need to go to continue to go to meetings. We need to spend time together waiting for God, waiting for a new outflow of heavenly fire that will give us the courage, language, and power we need to make happen in our world what our faith and love envision.

See you at the meeting! +

AWAKENING PENTECOST JOY

Br. Chris Dyczek, OFM

Some Christians are good raconteurs able to use lively phrases, while others are mostly cautious when they speak, keeping up a sense of realism. A certain amount of realism has been welcomed by modern storytellers, because it can acknowledge the advantage of a sense of balance in our relationships. But we also ought to recognise where there are breakdowns even in our more balanced friendships. A more honest telling of the slipping away of our foothold in life reveals how experience floats beyond our control. This is likely when we want to take seriously the times of brokenness we have met unawares. St. Luke was a good story-teller. He enjoyed exploring the relationships from both Greek and Hebrew viewpoints. The meanings of experience would be expressed differently. His story-style could vary, as he set out to show his respect for the multiple outlooks amongst Christians he knew. His gospel also has alertness to how trust collapses, the occasions which brought out Jesus most striking parables: the son squandering a legacy but with a crazy father to win him back; the travellers in severe danger, with none but a generous outsider, a Samaritan, to help them. In the memories of Jesus' followers, such stories were vivid, powerful tales of recovering fragmented trust. This buried need for God's empowerment was also present at the time when the followers gathered in an upper room. They huddled there, afraid of crowds of traditionalist visitors thronging through the principal city of Judaea.

The season of Pentecost arrived some weeks after Passover, after the killing of Jesus. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon all of the followers there in Jerusalem, and shaped the important occasions both in final part of the gospel by Luke and at the start of Acts of the Apostles, when those followers realised that they were being asked to take a very searching and honest look at themselves. They were asked to look at the loving energies of trust which they had previously celebrated, as grounding their relationships in hope. For now they must take stock of how their faith in God had often slumped into being half-hearted and shapeless. It would now be the Holy Spirit that could provide gifts of patient listening and wise collaboration. He will bring alive the whole-hearted roots of new inner growth, through fresh attention to the love of Christ. As Jesus says in John 14:26 'the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.' 'These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full' (Jn. 15:11) – the joy best seen when the community is made up of many

who receive the Spirit's love for one another. We can think about this joy being also genuinely active when we read any of the gospel stories. We may ask ourselves, 'how well do I read, not just words but a group's experience of reality?' - in a chapter from St. Mark or from St. Luke too. We become alert to voices and their meanings, if we experience strongly our conversations being based on faith.

Becoming authentic in this way is a challenge. We have to make the joy of Christian conversation lively and convincing. When Jesus' followers retold their tales, or the evangelists wrote down their gospels, we rightly picture them as practising a quality of vitality in their self-understanding. When we read out loud, and feel the wonder of the gospel passages, we should become better at self-discernment. We must let others see our attachment to the compassion first experiences when the resurrection was announced, far and wide. We then allow our voices to carry within them the strength of new life as a gift. A particular verse which we read should not be treated as a sound-bite in a TV chat show, a chance to prove that we've learned to speak the names 'Cornelius' or 'Thessalonika.' It is good to look through the whole chapter and the story from which our verse has been taken: to discover real anxiety, real delight or real longings for peace in the occasions being recalled. The Spirit, bear in mind, has brought many people, with their anxiety, delight or longings, closer to the god who transforms them as God's children. In this way, the New Testament narrative moved from being community memories, and re-tellings, to being set down as writing about the growth of a mission. All of this is intended to bring Christ-like love to the whole gamut of human lives around. A real reason for joy! The older covenant of Israel's celebrating God's guidance, through the wilderness, was steadily re-shaped into the new covenant of a new people of God, announcing risen life for the whole of humanity. Pentecost had been a Jewish festival. Fifty years after Passover, this 'Feast of Weeks' was a harvest festival, as mentioned in the book of Ruth.

It was appropriate that it became a celebration of the Renewal of the Covenant at which, for the prophet Joel, the believers will expect to see the Spirit poured out 'on all flesh,' that is on all humanity. None of the lives created by God are overlooked nor is anyone unimportant to him. But that is why he is also keen to bring out in us new potential and more creative commitments. This passage is used by Christian preachers (looking at Acts 2:14-36), to speak of a new stage in the unfolding of God's purpose. In Isa. 66:18, God had said, "I am coming to gather all nations and tongues." The conversions in Jerusalem, after Jesus had ascended to his heavenly Father, were treated as 'first-fruits,' a harvest of sudden faith and hope, for all sorts of people, who began speaking in their own varied languages, yet understood one another, says Luke. They are regarded by St. Luke, the author of our one single account, as a paraphrase or summary bringing together several speeches given in Greek. The multi-cultural character of Christianity has meant that, over the centuries, people have used a number of prophetic passages while also telling new stories of conversion, changes of heart, forgiveness, healing and new dreams awakened in them through openness to the Spirit. A mission to bring love into lives of people who have suffered greatly has also been revived by reciting the Ascension and Pentecost passages in times of prayer. When Franciscans first came to England, to Dover, they saw themselves as awakening many hearts and minds in this way, to a new telling of the earlier accounts of liberation. One of their fellow friars, St. Bonaventure, a theologian was in Paris, when other Franciscans announced their mission of healing for people in Oxford, London, Cambridge and elsewhere. He wrote about harvests of the gifts of the Spirit in knowledge, understanding and discernment. Counsel, another of these gifts, in situations of stress and confusion, could provide much-needed new realities of peace and reconciliation, to replace greed or resentment in English lives. This has been the sowing of the joy of the Gospel for all who welcome it.

If we think of ourselves as taking part in these different sorts of harvesting of love, we can find more strength in the call of God, which we all share, from our baptism. If we are those 'more labourers needed for the harvest' to which Jesus referred with his enthusiasm, we are likely to see many details of our relationships – old ones and new ones – as irrigated by the kindness and loveliness of God's grace. We may review them and revisit them as places of refreshed freedom from fear or despair. The people who know us may also be surprised to see a different dimension showing through, in our ways of being friendly and supportive. This is not something artificial or contrived. The diversity which sprout new buds and leaves in our usual personality is the context for new beginnings of compassion and attentiveness for many neighbours and new friendships. We are all inclined to play down the advantages of being helped by God, but when we shrug God off too frequently, we are also depriving people who love us of better paths to similar advantages for themselves. +

SAVING OUR EARTH: ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

Introduction: Mike Eggleton, St Anne Line

In recent years much concern has been expressed about the effect that we human beings are having on our planet, the Earth. You will no doubt be aware of organisations challenging our use of the world and its resources as well as the voices of many young people speaking out, perhaps the most famous being Greta Thunberg.

During Lent the members of three South Woodford churches – St Anne Line, St Mary's Woodford and the Woodford Methodist Church, met to discuss *Laudato Si*, the encyclical of Pope Francis published in 2015, the sub-title of which was *On Care For Our Common Home*.

The encyclical letter addresses several aspects of the current ecological crisis looking at our relationship with and commitment to our environment. Pope Francis puts forward some proposals for dialogue and action

which would involve each of us as individuals as well as having an effect on international policy. Its 100 pages are no light, easy read but are fundamental in helping us to look at the crisis not only in scientific terms but also from a Christian viewpoint. It needs to be read carefully and slowly a few times over in order to grasp its deep significance and the hope that it offers us to be able to change things.

The six chapters of the encyclical were led into by, in turn, by three faith leaders – one from each of the three churches. They each took two chapters of the book and led us in an outline of the issues posed, followed by discussion to answer various questions.

Content of Laudato Si talks:

The Introduction (Praise be to you my Lord); Mike Eggleton, St Anne Line

Chapter 1 (What is Happening to our Common Home?) led by Rev Alan Mair, St Anne Line

Chapter 2 (The Gospel of Creation) led by Rev Alan Mair, St Anne Line

Chapter 3 (The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis) led by Rev Oseias de Silva, Woodford Methodist Church

Chapter 4 (Integral Ecology) led by Rev Oseias de Silva, Woodford Methodist Church

Chapter 5 (Lines of Approach and Action) led by Rev Dr Elizabeth Lawson, St Mary's, Woodford

Chapter 6 (Ecological Education and Spirituality) led by Rev Dr Elizabeth Lawson, St Mary's, Woodford

Session 1: Chapters 1 & 2: Rev Alan Mair, St Anne Line

A broken relationship with God, creation, and each other.

Laudato Si' reminded us that every speck of life is valued by God and not a single creature is forgotten in God's sight. We are now living in the sixth great extinction event. This mass extinction is, unlike others in previous geological eras, the direct result of human activities. Loss of habitats by deforestation and mining programmes, particularly in the global South, supported by Western multinational companies, not only accelerate that extinction, but also threaten the livelihoods of indigenous human communities.

In Africa, for instance, the illegal harvesting of rhino horn by poachers for use as aphrodisiacs in Asia and elsewhere leaves in its wake a catalogue of cruel animal suffering. In the COVID-19 crisis this poaching has escalated. The source of COVID-19 in a market dedicated to the trading of live animal 'products' incorrectly thought to have sexual potency in humans reflects a distorted and disjointed relationship with other animals and each other. Instead of valuing and loving creation in the way humanity is called to do, we have failed to live up to that divine image and have become the oppressors of the natural world instead of its carers.

Session 2: Chapters 3 & 4: Rev Alan Mair, St Anne Line

The most vulnerable and marginalised are forgotten.

Laudato Si' stressed the need to care for and listen to the poorest and most marginalised in our communities. COVID-19 has exposed the inequity in provision and even racial discrimination illustrated by those most affected by the disease. While the precise reasons are unclear, this global health pandemic has highlighted the injustice embedded in social structures.

In other parts of the world, as in Brazil for example, indigenous communities have little or no access to health care or even basic sanitation and clean water, leading to disproportionate illness and death on a mass scale. This is a result of social and political issues of global public health provision and not merely medical questions of epidemiology. An integral approach is needed to tackle such inequities without compromising on care for creation. Conflicts of interest must be addressed and resolved rather than avoided.

Canticle of the Creatures

O Most High, all-powerful, good Lord God,
to you belong praise, glory,
honour and all blessing.

Be praised, my Lord, for all your creation
and especially for our Brother Sun,
who brings us the day and the light;
he is strong and shines magnificently.
O Lord, we think of you when we look at him.

Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Moon,
and for the stars
which you have set shining and lovely
in the heavens.

Be praised, my Lord,
for our Brothers Wind and Air
and every kind of weather
by which you, Lord,
uphold life in all your creatures.

Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Water,
who is very useful to us,
and humble and precious and pure.

Be praised, my Lord, for Brother Fire,
through whom you give us light in the darkness:
he is bright and lively and strong.

Be praised, my Lord,
for Sister Earth, our Mother,
who nourishes us and sustains us,
bringing forth
fruits and vegetables of many kinds
and flowers of many colours.

Be praised, my Lord,
for those who forgive for love of you;
and for those
who bear sickness and weakness
in peace and patience
- you will grant them a crown.

Be praised, my Lord, for our Sister Death,
whom we must all face.

I praise and bless you, Lord,
and I give thanks to you,
and I will serve you in all humility.

Session 3: Chapters 5 & 6: Rev Dr Elizabeth Lowson, St Mary's Woodford

The very voices that are suppressed are those we need to listen to the most.

Our third and final session focused on global inequality and weak responses – in short, what is God calling us to do, what are we going to do, and how are we going to ask for God's help?

Ecological debt is an interesting and I think powerful concept. Many of us will remember the Jubilee campaigns of 2000 and I think 2005 – cancel the debts of the global south was our cry and our prayer. Stop the unjust accumulation of interest which countries will never be able to afford. What if there were an attempt to quantify the ecological debt of the richer and more powerful countries to the poorer countries? That ecological debt couldn't just be cancelled and the countries that incurred it have more resources, but how to do so, how to take responsibility? How to even make such a calculation happen? "We are one single human family" – how do we fully recognise that? Does it even make sense to speak of developed and less developed countries – what are the criteria of development, responsibility, who should be allowed that power if responsibility is not being taken? What would Jesus do? What is Jesus saying to us?

How can we be encouraged, what can we do? There are many positive examples of environmental improvement and for the sake of motivation, survival and our mental health we do need to focus on progress, but we also need to recognise how the processes even of focusing on the environment can mislead, can involve false or superficial ecology, greenwashing. How will true justice come about, things that directly help bring about true carbon neutrality, care for our common home and for our siblings across the world? What are the sacrifices that need to be made for the sake of this beautiful earth?

Conclusion: Mike Eggleton, St Anne Line

These three talks gave us much to reflect on. The purpose of this document is to share some of those thoughts so that you too may reflect on them and in turn may share with others. Perhaps we all need to read *Laudato Si* again carefully and prayerfully. As Pope Francis acknowledges at the beginning of *Laudato Si* the *Canticle of Creatures* by St Francis of Assisi reminds us of our common home. +

EIGHT THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE FOOD SYSTEM

CAFOD.ORG.UK

The global food system is broken. It doesn't work for those who work the hardest – small farmers – and it's a major driver of the climate emergency.

But it doesn't have to be this way. Communities who work with us are leading the way, growing food in ways that are good for people and the planet. We are urging the UK government to fix the food system.

1. Our food system is bad for the planet, our common home

The way we grow, process and transport food is responsible for around one third of all global greenhouse gas emissions. Huge quantities of pesticides and fertilisers are made using fossil fuels. Forests and rainforests are cut down or burned to make huge areas available for rearing cattle for meat and dairy or to grow soya to feed the animals that we want to eat. Since 1990, around 420 million hectares of forest have been destroyed. This is 17 times the size of the UK.



2. Small-scale farmers have little choice over what they grow

Five of every six farms in the world consist of less than two hectares, operate only around 12 percent of all agricultural land, and produce roughly 35 per cent of the world's food. So small-scale farmers are efficient at producing food. But the domination of huge companies known as agribusiness means that they often face little choice about what they grow or how they grow it.

3. More than half of some crops are grown to feed animals reared for meat

Four corporations control 60 per cent of global seed sales, and vast areas of the same crop are grown for export, because they are profitable. For example, as much as 80 per cent of all the soya grown across the world is fed to

animals that are being reared to provide meat. The UK imported about 3.5 million tonnes of soya beans in 2019 and over half of that ended up in chicken feed. Community land is taken away by these giant businesses, leaving the small farmers with small plots, which reduces their options. Pesticides are used widely, harming people and depleting the soil.

4. Millions of people who produce our food are living in poverty themselves

Around 800 million people go hungry each day and the majority of them are those who grow the world's food. Three-quarters of people facing hunger in the world are living in rural areas and most of them depend on agriculture for their livelihood. 25 per cent of people in Africa are affected by hunger – the continent with the highest proportion. Of course, hunger is an issue in the UK too, with 9 per cent of adults experiencing food insecurity in January 2022.

5. One third of the food we produce is wasted

Around one-third of all food produced globally is lost or wasted. That's 1.3 billion tonnes of food every year being thrown away globally. The land it takes to provide just the food that we throw away is bigger than the size of India, and the water it takes is equivalent to 300 million Olympic swimming pools. One study found that, in the UK, 9 per cent of strawberries and 19 per cent of lettuces grown ended up as waste.

6. But we produce enough food to feed everyone!

To feed the current global population, we need to produce 3.7 billion tonnes of food per year. We are currently producing 4 billion tonnes per year.

7. In the UK we are reliant on other countries for our food

Around half of the food we eat in the UK comes from other countries, including 80 per cent of our fruit, 50 per cent of our vegetables, and all of our rice!

8. Returning to traditional ways of farming can help

In rural Bangladesh, small farmer Alpona is growing food in a different way. After her community received training from CAFOD in organic farming, things changed quite dramatically:

"We had not realised just how big a mistake we had made by moving away from the traditional ways of farming of our forefathers. We had become disconnected from nature, but now we are going back to it again." I get a great deal of vegetables and fruits from my organic farming, which is enough for the family to eat, and which I can sell at the market too. Our village has become a lot greener and healthier after so many of us shifted to organic farming, and the soil has greatly improved."

How you can play your part to fix the food system

We need alternative food systems that help tackle the climate crisis rather than fueling it and that put people first. But rather than supporting these alternatives, the UK government is backing big businesses that are putting profit first and accelerating the climate crisis.

For example, from 2013-2019 the UK spent at least £125.5m of aid money in Nigeria on fossil fuel-based fertiliser, which was five times as much as it spent supporting local farmers.

Urge the UK

Government to keep the promises it made at the COP26 climate talks last year and support agricultural systems that tackle the climate crisis as well putting local communities first.

Email the Foreign Secretary urging her to take steps to ensure that the UK government implements its COP26 commitments

and backs agricultural systems that tackle the climate crisis, put local communities at the centre and protect the planet.

[Email the Foreign Secretary](#)

(This link takes you to the CAFOD website with the letter to send.) +

Each of us has a role to play in transforming food systems for the benefit of people and the planet. If we do not want to jeopardise the health of our planet and our entire population, we must encourage active participation in change at all levels and reorganise food systems as a whole."

Pope Francis on World Food Day 2021



WOODFORD REFLECTIONS - STAINED GLASS 1: ST. BONAVENTURE

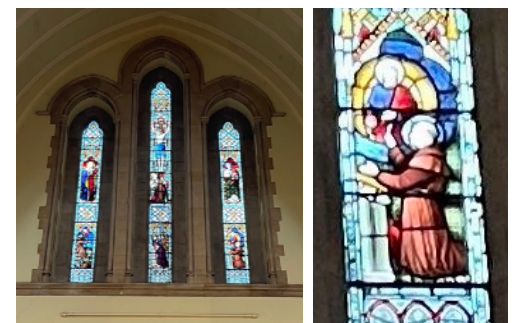
Br. Chris Dyczek, OFM

There is an important Christian story about recovering mental health in St. Luke's gospel (8:24-39), where evil spirits are driven out of a suffering human being. They depart into a herd of pigs (unclean creatures for Jewish readers), which plunges into the lake of Galilee, and the man recovers his sanity. St. Bonaventure, who was a Franciscan lecturer in Paris, tells this story very well in his long Scripture commentary. He sees that St. Luke had placed it directly after the narrative in which Jesus travelled across the lake with his disciples in a boat, during a storm. Mighty in holiness, Jesus is able to calm the storm, and also to bring calm healing to the minds and hearts of his terrified followers. God's healing power is apparent, therefore, both in removing a fear of serious storms and in ending years of lunatic hardship for a man trapped in wildness and nakedness. Or, as Bonaventure says, he was someone 'both remarkably and miserably possessed,' in a 'condition of great disgrace.' He then is restored 'to his right place, [enabled] to move beyond restlessness and craziness.' We should probably take notice of Bonaventure's teaching skill ourselves, because awareness of deep fears and mental health at risk has been a factor in general public awareness in recent months. However, he could also take notice of this compassionate story-telling because in our Church in Woodford we have not just one but two stained glass windows that picture St. Bonaventure (1217-1274), learning how to teach others about Jesus.

One of these images is in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel (retro-chapel) at the top end of the Church, which places him on the left side, in between a Franciscan shepherd boy, Pascal Baylon, and St. Francis himself. We see Bonaventure with an open book and a quill pen, raised to write in it, while his eyes look over to the crucifix in the centre. He is standing up, keen to discover new insights about the loving of Jesus and his innocent death. The second window in which Bonaventure occurs is in the main body of the Church, let into the wall of the sanctuary, behind the presider's chair and the altar. This is on the right-hand side, with St. John the Apostle in a window immediately above him. Jesus Christ appears in the Bonaventure window as a dream-like figure in a circle of rays of light, who is pointing symbolically to his compassionate heart. Bonaventure is seen kneeling but here again he has a pen raised to record everything, and to pass on all of the guidance which the Son of God is about to provide. We may wonder, 'why have two views of him?' We can tell from our other windows that the patroness, Henrietta, Duchess of Newcastle wanted to celebrate a whole male and female Franciscan movement. Other windows show the death of Francis, Bl. Agnellus of Pisa, who brought the first friars to England, and several others devoted to this charism. We see St. Clare of Assisi, consulted by Francis as a friend, Rose of Viterbo, a teenager, and St. Margaret of Cortona, an unmarried mother. Before the lady Henrietta's death in 1913, support had come from the Pope for Franciscans to publish writings in theology and spirituality from academic followers of St. Francis. Bonaventure was an Italian who studied and taught in Paris as a theologian, and who wrote on many aspects of Catholic teaching. His two versions of the Life of St. Francis are still popular reading today.

Bonaventure's role in developing a distinctive Franciscan theology has been a central resource for training Franciscans for 800 years. He took notice of St. Francis' ideal of environmental harmony between humans and animals. He produced guides to conversion and the gifts of the Holy Spirit (books such as his Journey of the Mind to God, his Breviloquium, the Soliloquium, Five Feasts of the Infant Jesus). His feast day is Thursday 15th July. It will help if we provide a few extracts from his work here:

In The Mystical Vine he wrote: "Be strong, then, my weak and wretched soul, and rise aloft; on the wings of faith and hope, fly to this garden of love; concentrate the scattered vision of your mind, and follow the zeal of the bee in gathering for yourself the honey of devotion. Rise to the paradise of love – rise, I say, to the heights of the heart; behold, the One you seek has been lifted up. But have no fear: being exalted, He was humbled. For, he was not lifted up on the cross to show Himself less accessible, to those who seek him, but in very truth to make Himself more accessible to all. And as you approach this paradise with trusting heart, feel the love of the Crucified



expressed by the open arms, feel the embrace of Him who offers Himself to you and calls you... Turn away from your evil will, from your evil deeds, from your obstinacy and despair; turn back to me, for you have turned away from me. Let me look upon you with the eyes of grace wherewith I looked upon the sinful woman and the thief.... What happiness for you, when, being let in amongst the flowers of blood, the wounds of Christ, our blossoming garden of supreme sweetness, you can be completely rid of the world's clamour and the assaults of temptation, and caring now for Him alone whom you have come to meet, can taste and understand how good and sweet He is... Finally, through the door of his spear-torn side, we should come to the most humble heart of Jesus most high. Here in all truth is hidden the very treasure of love, desirable and ineffable... here we learn benignness and patience in our afflictions, and compassion for the afflicted; here above all, we find within ourselves a heart contrite and humbled."

In *Defense of the Mendicants (Apologia Pauperum)* he wrote: "let him listen to Bernard [of Clairvaux]...: "If anyone resists, if anyone opposes whatever pertains to salvation or comes forth from religion, he is clearly attempting, with the Egyptians, to kill the young boys of the Israelite race; even more, with Herod, he is persecuting the Saviour at the time of his birth." We must believe that it is not all by chance, but by an act of divine Providence that – like Joseph, going down into Egypt for the sake of storing and distributing material food, a truly growing son whom God made to increase in the land of his poverty – men in the state of the gospel-preaching poor are sent out into the world for the sake of preserving and dispensing the teachings of the Scriptures as a spiritual food; and that in all matters related to the salvation of souls they stand out as assistants of the priests of Christ in charge of the flock." Note that this is a passage intended to promote lay preaching activities.

"First by the example of the Builder, the Scriptures describe [the] function of instructing in matters of faith, as indicated in 1 Cor. 3:10 "As a wise builder I laid the foundations"; for the stones in a building correspond to the articles of faith in a soul in which Christ dwells as in his temple.... Secondly, by the example of the Gardener, as regards the function of developing virtues... If indeed, the people of the Church are a garden and a paradise planted and thriving with many virtues, one who keeps the people informed as to the principles of ethics is rightly called a gardener; and he is represented by the first man, whom the Lord God "placed in the garden of Eden to till and to keep it.".... Fifth, by the example of the Physician, as regards the function of healing the injuries received from enemies, according to this passage which Luke inserts in the parable of the man who fell in with robbers: the Samaritan "bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine". The Samaritan represents Christ the supreme healer and those who hold his place in the cleansing of vices.' To be fair, some modern commentators will disagree and say Christ is himself identified in the man who became the victim of robbers. But the diversity of sensitive roles needed to make Christian community a thriving group is a strong aspect of the picture given of the Body of Christ. Bonaventure continues his defence: "if there prevails such a spiritual plague that almost the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is sad... would any faithful physician dare to cast out not only the man well versed in the art of spiritual healing... unless he wanted to extinguish the lives of the wounded and the languishing?" The wholeness in body and soul of the Christian people is a serious issue for him.

In a meditation on what God reveals through the childhood of Jesus, he thinks of how the Son of God is 'born spiritually in a devout soul,' in a work called 'The Five Feasts of the Infant Jesus': 'Let us mark well how the blessed son of God... is born spiritually... when the soul begins to do that which it long had in mind [i.e. to lead a more perfect life] but was afraid to undertake through fear of its own weakness. The angels rejoice at this most blessed birth, they glorify God and announce peace. [However] God's peace cannot be firmly established in the soul while the spirit and the flesh are at war with one another (cf. Gal. 5:17); when the spirit longs for solitude and the flesh craves to be with the crowd; when the spirit delights in Christ and the flesh is allured by the world; when the spirit seeks the serenity of contemplation and the flesh desires positions of honour in the world. On the other hand, when the flesh is subjected to the spirit... inner peace and joy are restored to the soul... How lovely and delightful it would be if we always did what was best for us... In this birth [once we rid ourselves of our foolishness], human nature recognizes what is native to it. In this birth we experience the truth of that Gospel saying: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and

DIARY DATES

Tuesdays, 11am-12noon - Christian Meditation
Our Lady of Lourdes Pastoral Centre

Thursday, 9 June, 7.30pm - Introduction to Lectio Divina
St Anne Line Francis Xavier Hall

Saturday, 11 June, 2.30pm-5pm - Afternoon Tea
St Mary's Woodford. This event celebrates 50th anniversary of St Mary's re-dedication following a devastating fire in 1969

Sunday, 12 June, 11.30am - Open Air Mass & Family Picnic,
St Thomas' Friary Garden

Wednesday, 15 June, 5.30pm - Contemplative Prayer
St Mary's, South Woodford

Saturday, 18 June, 9.30am - Annual Parish Sponsored Walk
for Brentwood Catholic Children's Society
Meet at St Thomas' Becket Centre

Saturday, 25 June, 1pm-4pm - Summer Fayre
Friary Garden, St Thomas

Saturday, 2 July, 12noon-4pm - Summer BBQ
St Anne Line

lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt 11:29-30). But this also means, he says, that we must 'be like Mary'. 'You must be "one who enlightens" by speaking words of edification, practising virtue and teaching others untiringly to do good.' He wants us to realize that we should aim to become peace-makers, but that this takes dedication and willingness to learn.

When we look at these two windows, the one in which Bonaventure looks at Christ on the cross could be tied to both St. Francis and St. Paul, both preachers who 'take on the yoke of Christ,' keen that the cross should not be 'emptied of its power' (1 Cor. 1:17). That power of Christ's love is what can 'bring the hostility to an end' (Eph. 2:16), bringing a new beginning between those who have been enemies. Christ 'made peace through the blood of the cross' (Col. 1:20), as Bonaventure in his gentleness also hoped to do. When we look at the second window, we see how Christ lets Bonaventure focus his prayerful thoughts on the heart of his Saviour. Looking with 'the eyes of the heart' is a Franciscan approach to meditation. Our aim must be not to 'honour God with our lips,' like a dry routine, but to speak heart to heart when we pray to God. Any heart that God can see 'is far from me' (Mark 7:6) is only pretending to include worship in its path of conversion. Our prayer will then not be genuine.+

WEB RESOURCES

Parish websites

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>