

# PASSIO

NEWSLETTER OF THE PASSIONIST FAMILY  
ST JOSEPH'S PROVINCE

ISSUE#5 - LENT 2020



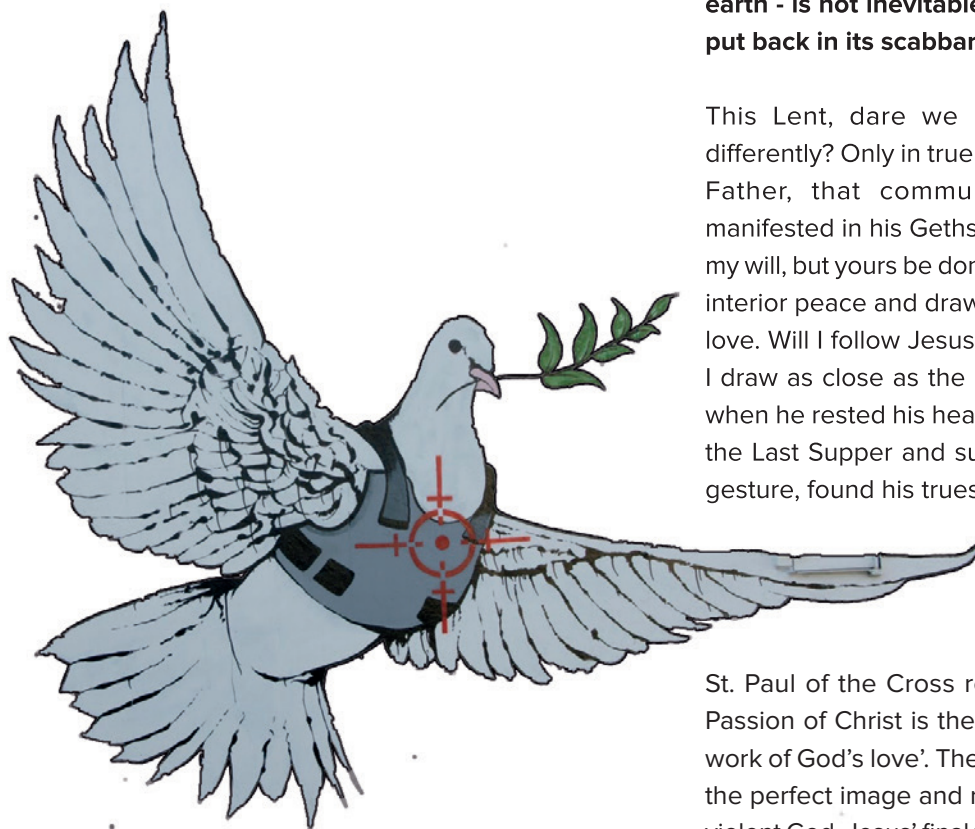
**W**elcome to the new look 'Passio', the first issue of 2020. This year is a very special one in the history of the Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ as, from December 2020, Passionists worldwide will begin twelve months of celebrations to mark the tercentenary of their founding by St Paul of the Cross.

The cover of this Lenten issue depicts the 'Chapel of Christ in Gethsemane', one of the many outstanding features of Coventry Cathedral. This Chapel reminds us of Jesus' agony in the garden, prior to his betrayal and arrest. It also tells of the visit of the Angel who held the 'cup of suffering' to Christ as He prayed on the night before His crucifixion and death.

During Holy Week our thoughts centre, amongst other places, on Gethsemane. In the garden, Peter's actions can be summed up as sleep, fight and flight (a little later denial can be added). In that same garden, Jesus, in contradistinction, remains vigilant through prayer, exemplifies non-violence and remains faithful to his mission. The Gospels inform us that Peter follows Jesus after his arrest towards the High Priest's House but at a safe distance, as Jesus permits himself to be handed over and swallowed up by the violence of his Passion.

As we entered 2020, one of the less trumpeted of news headlines concerned sales of arms and military services by the sector's largest 100 companies (excluding those in China). Such sales totalled \$420 billion in 2018, with US companies dominating the top 5 (Lockheed Martin still top of this particularly noxious tree).

**POWER BASED ON  
FORCE IS ULTIMATELY  
FAKE POWER.**



**Violence – towards others or towards the earth - is not inevitable. The sword can be put back in its scabbard.**

This Lent, dare we imagine the world differently? Only in true communion with the Father, that communion which Jesus manifested in his Gethsemane prayer – 'not my will, but yours be done' - can we find deep interior peace and draw close to the Lord of love. Will I follow Jesus at a distance, or will I draw as close as the Beloved disciple did when he rested his head on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper and surely, in that intimate gesture, found his truest home?

St. Paul of the Cross reminds us that, 'the Passion of Christ is the most overwhelming work of God's love'. The non-violent Jesus is the perfect image and reflection of the non-violent God. Jesus' final words to his Apostles before his arrest were words of peace. The first words spoken by the Risen Christ were likewise words of peace. That peace which the world so badly needs must begin in our own hearts and flow out from there to the world.

May the Lord bless us with his peace during this holy season.

*Paschal Somers*  
*Passionist Development Worker*

“I prefer a church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.”

*Pope Francis*



The whole life of one who serves God should be to remain on the Cross with Jesus.

*St Paul of the Cross*

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# Faith Justice

*by Matthew Neville*



*Matthew Neville, is the Young Adult Outreach Worker for St Joseph's Province*

FaithJustice is the new Passionist-supported project focused on young adults aged between 18-35. Since introducing the project in the July edition of Passio, the FaithJustice network has continued to grow and develop. Here is a quick summary of the events which took place through 2019.

In May 2019, the 'God's Love Has No Border' event was focused on migration and welcome. In June, 'Discovering a God Who Hungers for Justice' took place at the Catholic Worker Farm to explore the arms trade and militarism. This event was followed in September by a small group of young adults taking part in the 'No Faith in War' day of resistance to the DSEi arms fair. Our group supported actions led by two organisations, 'Put Down the Sword', and the 'London Catholic Worker'. In October, the focus switched to climate change with two events exploring Christianity and climate change, one taking place before and the other being staged after the Extinction Rebellion weeks of protest. Finally, in November, a group gathered for a day of pilgrimage in partnership with the Student Cross pilgrimage.

The network continues to grow. Signs of ongoing community are emerging and we hope this will continue to grow and deepen. An exciting list of events for 2020 is being put together. The highlight is likely to be a summer festival at the Catholic Worker Farm between 19-21 June. Watch this space for news of this event.

Little by little, our hope is that the young adults who engage with the network will become more engaged with the Crucified of our earth. Hopefully, over the year, FaithJustice has inspired and enabled some to find a place of encounter and service, or at least to have begun that journey.

Please help us to spread the word among young adults and grow this work. For news of upcoming events, and to join our mailing list please visit the website at: [faithjustice.org.uk](http://faithjustice.org.uk)



# SPOTLIGHT

*on Margaret Thelwell*

*Margaret (pictured front right) is the secretary of the Passionist Grants Panel and a member of the Liverpool based Passionist Partner Group 'The Vestibule'.*

## **What is one word that you would use to describe yourself?**

Forty years ago, when preparing for our wedding, the priest who was to officiate described me as an “enigma”! I was indignant at the time, but I now think he was right. I’m such a mixture that I can be very difficult to understand – even by myself!

## **What one memory do you most treasure?**

The outpouring of love when I first held my child, Helen, is my most treasured memory. I worried I couldn’t possibly feel like that at John’s birth, but it was just as amazing!

## **What advice would you give to your younger self?**

I would advise myself to trust on all sorts of levels. I wish I had trusted in God more and in the goodness and willingness of others. Mostly I wish I had trusted myself more and not doubted so much.

## **Which person (living or dead) would you most like to meet and why?**

I’d love to invite Barack Obama to dinner! I found many of his addresses really inspiring but I still have lots of questions that I would like to ask.

## **What is the most important thing you have learnt in the past year?**

I’ve learned that nothing stays the same. Everything changes, including me. Some of the changes I welcome and embrace; others are scary and hard for me to accept. It certainly

keeps life interesting!

## **Brown sauce or red sauce?**

Definitely red sauce! A bit of sweetness is always welcome in my life.

## **When did ‘God’ become more than a word to you?**

I can’t remember when God was just a word to me. But I vividly remember that my Confirmation meant a great deal to me and that awareness of the power of the Holy Spirit has never left me.

## **How does your faith shape your work?**

My professional work was as a nurse, but I am now retired. In both work and retirement, my faith makes me take action. I can’t be just an on-looker, I have to get involved and do what I can.

## **If you could go anywhere in the world right now where would it be and why?**

I’d love to take a rail trip through the Canadian Rockies.

## **If you were about to be castaway on a desert island, what three items would you take with you?**

I’d take my Bible for a good read and to offer me comfort and challenge in equal measures. I would need my duvet to keep me warm at night and a Swiss Army knife for any practical tasks.

# TALKING

*with Brother Johannes Maertens*

*This interview was conducted by Henrietta Cullinan, peace writer and member of the London Catholic Worker, and recently featured on the ICN website. Johannes is a monk and missionary, currently a member of the London Catholic Worker, and involved in pastoral care towards young Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees in London.*

**HC:** *First tell me how long were you involved in helping the refugees of Calais?*

**JM:** I had been going to Calais occasionally, since 2004, in solidarity with the refugees living there on the streets, but it was August 2015 when Juan Peris from the London Catholic Worker and I arrived in Calais to visit and stay at the big Jungle camp, and to meet up with a local parish priest, Jean-Marie.

Juan had already visited the camp a few weeks earlier and some of the young Sudanese refugees, who recognised him, offered to 'lodge' us in one of their little houses made of plastic canvas. We stayed with them for several day and nights. Later, with the help of Secours Catholique and the support of the Passionist UK we were able to open Maria Skobtsova House, a Catholic Worker house of hospitality, in February 2016. I remained in the house until June 2019.

**HC:** *Tell me how the spiritual life of Maria Skobtsova House began.*

**JM:** The spiritual life and work of Maria Skobtsova House really began in the Jungle camp, in the now famous wooden church used by the Eritrean and Ethiopian refugee community on Sundays and for daily prayer. The church stood slightly apart from the main camp. In its beauty, it was a place to find silence, light a candle, say a prayer.

The impact of the church went far beyond its physical presence. It was a focus for volunteers and refugees of all faiths. The cross on the top and the icons inside pointed upwards, to something bigger than us, and in that way, it gave us hope. At first, I was drawn to the church out of curiosity. There was a furious racket coming from a generator they were using to run the sound system. There was noisy chanting. For someone like me from the western tradition it was a bit overwhelming. That day I was quite emotional. The misery I had seen, people

living in the dunes, under plastic sheets, in makeshift dwellings, the dirt and the dust affected me, so much I couldn't pray. I went down on my knees. Not a word came to my lips.

Words from psalms came into my head, 'We are brought down to the dust; our bodies cling to the ground ... rise up and help us.' Psalm 44:25-26

The next time I went to the church, it was nearly empty. I knelt on the thin carpet and closed my eyes. When I opened them, there were some women on my right, men on my left. Even though I didn't know their language, I knew they were praying the Our Father and Hail Mary. At that moment, I saw my brothers and sisters. I had a very strong feeling that God wanted me to be with my brothers and sisters, because that was where they were, and they were in need. That was the moment that I decided to stay there, in Calais.

I had no idea what work I would do. I thought I would clean and chop vegetables. It was the refugees themselves who said, 'No, come and sit with us. Have a cup of tea.' At first, I was a bit uneasy. We couldn't understand each other. Then I learned to just sit there. They would chop wood, build a fire, fetch water, buy milk. Unlike here at home where you just fill the kettle, there you take time to receive someone, make tea, serve it; it's a ritual in which something happens, you patiently enjoy the moment of sharing that time with each other, waiting for the water to boil, to make the tea. I had

one talk with an Arabic Sudanese man. He and I didn't speak a word of each other's language. The only thing we could do was look. These are very precious moments - when one human being recognises another.

The majority of refugees in Calais then,

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as now, were Muslim. In the camp there were places of prayer, improvised mosques. On Fridays, or for Christians on Saturday or Sunday, they went to

pray. It's part of their life. So It has to happen .Even if we are in an industrial zone in northern France, we have to glorify God. This was the gift they gave me. In the midst of misery and sometimes happiness, we have to glorify God.

When the authorities were destroying the camp, a young Afghan man beckoned to me and said, 'Come'. He led me right into an area that was being bulldozed. He ran into a little house and brought out a booklet. It was part of St. Luke's gospel. He said, 'Here!' Even if it was only part of scripture, it was sacred and so he gave it to me because I represented Christians. Three times, it happened that some of the Afghans tried to salvage copies of the Gospels. This is an anecdote that I find important for an account of faith in the camp.

**HC: Tell me a bit about sharing the spiritual life of the house, day in day out, with the refugees.**

**JM:** We always intended that the guests should feel as if they were coming into a family home, [as opposed to] a large church institution where prayer is central. It was more a place around the table where people come, meet, eat and then also share the prayer life. It quickly became a large family, with many people around that table. Most of the guests were younger than me and the other volunteers. Naturally we each became a bit of a mother or father figure. We were accepted in that role and that also had a spiritual dimension. When a guest came into the house, we were not just there to take care of them.

We were also there to think about them in our prayers.

Sometimes the guests would literally ask us to do that. As the guests came home each evening, one might ask, 'Did you pray for me?' It was always our intention, that the house should be a place to return to, as if to a family home. But some guests themselves also wanted to feel that they were part of a community life. That meant, 'You are part of my life and I am part of your life. You pray for me and I think of you in my prayers.'

It was always a struggle to keep the prayer rhythm more or less constant. It was our choice, as volunteers, to say morning prayer, noon prayer, evening prayer, night prayer. When it went well, some guests joined in, especially for night prayer. With 20 people always around, plus 10 to 15 visitors per day it was a very busy house. To take the time, four times a day, to have prayer, to share a moment of silence with each other, gave structure to the day. It also gave meaning: 'I'm not just washing your clothes because they're dirty. I'm not just cooking for you because you're hungry. You are my brothers and sisters.'

**HC: Without prayer things could seem chaotic?**

**JM:** There was a massive amount of work to do: just ordinary things like cleaning, washing and cooking, over and over again. If prayer was not in there the physical work would lose meaning. It would become a burden; boring even.

**HC: You mention becoming part of each other's lives, through prayer and living in community-something that we should to aspire to always.**

**JM:** It is hard. It is not the easy option, because when we say that we are part of each other's lives, that we share a certain level of responsibility for each other, it's not so easy to step back. When we're not able to help someone, it becomes painful. When there are too many people, with too many needs and too many problems, it is easy to be overwhelmed.

That is always a risk because, in a Catholic Worker house, we choose that personal commitment towards each other. It's not about the number of people we helped; it's about sharing our life with somebody else in God and that demands personal commitment, that demands sacrifice. Each of us has to find the energy and keep the energy. And we have accepted that not every guest in the house wants that. Many people come because they need help and they are happy that we give it, but they don't necessarily want us to become their brother or sister. It must



**'I'M NOT JUST WASHING YOUR CLOTHES BECAUSE THEY'RE DIRTY. I'M NOT JUST COOKING FOR YOU BECAUSE YOU'RE HUNGRY. YOU ARE MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS.'**

be their choice.

**HC:** *Tell me how Maria Skobtsova, the Orthodox Saint, helped you in all this.*

**JM:** When we chose Maria Skobtsova as patron saint of the house, we had a vague idea who she was but when we read more about her life from her writings, we said 'Wow! This really is a saintly woman who is going with us along this path.'

She also had a big house. She took care of hundreds of refugees at a time, yet she believed that her room needed to be in the heart of the house, so that she was always available; she couldn't hide if someone needed something. I wonder where she found the energy. For her it was personal, the same as for Dorothy Day: being there with and for people. At the same time, she travelled a lot, to hospitals, psychiatric institutions and prisons to visit Russian migrants. She spent her time in chapels, she spent her time in prayer. It is a big challenge.

**HC:** *As a visitor to the house, it seemed to me that the guests' enthusiasm for prayer varied from week to week.*

**JM:** The rhythm of prayer and the intensity was certainly influenced by

their hope. They prayed more when they were hopeful and had energy. Sometimes when times were hard, when there was a lot of police brutality and very few of them were getting to the UK, they would prefer to sleep. We could see how hope had disappeared. There were really periods and there still are, in the house, in the camp, in the day centre, when it seems that people's hopes have almost disappeared, when they think, why did I leave my country? Why am I here?



One of the purposes of liturgy is to lift us up, so we can glorify God. So, it's also emotional. Sometimes people can be very down and repeating the words of the liturgy can be very heavy. In the house there was this up and down rhythm.

That was why it was important that we, volunteers, kept praying. For them to

know that the prayer went on was very important.

When I left Calais, one of the guests who is now in the UK asked me, 'And the prayer? Is the prayer going on?' That was very touching. It's still happening. The community still does the four prayers a day. It is a place of miracle. That is where you see that the spirit of Maria Skobtsova is quite alive there.

## INSIGHT: THE VESTIBULE

by Freda Witter

The Vestibule had originally met as a scripture conversation group in St. Thomas More and St. Charles Churches in Liverpool. In 2011 it moved its meetings to Belgrave Road in Liverpool 8 and that was when I started to attend.

It was made clear at the beginning that it was open to people of all faiths and those who did not follow any specific one. I belong to the latter but, even so, over the years I have found it to be a place where thought is encouraged and where questioning is allowed.

One of the aspects of attending any Church is that the weekly readings are read aloud but the congregation does not always understand them or have the opportunity to discuss them. Discussion for me is important as it brings the ideas and understanding of others into play.

I have learned a great deal through attending the Vestibule over many years and have really enjoyed the discussions. An added attraction is that group members meet periodically for shared meals when obviously the talking continues with wonderful food and friendship.

The main features that I enjoy about the group are TRUST, DISCUSSION



*Freda Witter is a member of Passionist Partner group, The Vestibule*

and FRIENDSHIP.

We take it in turn to chair the meetings which follow a specific pattern. We begin by saying how our week has been, with all its ups and downs, trusting in the knowledge that anything shared does not go beyond the meeting.

We then look at the scriptures for the following Sunday. We take turns in reading them aloud and follow this with a discussion on their meaning for each one of us.

As a result, the meetings have produced a shared commitment to each other and to the larger community and have deepened our care and support of each other.

Long may it continue!!

# CALAIS RED CALAIS WHITE CALAIS BLUE.

A poem by Alex Holmes



Calais Red. Washed red trainers tucked into the rotting tree stump, red Berbere spice, red Harissa, the hot chili pepper paste, in a large tub at the food distribution, *but too much*, says Yonas, *is bad for the stomach*.

Gebre shows me his cracked phone screen. *“The CRS\* he hit me and broke the screen, he hit my friend too, in the face”* He points to his nose, *“blood, too much blood”*.

A red candle burns, a red sanctuary light, signifier of God’s Presence, but God’s Will, a young Nigerian exile has gone, killed by the fumes from the makeshift heater he hoped would warm him through the cold night. His orange tent is now a small shrine, red sanctuary light burning, a dozen small candles flickering. His photo is set into a shallow wooden box. It’s near midnight. Amidst the dark shapes of small tents, dying fires, the dripping black trees, there’s an intense and sad silence. France 3, the French National broadcaster, have run a piece on the young Nigerian’s death. *“It was our brother who died”* says one of his friends, *“why does no one want us?”*

White on red, the *No Entry* sign near the stadium. It’s here, on a Sunday morning, that the Eritrean Orthodox Christians meet for prayer. Bound to the post bearing the red and white sign is a wooden cross, and on the

cross, a rosary and a small icon of the *Theotokos*, Mary, the God-bearer, with the Child Jesus. A tarpaulin is laid onto the cold tarmac, shoes are removed, heads bared, and the young men sit listening attentively to the words of the Eritrean deacon. As he speaks, a white minibus parks twenty metres away. A CRS officer winds down his window and films.

More white. The whites of eyes veined red from exhaustion. Tonight, the white full moon. Breakfast before Sunday prayers; on the fire, steam rising from a white circle of milk. The Sunday sun bleaching white the prayer shawls of the two deacons.

Woldu’s shoes are perfectly white. The small encampment where we meet is cloaked by tall poplars shedding their late season blackened leaves. After weeks of persistent rain, there’s water everywhere. Eastwards and spreading ever closer to the camp, a lake has formed. There’s a sense of battlefield, wooden pallets as duckboards snaking across this wasteland swamp. The half-dozen tents are all raised on pallets. Woldu in his perfect white shoes is balanced on a section of pallet that acts as decking to his tented home. *“I clean my shoes everyday”* he says. He needs to go to the other Eritrean camp and leads me out of the swamp, past strangely incongruous heaps

\*CRS: *Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité* (the French riot Police)



of farmyard manure, through fences and under the road bridge to a line of sagging tents. Semere is attempting to light a fire but the wood is wet. By burning white plastic jerry cans and dousing the wood with cooking oil, the fire comes to life and Tesfay starts preparing a meal.

The wind is getting up and the acrid fumes of burning plastic sting the eyes. The flames light up the blue tarpaulins that protect the sagging tents from the rain. More blue. A discarded blue camping mat floating on the large puddle besides the tents. It's cold and damp and Birhan is without socks and wearing blue flip-flops. The only shoes he has.

The other side of the fire is Aziz. Tesfay tells me that Aziz was badly beaten three nights previously. Midnight beside the warehouse with free wifi. A car rolled up.

*"Four white guys got out of the car, they kicked me and beat me and took my phone".*

*"I'm so sorry, Aziz. Are you ok now?"*

*"I'm ok, and it's not your fault. There are good and bad people in Eritrea too."*

Beside me at the fire is Fessehaye. He has his phone open on google maps, satellite view. He's located our Calais location, and then he moves

the cursor back and forwards across the Channel. *"Small small distance"* he says. He then flits across the world to Eritrea, to Massawa, the Red Sea port. He locates his house, then opens his photos and in the dark and damp of the Calais night, the smoke from the fire blowing chaotically first westwards then back into our faces, there he is, in a boat on an absurdly blue sea, smiling in the bright sunshine. Blue.

Red, white and blue.

Behind us, the artery road connecting the autoroutes of France to the port of Calais. By some strange quirk, in rapid succession, three lorries speed by towards the port, towards the UK; the first is red, the second is white, the third is blue.

Tesfay looks up from his cooking at the passing lorries, the only means for him and his exiled friends in Calais of crossing the Channel to seek asylum in the UK. *"Getting to UK,"* he says, *"is too hard now. It's Mission Impossible."* Somehow, he manages a smile.

# PASSIONIST PARTNERS GATHERING AT MINSTERACRES

by Paschal Somers

The third annual Passionist Partners Gathering took place at Minsteracres Retreat Centre in Northumberland at the end of October last year.

More than 40 representatives from the growing Passionist Family of St Joseph's Province (England & Wales) - working with the homeless, refugees, people with HIV, former prisoners, and parish projects, as well as running campaigns on many social, peace and environmental issues - came to Minsteracres from 21 - 23 October 2019 to meet each other, pray and share ideas.

Partners who attended included representatives from Reformed which supports ex-offenders, Green Christian, London Catholic Worker, Calais Catholic Worker, Catholic Worker Farm, the Austin Smith Memorial Fund which supports a range of community projects in Liverpool 8, The Vestibule, another community building project in Liverpool, CAPS, (Catholics for Aids Prevention and Support) and Martha House which works with destitute refugees in London.

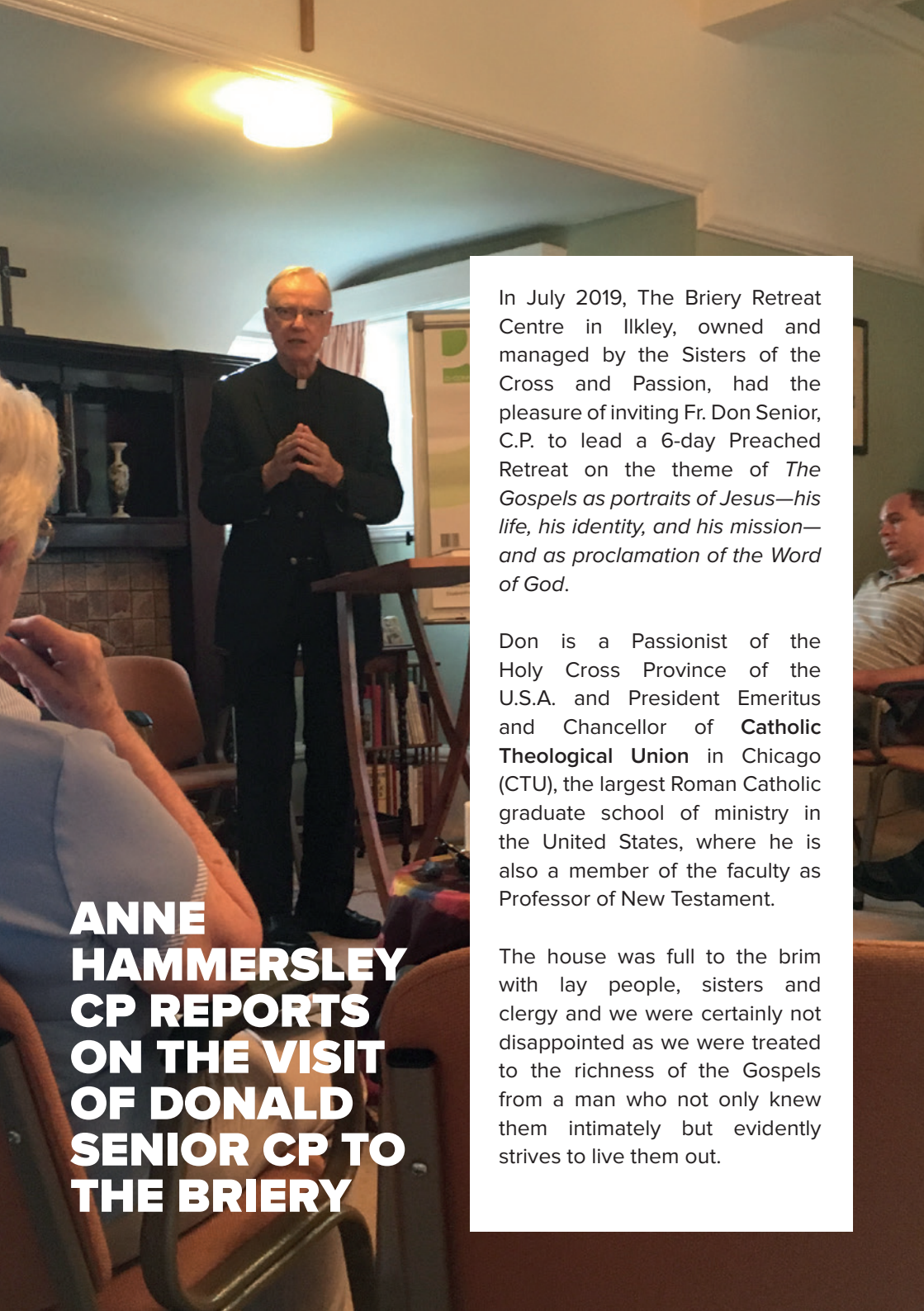
Members of the Minsteracres Team, the Community of the Passion, St Joseph's

Province, representatives from the Cross and Passion Sisters, the Provincials of Holy Hope Province (Passionists of Netherlands and North Germany) and St Patrick's Province (Passionists of Scotland and Ireland) also took part.

The Gathering featured workshops led by Steve Atherton, J&P Fieldworker for the Archdiocese of Liverpool, Paul Bodenham from Green Christian, Martin Newell CP and Nicholas Postlethwaite CP designed at strengthening and growing the Partnership and seeking to map out pathways forward for the Passionist Family in this part of the world.

Passionist Partners is a relatively new initiative. A note from the Passionist Order on their website explains: "We see in them something of ourselves. Mainly Christian groups, they are all committed to the crucified of today and we hope to deepen the relationship we already have with them. We value their work and wish to support them in practical ways. We also hope to learn from and be inspired by them. Their life and work reflect values of God's Kingdom, of peace, justice, care for creation, freedom and human rights."





# ANNE HAMMERSLEY CP REPORTS ON THE VISIT OF DONALD SENIOR CP TO THE BRIERY

In July 2019, The Briery Retreat Centre in Ilkley, owned and managed by the Sisters of the Cross and Passion, had the pleasure of inviting Fr. Don Senior, C.P. to lead a 6-day Preached Retreat on the theme of *The Gospels as portraits of Jesus—his life, his identity, and his mission—and as proclamation of the Word of God.*

Don is a Passionist of the Holy Cross Province of the U.S.A. and President Emeritus and Chancellor of **Catholic Theological Union** in Chicago (CTU), the largest Roman Catholic graduate school of ministry in the United States, where he is also a member of the faculty as Professor of New Testament.

The house was full to the brim with lay people, sisters and clergy and we were certainly not disappointed as we were treated to the richness of the Gospels from a man who not only knew them intimately but evidently strives to live them out.

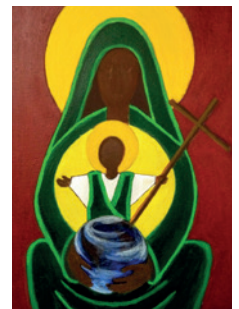
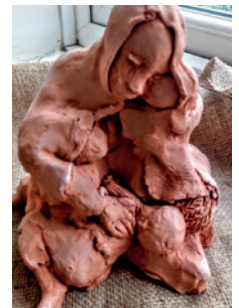
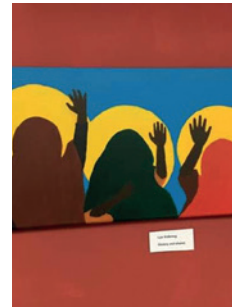
## SPIRITUALITY & ART EXHIBITION

Alongside the Passionist Seminar *“Love and Suffering: exploring the meaning of the Passion”* which was held at Minsteracres in September 2019; Community of the Passion members Lya Vollering and John Thornhill co-ordinated a small exhibition of art which was designed to provide a visual, tactile and creative space for the development of the themes of the event. Set within the Walled Garden, the exhibition hoped to draw delegates into a natural and green environment to reflect, contemplate and imagine.

There are many links between art, spirituality and suffering. Art functions on different levels. For the individual artist, art is an exercise in reflection, imagination, expression and prayer; often bringing into shape deep-felt passion. But art is also “experienced” by the “other”: it can say something deeply personal to an individual, unbeknown to the artist; or it can speak to a group of shared experience. Picasso’s memorial to the atrocities of Spanish Civil War in his mural “Guernica” is an example of this. Thirdly, in Orthodox religious traditions, the religious image is said to “behold the viewer”, that is, the icon looks at the viewer and the viewer is drawn into the spiritual realm of the icon. This is an invitation to participate in sacred mysteries and to be placed in passionate places.

The process of making art is also a difficult and painful process for many artists. The cliché of the “tortured artist” vaguely veils a fundamental fact. Artists often experience great creative frustration, loneliness, a sense of pointlessness and failure when at work; and then finally they often experience the misunderstanding, apathy and judgement of the viewer. The playwright John Logan in his portrait of the American abstract expressionist painter Mark Rothko has Rothko say: *“I do get depressed when I think how people are going to see my pictures. If they’re going to be unkind... Selling a picture is like sending a child who cannot see into a room full of blades. It’s going to get hurt and it’s never been hurt before, it doesn’t know what hurt is.”* Rothko’s own work was a kind of via negativa an attempt to expressive creatively the elusive form beyond substance.

Finally, art can be an act of healing and the creation of meaning in the face of suffering and loss. It can offer hope to an individual and offer collective voice to a people. The Victorian philanthropist John Lubbock once wrote *“as the sun colours flowers, so does art colour life”* and the French author André Maurois could comment: *“art is an effort to create, beside the real world, a more humane world.”* - by John Thornhill





# WE ALWAYS MENTION YOU IN OUR PRAYERS AND THANK GOD FOR YOU ALL

*Homily from Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham, given at the Mass for Blessed Dominic Barberi at Sutton Shrine, 26<sup>th</sup> August 2019.*



This year's annual Mass on the Feast of our mutual friend and patron, Blessed Dominic Barberi, has a special significance. As we gather at his shrine here in Sutton it is right that we remember the moment in Blessed Dominic's priestly ministry for which he is most widely known – the reception of Blessed John Henry Newman into full communion with the Catholic Church. In less than two month's time Blessed Cardinal Newman will be canonised in Rome by Pope Francis on 13 October.

This is a cause of great thanksgiving and celebration in my own diocese, where the precious sacramental moments that forever link Blessed Dominic and Blessed John Henry took place at Littlemore in Oxford. It is a cause of great thanksgiving across England and Wales, where Blessed Cardinal Newman will be the first English Pastor and Confessor to be canonised, other than for martyrdom, since the Reformation – and there is widespread international interest and devotion to the new saint.

And I would venture to say that, if such events are noted in the eternal Kingdom of the Blessed, then Blessed Dominic himself will be rejoicing that the man he helped to draw closer to Christ – because he showed him his own true pathway to salvation – is being raised to the altar and universally recognised for the holiness of his life.

And what then of Blessed Dominic himself? We can take a steer from Blessed Cardinal Newman who was among the first to recognise the humility, truth and holiness that shone from the teaching, pastoral ministry and personal example of Blessed Dominic. His life was shaped by the charism of St Paul of the Cross which he witnessed in action in the mission of the Passionists in his native Italy.

We should not allow the famous moments at Littlemore to overshadow the totality of Blessed Dominic's life and witness as a Passionist. After all, it was the very witness of his life in its totality and integrity that first attracted the notice and came to deserve the

## **CANONISATION OF ST JOHN HENRY NEWMAN**

*John Kearns CP (Provincial) and Malachy Steenson (Herne Bay) represented St Joseph's Province at the canonisation of St John Henry Newman in Rome on 9th October 2019. Pictured: John Kearns CP (Provincial) and Fr Joachim (our General), front row is Malachy Steenson CP (Herne Bay), Sr Martin Joseph CP and Alessandro Foppoli CP (the General's Secretary, and their guide for the day).*

confidence of Blessed John Henry and his friends. This is no mere cameo role in the story of another great saint. It is a compelling story in its own right, which deserves to be told and celebrated for its own significance for us today.

The first reading of today's Mass introduces the work which lay at the heart of Blessed Dominic's life – a work which has made such a difference to the story of the Catholic Church in England and Wales and in the lives of many thousands of people alongside Blessed Cardinal Newman. We heard St Paul, at the beginning of his letter to the Church at Thessaloniki, expressing his pastoral concern and his love for the people he had come to know and form in their Christian faith and way of life.

There is always a poignancy in St Paul's letters to the Christian communities he had founded and where he had spent many months of his own life. Missionaries and priests who have to move from one community to another will recognise the abiding concern that St Paul feels for the people he once lived among. The generous and adventurous spirit that led St Paul on his many missionary journeys also inspired his namesake, St Paul of the Cross, as founder of the Passionists to look beyond the horizons of the world that was familiar to him.

The courage that drove St Paul of the Cross – part of the charism which his followers share – also drove Blessed Dominic. His natural curiosity about

the wider world – and in particular his longing to come to England – are another expression of his faithfulness to Christ. We see in Blessed Dominic his obedience, under his Passionist superiors, to the command of our Lord to go out and proclaim the Good News. We see the fruits of that obedience in his ministry in Staffordshire and beyond.

Blessed Dominic was himself a great founder of communities which would share and develop the charism that he was charged to bring to England. The Passionist Fathers here could tell you much more than I can about the story of the communities founded by Blessed Dominic in London, in the West Country and of course here in Sutton. He could echo the words of St Paul to the Church at Thessaloniki: *We always mention you in our prayers and thank God for you all.*

The example of Blessed Dominic encourages us in our own Christian vocation – and the contemporary witness of the Passionists should be a valuable reminder – that we need to extend ourselves beyond what is familiar and comfortable and be prepared to reach out into unfamiliar territory. With Blessed Dominic we can be confident that we will not do so alone. The pattern of ministry that we see in his life shows us that our Lord will always be at our side to guide and strengthen us – and that he will inevitably send us companions to share the work he has entrusted to us.

Now that Blessed Cardinal Newman is to be canonised there should be

nothing to divert our energy and attention from the efforts we need to make for the cause of Blessed Dominic. We know from his writings that this is something Blessed John Henry Newman would welcome, and he can invoke his prayers for this purpose. I want to invite the Oratory Fathers in England and Wales and all those who love Blessed Cardinal Newman to pray with us for the miracle that will lead towards the canonisation Blessed Dominic.

As we give thanks for the sanctity of his life and the fruitfulness of his work we are encouraged to keep on praying by the words of Blessed Dominic himself: *I consider it should be held as a maxim that when God stirs the hearts of many to ask for any one thing it is an evident sign that He wishes to grant it.*

Blessed Dominic Barberi....  
Pray for us.

**C**ongratulations to Vincent Manning who was awarded a PhD. Vincent is chair of CAPS (Catholics for Aids Prevention and Support) and a member of the Community of the Passion. His research into the theological meaning of HIV in the Church was supervised through St. Marys University, Twickenham. His final thesis, defended in October 2019, includes interviews with 8 theologians and practitioners who have written about or had experience of HIV: Timothy Radcliffe, James Alison, Julie Clague, Ije Ajibade, Christina Beardsley, David McLoughlin and the last recorded interviews with the late Kevin Kelly and Sebastian Moore. In Part I of the thesis Vincent considers how the church has responded to HIV in our midst historically. The heart of the thesis and main argument is made in Part II. Drawing from the experience of 10 Interviews with Christians living with HIV in England he considers HIV theologically through the lens of Passionist spirituality. Manning argues that an HIV diagnosis may be considered as a privileged encounter with Christ in His Passion. His research keeps alive the memory of the Passion of Christ in a theologically practical and pastorally relevant way. The thesis will also be of interest academically, uncovering a type of 'underground theology'. Manning's research successfully combines phenomenological research methods to reveal fresh theological insights into the lived experience of a marginalised group in both society and church.

*Manning, V., 2019. Encountering Christ through the Passion of HIV: An inquiry into the theological meaning of HIV in the Church* is available from St. Marys University  
Open Research at:  
<https://research.stmarys.ac.uk/view/creators/Manning=3AVincent=3A=3A.html>



# WALKING WITH THE CRUCIFIED

In his invitation to write this article, Paschal suggested I might like to talk about how The Cross and Passion Sisters live true to the Charism of Elizabeth Prout and continue to walk with the crucified of today's world. This invitation has given me the opportunity to put on record an experience the Sisters in Botswana had which was truly Passionist and life changing.

In 1952, with our Passionist Brothers, the Sisters answered the call to go to Botswana, or Bechuanaland as it was known then. The simple lifestyle of the Botswana people and the importance they attributed to community and everyone's place in that community would have appealed to the hearts of Elizabeth Prout and Paul of the Cross - as it did to their Passionist followers. For the 30 years which followed, the Church in Botswana was Passionist. With hard work and living close to the lives of the people, we saw our schools, clinics and parishes flourish. Other Congregations joined us and they, too, flourished. The Government's wise use of wealth, from the recently discovered diamonds, saw developments in many areas.

Then, sometime in the 1980's, we

heard of this thing called AIDS! By the 1990's it was reported that Botswana had the highest incidence of this disease in the world. These were dark days. A positive diagnosis was a death sentence. The whole nation was shaken; every family was smitten in some way. What could we Sisters do? We took the decision to leave our institutions and work with and alongside the community.

The Government moved quickly. Hospitals could not cope; care for the most part had to be 'home-based'. We all had to do whatever we could. A second major source of infection was in the home. Through living in close proximity and sharing the things needed for daily living with people who had open sores, carers, many of them older people or children, were putting their own lives at risk. Teaching these carers basic medical skills and how to protect themselves was a priority. Government ensured that local clinics were equipped with 'home-based care' requirements and social workers in villages mobilised teams of 'home-based volunteers'. Here, the Sisters were able to help. We were there, day or night, with a truck or a car, to assist with this or that need.

Just as important were the hours spent in clinic waiting rooms or sitting with families grieving the loss of someone they loved. On Saturday mornings there were the funerals; as many as five taking place at the same time in the one cemetery. Very often these funerals were of students we had taught, colleagues or friends. Needless to say, our Botswana Sisters felt this suffering and grief most keenly.

In the mid-1990's news broke; there was 'treatment' available and the government would provide it for free. Despite all those who might die in the short term, this was hopeful news. However, treatment was anything but simple. Drug cocktails were individual to each person, had to be taken faithfully at various hours of the day and night and 'adherence' was closely monitored. Every clinic in the country was computerised so that wherever a patient went their medical details were available. This might breach GDPR rules today, but it saved the lives of so many.

New priorities were emerging: Getting people to their numerous appointments, registering orphans so they and their carers could get the

monthly food rations and other benefits are just some of the ways we could help. Aid was coming from many sources. Missions, Churches, NGO's, the International Community all responded. Harvard had a research centre, Rotary built a special Day Centre for Orphans which they entrusted to one of our Sisters to run, the Baylor had a Centre of Clinical Excellence for Children with AIDS - to mention but a few. Children with AIDS, for the most part, were born with the virus having had it transmitted from their mother. Twenty years on, modern medicine has managed, to a large extent, to control the various ways in which the virus is transmitted and found more manageable forms of treatment.

Living through those years, those Passionist priests, brothers and sisters shared their daily stories with each other. For me, and I think for all of us, this was, and still is, a defining moment in our lives.

*Sr. Carmel Gorman CP*



## LOVE AND SUFFERING: FIVE DAY SEMINAR AT MINSTERACRES BRINGS PASSIONISTS FROM ACROSS THE WORLD *by Jo Siedlecka*

**T**hey came from Ireland, Australia, Poland, Botswana, Germany, Sweden, Tanzania, Germany, The Netherlands, and, of course, from England. This year's International Passionist Seminar, held bi-annually at Minsteracres Retreat Centre in County Durham, had the title "Love and Suffering", and over five days from 16th to 20th September had a range of speakers exploring those themes and how they related to the Passionist Charism, keeping alive "The Memory of the Passion".

As well as Passionist brothers from six provinces, there were also a number of Cross and Passion Sisters from England, some members of the Community of the Passion (CoP) and

some staff and volunteers from the community at Minsteracres.

Fr Dennis Travers CP from the Australian Passionist Province held the week together, chairing discussion sessions and introducing speakers, and led an introductory reflective session on the Monday, which in the afternoon was followed by the opening of an art exhibition at the Minsteracres Walled Garden. Put together by Community of the Passion members Lya Vollerling and John Thornhill, the "pop up" gallery shared the Love and Suffering" theme, and featured paintings, collages and sculptures from a range of artists with Passionist connections. This included an installation on a washing line outside entitled "Underpants to the Underpass" which had been used recently as part

of an Extinction Rebellion protest against a proposed £30m development on the A69 in Hexham.

On Tuesday, keynote speaker Karen Kilby, Bede Professor of Catholic Theology in the Department of Theology and Religion at Durham University, led three sessions, which were followed on Wednesday and Thursday by sessions from six Passionists on academic, theological, reflective and activist themes. This included session from our own Martin Newell cp entitled "Love and Suffering in a time of Climate Emergency", relating the Passionist charism to the "Crucified Earth" in the context of his role in campaigning against climate change.

After Wednesday's reflective sharing session, the three speakers for that day come together for a short, videoed conversation where they commented on how they had been impacted by

each other's sessions and in particular the value of face to face connections during the week. Therese O'Regan CP of the Cross and Passion sisters in England said, "That's the beauty of coming together and sharing, I agree that the digital world is wonderful, but there is nothing to beat the human contact." In reply Łukasz Andrzejewski CP said, "That's why gatherings like this are so important, not just to share the stories but the experiences as well." Every one of the fifty or so delegates took shared stories and experiences back to their own context, but it was also hoped that the seminar would become a resource for other Passionists and would be Passionists. As such the sessions were videoed and are being assembled on a Vimeo channel, and notes and presentations are being assembled for a resource on the website.



# CRUCIFIED EARTH

In September 2019, The Passionist Congregation in England and Wales issued a statement in recognition of the climate and ecological emergency, as a pledge to work to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions in their own operations by



2025 and to call on government to tell the truth about the emergency and to work towards a zero emissions target also by 2025.

We Passionists of St Joseph's Province in England and Wales, recognise that we are in a Climate and Ecological Emergency.

The life of God's creation on earth is threatened. The climate is changing rapidly due to human actions, and species are threatened with extinction at an ever-increasing rate. Both of these undermine the basis for human life and desecrate God's creation.

God created human beings in the Divine image, to love their Creator and to care for all Creation, both human and the whole natural world. We are called to love our neighbour as ourselves. Laudato Si reminds us that the Earth is our neighbour, our mother and our sister. Our globalised society has harnessed God-given human ingenuity for the universal common good, in ways that contribute to the good of many millions of our sisters and brothers. However, in the process, we are now damaging the very fruitfulness of creation that God intended, and on which we depend. In this kairos moment, this crisis-point at which we have arrived, emergency action is needed to protect God's earth and God's poor. We, especially in the richer nations of the world, need to change direction, to repent. If we do not, we know the poorest will once more suffer first and most. Christians must be open to, and speak, the

truth that sets us free. So, we commit ourselves to integrate human, climate and ecological justice in every aspect of our life, work, worship and prayer.

We pledge to act on this Emergency in our own lives and ministry. We will also work with and support our members, friends and government, at local and national levels, in tackling this Emergency, and we call on others to do the same.

These are our intentions:

### 1. WE WILL TELL THE TRUTH

Governments and broadcasters must tell the truth about the Climate and Ecological Emergency, reverse inconsistent policies and communicate the urgency for far-reaching systemic change. We will communicate with those associated with us and those we minister and work with, and support them to discover the truth about the Emergency and the changes that are needed.

### 2. WE WILL TAKE ACTION

Governments must enact legally binding policy measures to reduce emissions to net zero by 2025 and to reduce consumption levels. We pledge to work towards reducing our emissions to net zero by 2025. We will challenge policies and actions of local and national governments and their agencies, where they do not help to reduce emissions or consumption levels. We will actively



Martin & CCA (Christian Climate Action)



Martin & Rev Sue Parfitt on train



Martin's arrest



XR Protest



work to inspire, enable, imagine and model ways in which our faith and our congregations can protect and renew our life-sustaining planet.

### 3. WE ARE COMMITTED TO JUSTICE

*The emergency has arisen from deeply systemic injustices. Faith communities can imagine and unleash shifts in the ways people relate to one another and the world, in our values and behaviours. We will do what is possible to help all those associated with us and those we minister and work with to talk about how the Emergency will affect them and the changes that are needed. We believe that all truth-telling, action and democratic work must be underpinned by a commitment to justice, both within our nation and towards other nations, particularly for those who are poorer.*

Martin Newell CP was arrested three times during the Extinction Rebellion (XR) climate change protests in London in October. In 2015, Martin helped found Christian Climate Action (CCA). CCA is a community of Christians acting in the face of imminent and catastrophic climate breakdown. Inspired by Jesus Christ they take non-violent action to make the change needed. During the last 18 months CCA effectively became the Christian section of XR.

Following the lead of cosmologist theologian Thomas Berry CP, Passionists recognise our dependency on our wounded Mother

Earth. In this way Martin's participation in this response to the signs of the times, fulfils our vocation to 'keep alive the memory of the passion', the passion of the suffering Earth.

Martin said: **“WE ACT TO RAISE THE ALARM IN A SPIRIT OF REPENTANCE FOR OUR COMPLICITY IN SINS AGAINST GOD’S EARTH AND GOD’S POOR. PARLIAMENT HAS DECLARED A CLIMATE EMERGENCY BUT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES WERE VIRTUALLY ABSENT FROM THE QUEEN’S SPEECH. WE NEED ACTION NOT WORDS.”**

The protests disrupted much of central London by blocking roads. Two of Martin's arrests came outside London City Airport and New Scotland Yard. The third was at Shadwell DLR station, where Martin, along with CCA members Rev Sue Parfitt and Phil Kingston, climbed on top or glued themselves to the train.

## PASSIONIST GRANTS PANEL NEWS

One of the projects given recent support through the Passionist Grants Panel involved young people from Hallam Diocese who have been challenging world leaders and newly elected MPs in Britain on climate change.

As world leaders were meeting at the UN climate summit in Madrid last December, 50 young people from seven Catholic secondary schools gathered in Sheffield and urged them: “Don't let climate change threaten our future”. It's a message they also want the new clutch of MPs in Britain to hear loud and clear.

The 'Care for Creation Day' on 9 December 2019 was organised by Anna and Eleanor Marshall (aged 16 and 14 respectively) from Chesterfield. The conference gave 11-14 year-olds a rare opportunity for speak for themselves about the environmental crisis facing them - and, as one young person put it, to “rewrite the future”.

*Anna and Eleanor are pictured with at the conference with Paul Bodenham of Green Christian (Passionist Partners), James Trewby of the Columbans and Very Rev. Ralph Heskett, Bishop of Hallam.*



## COP NEWS

In November 2019, seventeen members of the Community of the Passion gathered for a weekend of prayer, reflection and general camaraderie at Hinsley Hall, Leeds. The weekend had added significance as it saw the first meeting of the Community of the Passion's Core Group (Richard Solly, Kris Pears and Wayne Darbyshire).



The Core Group has been given the remit of enabling a decision-making process for the larger group which has, until now, relied on two annual gatherings to conduct and further its business. The core group is made up of elected members drawn from each of the three regional groups.

## AT THE MOVIES: THE TWO POPES

**T**hanks to ICN for permission to reproduce this film review by Fr. Terry Tastard.

The film begins with Cardinal Bergoglio in Argentina being summoned to meet Pope Benedict XVI at Castel Gandolfo. The cardinal had been intending to go anyway, to ask the pope's permission to retire. The initial meeting in the Castel Gandolfo gardens sees Benedict XVI interrogate Bergoglio in what seems like cold fury. The cardinal's people-friendly, social justice ministry among the poor has led Benedict XVI to fear that doctrine and tradition are being undermined. In a stinging rebuke he tells the cardinal that he disagrees with everything he says and does and asks if Bergoglio is sitting lightly even to his priesthood - whereupon shock and hurt register on the cardinal's face. All is not as it seems. In the evening Bergoglio tries repeatedly to get Benedict to sign his resignation papers. Benedict cannot acquiesce: people would take it as a sign that he was criticising Bergoglio and had pushed him into this. Then the tables are turned: it transpires that weary in body and spirit, it is Benedict who intends to retire, and sees Bergoglio as a likely successor. In fact, Benedict seems to accept this, repeating the old saying that each pope is elected to correct his predecessor's mistakes. The two men

then spar, with Bergoglio trying to get Benedict to change his mind.

The film then goes into Bergoglio's back story, with Benedict saying, 'I've read your files'. This framing device goes on for too long and at this point the film does sag a little. The past includes a young Bergoglio renouncing his girlfriend to enter the Jesuits, and the middle-aged Benedict grappling with Argentina's period of brutal rule under a junta of generals. During the latter period he distanced the order from Jesuits who were closely identified with the poor, thus exposing them to arrest, torture and even murder. The film is frank about Bergoglio's well-meaning but misguided attempts to protect his priests by ingratiating himself with the junta. Bergoglio admits to Benedict that one of the survivors always regarded him as a traitor.

Pope and cardinal travel back to the Vatican where the sparring continues, although it is clear that at the same time a rapport is developing. Each makes his confession to the other. When Benedict makes his confession to Bergoglio the content is not audible to us, but the cardinal's reaction is horror that at some point Benedict XVI knew something (presumably as Cardinal Ratzinger) and did not act on it. I wondered if this was a reference to the infamous Fr Maciel - against whom

Benedict did in fact proceed when he became pope. We end with the election of Pope Francis.

The two main characters are beautifully acted. Anthony Hopkins as Pope Benedict conveys an incisive intellect worn down by the cares of office and deteriorating health, an intriguing mixture of frailty and strength. Jonathan Pryce as Cardinal Bergoglio radiates humanity, warmth and an ability to relate to people from all walks of life. It is all sumptuously filmed. The dialogue not only crackles but in the



first part is shot through with humour. 'In Argentina', Bergoglio tells a bewildered Benedict, 'tango and football are compulsory.' How much of the film is true to life? Who knows? But you do wish it were.

## CELEBRATIONS



On Saturday 29th June Bishop William Kenney (left) and Father John McCormack CP (right) celebrated their 50-year anniversary to the priesthood with a mass held at St Joseph's, Highgate in North London, a Passionist parish.

Together with Fr Anthony Hale CP the trio were ordained in St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, on 29 June 1969 by Archbishop George Patrick Dwyer. Unfortunately, Fr Anthony was not well enough to attend the celebration mass.



On 15th December 2019 Father Malachy Steenson marked 70 years of profession. Following a celebratory mass in the parish at Herne Bay, Passionist confreres, parishioners and friends gathered for the occasion in the nearby parish centre.

# SKULLDUGGERY IN ROME?

by Ben  
Lodge CP



As a young Anglican curate in 1824, Ignatius Spencer was working in the parish on the Althorp estate. He faithfully visited all of his parishioners, and those of other denominations, always exhorting them to lead good and holy lives. He was convinced from his earliest days that we are all called to a life of perfection.

By 1831 Ignatius had become a Roman Catholic and had moved to the Venerable English College in Rome to study for the priesthood. While there he became acutely aware of a set of principles which indicated that the most perfect way of life was to live out one's life under the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. On one level he saw that the monastic life was the nearest thing in the Church to following Christ, but it left him uneasy. He was convinced that it should be possible for a diocesan priest, in a manner in keeping with his particular state, to make to his Bishop religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

He discussed the problem with his Jesuit spiritual director, and said he was not at ease with the hierarchical

structure, whereby at the top were people living monastic lives, then the clergy, then the laity. He began to grapple with the idea of everyone living out the Christian life while also living lives of poverty, chastity and obedience. Ignatius planned to present his idea to the Pope, but accepted the negative reaction of his spiritual director, and did not act.

Ignatius was not concerned solely with other people achieving perfection; he also felt the need to live a life of perfection himself. So, while he was parish priest in West Bromwich, he persuaded the Bishop to take all of his money so that Ignatius could live in absolute poverty. Ignatius wanted to live out his life as a Religious, but he recognised that this would mean his leaving the jurisdiction of the Bishop, and he had been convinced that the best way to evangelise in England was through the parish structures.

Following a serious illness in 1839, Ignatius was appointed spiritual director of the students at Oscott seminary. While there he tried to organise not only the clergy and students, but also the lay staff, to live

out their lives as if vowed. The eventual outcome of all of this was for Ignatius to enter the Passionists in 1846.

It was probably in 1847 that Ignatius wrote a paper entitled "*On the Christian Perfection of the Laity*". Unfortunately, this document is no longer in existence, but Ignatius refers to it several times in his Diary and Letters. We know that Ignatius discussed it with the Passionist General Consultor, Fr. Pio Cayro. We also know that on three preaching tours of Ireland in 1854, Ignatius insisted that England could only be converted by the prayers and personal sanctification of the Irish. On a number of occasions, he wrote reflections on the evangelical counsels and Christian Perfection.

In November 1855 Ignatius moved to Sutton, St. Helens, and immediately read his paper on Christian Perfection to the Community. In January the following year he read the paper to Bishop Turner of Salford, Canon Croskell, and Fr. Gaudentius Rossi, all of whom had been together at the founding of the Sisters of the Cross and Passion.

Ignatius tried to gain support for his idea by presenting the paper to various Bishops on the Continent – not always successfully. The only recorded negative comments came from the Bishop of Nancy and the Master General of the Dominicans. In April 1856 Ignatius translated the document into Italian with the intention of sending it to Propaganda Fide after receiving approval from the Passionist Superior General.

However, in June 1856 Ignatius received a fatal blow: Fr. Ignatius Paoli, a lecturer in theology in SS. John and Paul, wrote on behalf of the Father General. The letter contained a formal directive to stop speaking and writing about the evangelical counsels. Ignatius drafted a reply to Paoli, but then decided not to send it – he wanted to accept God's will, as revealed in his Superiors.

Interestingly, Propaganda asked Ignatius to write down "his rules for perfection", and two days later Ignatius sent them to Rome. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to find either the original or a copy.

If we step back two years to 1854, we find a letter from Ignatius to his Provincial, Fr. Eugene Martorelli, in which he clearly indicates both the origin of his ideas, and the basic content of the paper. Ignatius explains he has discussed the matter with Bishop Turner who was very interested in what Ignatius had to say, especially about a young woman, a convert of Ignatius eight years earlier. She had made several attempts at entering a convent, but had never succeeded, either because of her health or for other reasons. Ignatius allowed her to take a vow of chastity. He wrote to the Provincial:

Dr. Turner was much distressed about her, and so I begged leave to explain to him what had been on my mind for 24 years, and what has been sometimes approved, sometimes disapproved by learned people, but what I still wished very much to be allowed to propose, namely the practice of religious perfection in the common body of the Church. I said also what I have felt all along, that this is the very thing wanted for the conversion of good Protestants, namely that they should see in practice what we try to convince them of theoretically, that our Church is the same as that of the Apostles; by seeing that the same beautiful fruits which the primitive Church bore as related in the 2nd. and 4th. chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, may be brought forth again by the Catholic Church, without the necessity of people entering Religious Orders for the purpose, unless they have a special vocation to

one; and that the new restoration of the hierarchy in England makes it, to my mind, a beautiful opportunity for the attempt in this country.

Ignatius saw that if Christians lived the vowed life, they would be living in close imitation of the Primitive and Apostolic Church. While initially he thought of his proposal as a new way of Christian living solely for the clergy, he now wanted to expand it to the laity.

It is possible to reasonably summarise what might have been the content of Ignatius' paper on the sanctification of Christians in the world.

1. He did not envisage writing a treatise on the spiritual life of Christians in the world, although he was familiar with the example of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, and the "Introduction to the Devout Life" of St. Francis de Sales.
2. His starting point could only have been the expression of his conviction regarding the priority of prayer for the conversion of England, and for Church unity. He always insisted on this fundamental necessity, citing the words of Jesus at the last supper: "May they all be one." Ignatius had an unshakeable confidence in the power of prayer for unity. The sanctification of Christians was planned to support this power.

3. The example of the faithful in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, led him to promote a model of Christian life with complete abandonment of worldly riches. The Christian life put into practices as perfectly as possible, not only by the clergy, but also by lay people, would have a considerable influence on the conversion of non-Catholics.

4. Ignatius envisaged the possibility of there being a certain number of lay people in a position to live a Christian life based on the private profession of a form of religious vows adapted to their particular state.

The fact that Ignatius Spencer's paper met with the disapproval of certain ecclesiastical authorities, including those of his own Congregation, is not surprising. Given that vows, based on the evangelical counsels, were considered as being solely reserved for those who had embraced the religious life: the distinguishing features between priests and Religious on the one hand, and the laity on the other, was in the nineteenth century, accepted without question.

One has the impression that Ignatius' paper was made to "disappear" because he went too far in treating the laity as though they were Religious living in the world. For

Ignatius, perfection consisted in responding to the evangelical counsels by the commitment of vows. The tendency to seek perfection is perhaps typical of converts; it was certainly true of Ignatius Spencer. It can be affirmed however, that not only was Ignatius a pioneer in regard to ecumenical prayer, but in his own day, he advocated the opening up of the way for all those who, as lay people, wished to live the evangelical counsels in the world as perfectly as possible.

The Second Vatican Council was to make real much of the vision of Ignatius. The fruit of his thought can be found in the Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium); The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes); The Decree on Religious Life (Perfectae Caritatis); and The Decree on the Laity (Apostolica Actuositatem). Ignatius was no enclosed contemplative Religious, but a man who believed that all the children of God are called to live a life of perfection.



# 40 YEARS A PASSIONIST PRIEST

John Sherrington

In July 2019, John Sherrington celebrated forty years of being a Passionist priest. The occasion was marked by a celebration and a Mass of Thanksgiving for John's life and ministry at Hinsley Hall in Leeds.

John's life as a Passionist priest has been diverse and passionate: over four decades John has walked alongside the 'crucified ones' and through his presence and witness many women and men have been reminded of the Passion of Christ. His journey has taken him from the inner-city, to the Philippines and back to Newcastle-Upon-Tyne (he was born in nearby Blyth).

John spent many years working as a road-sweeper as a 'worker priest'. The worker priest movement began in Belgium after the disaster of war in Europe. It was an out-ward facing movement in which priests set aside their traditional social roles to take ordinary jobs, sharing the living conditions and social and economic problems of their co-workers. Their experiences motivated many worker-priests to become politically active, joining their fellow workers in demonstrations regarding such matters as anti-racism, social justice and peace. In later years, John became active in supporting people living with HIV and Aids. The 1980s and 1990s was a time of great fear and prejudice directed at people living with HIV and Aids; and John was a powerful presence of solidarity and support for many living with the virus. John was a chaplain for the Positive Catholics ministry offering pastoral support to women and men living with HIV and their friends and

families. Speaking about John's ministry, Vincent Manning, Chair of Catholics for Aids Prevention and Support said:

"The gifts of a priest within a fellowship of the weak are so valuable and important. We need the gifts of teaching, and healing, and loving presence. A good priest animates the sacred in ways that are empowering. John Sherrington has shared the richness of Passionist spirituality with us so generously. We will continue, with the help of the Holy Spirit and each other, to share that great gift of love with others. Thank you, John for your witness and your ministry. Thank you for your willingness to be vulnerable and share the place of weakness with us."

*For the Celebration, Catholics for Aids Prevention and Support commissioned an icon of Christ Pantokrator written by iconographer Noreen Thornhill.*

*This icon was presented to John during the celebration. The sweeping*



*brush symbolises his years as a 'worker priest'. We give thanks to God for the life and ministry of our brother John, who sadly passed away on 4th February 2020.*

# REQUIESCAT IN PACE

*an Appreciation by  
Ged Murphy*

Fr Timothy Cullen CP passed away peacefully on 14th August 2019 at Nazareth House, East Finchley after a long period of failing health. His birth name was Patrick and he was one of four children, brought up in Liverpool, but always proud to say he was born in Letterkenny, Donegal, Ireland.

Tim was a bright boy. He passed the eleven plus exam so enabling him to attend SFX Grammar School in Liverpool (He wanted to go there because they played football and not the rugby played at closer schools). He was from a "Blue" family and remained a life-long Everton supporter. His dry and wicked sense of humour helped him to cope with the see-sawing fortunes of his favourite football team!

He then joined the Passionist juniorate school at Blythe Hall, Ormskirk at the age of thirteen. He developed a love of languages which he attributed to the teaching of Fr Aiden Baker (RIP). He was always a great reader. Once he was ordained as a priest, he worked with Young Christian Worker groups and other young people. He always said he learned as much from children and young people as he had taught them. He gave up cigarettes because young people challenged him to do so, when he was trying to prevent them starting to smoke.

He spent his happiest years in Wales

proud to have learned the language. He loved St David's and for many years ran St Non's retreat house. He was also Vocations Director for many years and whilst at St Non's he developed a vibrant non-residential lay community.

Tim moved to St Joseph's, Highgate, London and was a part of the community there for the last fifteen years. He carried on doing supply work in Wales whenever he was able. He had a great devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes, attending her shrine with the Welsh pilgrimage each year.

He was a very independent person. He would prefer to care for himself than accept help. Over the last few years ill health and infirmity overtook him. He spent the last eighteen months in Nazareth House care home still wanting to self-care as much as possible. He attended and concelebrated Mass each day and, when able, went to Sunday Mass and lunch with the community at St Joseph's.

Over Fifty members of his family attended his funeral mass along with people from Wales and Ireland and parishioners of Highgate. He was buried at the Passionist grave in East Finchley. May he Rest in Peace.

*Fr Timothy Cullen CP*



## FAREWELL TO A MUCH-LOVED FRIEND

It was with great sadness and shock that we learned of the death of Sr. Ita Keane, a member of the Sisters of Mercy.

Tragically, Sr Ita was knocked down by a car while crossing the road in Birmingham and died later in hospital on 26th April 2019. Ita was a member of the community at St Mary's Convent, Handsworth, Birmingham who, with the other sisters, always guaranteed a warm welcome to those of us who attended Community of the Passion and Province meetings at the convent in recent years.

Ita's sister, Mairead Paoli, paid loving tribute, calling her a "special lady" who spent her life helping people and who enjoyed travelling.

She added: "Ita, we know what you would say to all those affected - be at peace. We were blessed to have you in our lives and we will always remember you."

# CAPS ANNUAL RETREAT AT DOUAI ABBEY

by John Thornhill

In 2016 the Passionists established partnerships with groups with whom the Congregation shares common aims and goals.

Positive Catholics (and its parent Catholics for Aids Prevention and Support) became a Passionist Partner because of its active commitment to women and men on the margins; and because of a long-standing pastoral relationship between the Passionists and the Positive Catholics ministry through the witness and work of John Sherrington (CP).

Vincent Manning, Chair of CAPS and member of the Community of the Passion said of John Sherrington's ministry:

'John Sherrington's support for Positive Catholics has been a blessing to us. We have seen how healing is experienced and people are strengthened through a deeper understanding of God's solidarity

with us. The interpretation of painful experience through the lens of the Cross and Passion has the potential to respond to suffering in its depths. However, John Sherrington has helped us to grow in our understanding that God has no hands but ours. We meet Christ in and through each other. I thank God for John's gifts of attentive listening; the carefully chosen word; and his healing touch.'

In continuation with this Passionist tradition, John Kearns' presence at the Positive Catholics retreat recognises that in the UK HIV is still very much here; and it remains a challenge for Christian Communities.

There are 102,000 people living with HIV in the UK. Although the UK has made significant progress in terms of providing access to antiretroviral therapies, there is a growing problem of later HIV diagnosis: often when health has deteriorated (42% in 2016),



and there are also decreasing levels of public understanding and awareness about HIV issues. In addition, for people living with HIV, ageing is emerging as a long-term challenge; as are the negative effects of long-term and extreme poverty and wider social exclusion.

Catholics for Aids Prevention and Support (CAPS) is now the last remaining nationwide Christian charity responding to the pastoral and spiritual needs of people living with HIV here in the UK. CAPS regularly encounters people experiencing difficulties with asylum applications, homelessness, mental health issues, complex intersecting illnesses, social isolation; and extreme poverty.

Vincent Manning, Chair of CAPS and member of the Community of the Passion said: 'The "normalisation" of HIV and its reduction to a medical problem means that people who are living with or affected by HIV are marginalised in society. Not only the actual physical, material and social needs, but the spiritual and pastoral needs of people living with HIV are neglected also.'

John's presence at the Positive Catholics weekend was a powerful sign of welcome and solidarity from the Passionist Congregation with women and men from all over the world who are living in different ways with HIV.



## ROMERO LECTURE 2019: PROPHETIC TRAJECTORIES OF HOPE FROM SAN SALVADOR TO LIVERPOOL

by Steve Atherton – Member of the Community of the Passion

**W**ednesday 25 September was an extraordinary day in the life of Liverpool Archdiocese.

After an all-day event where the themes of the Synod were presented to Synod members setting out the course for diocesan renewal, there followed an evening lecture which demonstrated that current developments are rooted deeply in diocesan history, in its devotion to St Óscar Romero and in the lives of three priests who lived their prophetic witness in this Archdiocese.

Under the auspices of the Romero Trust, and in Liverpool Hope University's beautiful Capstone Theatre, David McLoughlin delivered a lecture titled 'Prophetic Trajectories of Hope from San Salvador to Liverpool: A Celebration of the ministries of Oscar Romero, Austin Smith, Tom Cullinan and Kevin Kelly'.

In her introduction of the speaker, Pat Jones, herself a Liverpool prophet, spoke of how we had taken our three prophets for granted, assuming that what they taught

and what their lives demonstrated was the norm. It seemed normal at the time because we saw it daily but now they're gone, it's clear just how extraordinary they were.

With an opening reference to Moses, one of David's themes was that the 'prophetic trajectories' of all four men began with contact with the real lives of the faithful among whom they served and lived, requiring a struggle to loosen the grip of the background and training that had prepared them to have all the answers to the questions nobody is asking. In their radicalisation, all four were deeply affected by the cry of the poor, the 'za'ak' of scripture which is both the cry of grief and the lodging of a formal complaint.

As demonstrated by Pope Francis when he cited see-judge-act in *Laudato si'*, methodology that begins with experience has different results from that which begins with theory. This change of theological methodology – from starting with first principles to starting with lived experience – engages the heart as well as the head so that Romero's episcopal motto 'Sentir con la Iglesia' expanded from merely 'think with the mind of the Church' to include 'feel with the heart of the Church'.

Developing the insight that the Magnificat came from the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth, the first prophets of the New Testament, David pointed out that they were foreshadowing God's bias to the poor as shown in the Beatitudes; the word 'ptochoi', translated in the Beatitudes as 'the poor', actually means 'the destitute'. To illustrate how this changes attitudes and practice, he told the story of a poor woman telling hostile reporters that Romero was the first man who'd ever asked her what

she thought and listened to her reply. He likened this to the 'grace space' around Jesus's presence with those who connect with Him to this day.

Then as now, radical thought is a challenge. He noted how relevant the 'Liverpool three' are today because, in true prophetic style, they identified key issues ahead of the following pack: Austin Smith responded to race; Tom Cullinan to ecology; Kevin Kelly to gender. And all three to unjust structures, including within the Church.

Does our Church dare to point out the relationship between the stellar wealth of the minority super-rich and the growing poverty of the masses? Dare we lead on what might change things, a rediscovery and re-embracing of the vision of kinship and hospitality of Moses and the prophets so that we take the crucified people down from the cross? He quoted Austin Smith's realisation that he must confront 'any "not yet" in history which blesses or spiritualises ideologies and institutions which marginalise and oppress the powerless'.

David ended with a quotation from St Óscar Romero: 'I ask all of you, dear brothers and sisters, to view these things that are happening in our historical moment with a spirit of hope, generosity, and sacrifice. And let us do what we can.'

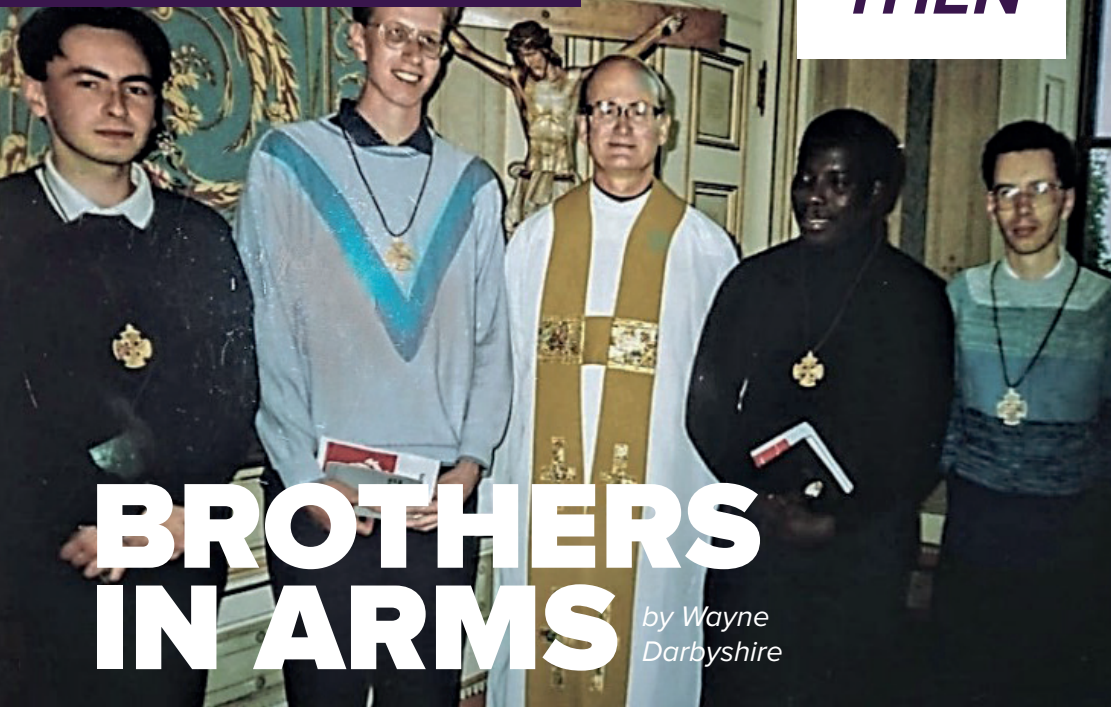
Summing up, Pat said that their questions remain live now and challenge us to accept their prophetic mantle so that our diocese incorporates their insights into the Synod's deliberations and recommendations. There is, she said, an 'ouch' as well as delight in hearing the challenge. We are the Church. Dare we engage with the prophetic imagination?





**THEN**

**NOW**



# BROTHERS IN ARMS

by Wayne Darbyshire



*My, how they've changed!*

In the beginning there were two. In January 1990, two young men (John Kearns and Wayne Darbyshire) were sent off to the monastery at Minsteracres to begin their formation as postulants. In September of that same year they were joined by two other youngsters to begin their novitiate with the Passionists. Thomas Esborn had already been a part of the community at St Joseph's, Highgate for a number of years whilst finishing his studies. Jeroen Hoogland was also a member of the Passionist community at St Gabriel's monastery, Haastrecht, again, as a student. Fr Aelred Smith CP was to be our novice master; and as novices we hung on every word he uttered! And so, Brothers Thomas, Jeroen, John and Edward (Wayne) set out on their voyage of self-discovery, immersing themselves

in Passionist life and in the spirituality of its founder, St Paul of the Cross.

The novitiate was an exciting yet very busy time for them but they were blessed with countless instruction and tutoring from Fathers Aelred, Luke, Mark, Frans, Paulinus, Benedict, Colum and Austin amongst others. They also had the good fortune to experience Passionist life in Northern Europe, spending time in the Netherlands, Germany and France (unfortunately the Maldives wasn't on the itinerary!) where they were taught much about the international congregation. There are far too many stories of their exploits to write here but they were to be gladly shared in the spirit of brotherly love at the long-awaited reunion.

Some 29 years have passed since those formative days in the novitiate and on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2019 the four brothers were finally reunited at the place where it all began, Minsteracres Retreat. Here we spent the whole weekend together, remembering stories of days gone by along with our hopes and dreams for the future. With much laughter, food and wine (the latter courtesy of the Rector!) an enjoyable time was had by all. We were in total agreement on just how fortunate we had been to share community life with each other. It was more than evident that, although some of us were a little rounder (not including Jeroen!) and greyer, Passionist spirituality still courses through our veins and is set as a seal upon our hearts. Each, in our own way, keeps alive the memory of the

passion in both the congregation and through the Community of the Passion. We also acknowledged that too many years had passed by without getting together and so our story is set to continue. Watch this space!

*These few paragraphs are dedicated to those who played a vital role in our formative years, many of whom are no longer with us.*

In fond, grateful and loving memory of Aelred our novice master, a humble, wise and holy man who made us the Passionists that we are today. May he rest in peace.

# THE LAST WORD

by Matthew  
Neville

## **T**he Risen Christ has gone ahead of us. Mark 16:5-7

The Resurrection is the beginning of everything. The moment of new creation. The bursting out of hope, love, creativity and healing. It is the event which makes reconciliation possible. As Christians we must keep returning to this source again and again.

At the end of Mark's Gospel three women discover an empty tomb. They are told by a young man dressed in white that the Risen Jesus is not there, he has gone ahead of you to Galilee, it is there that you will find him. (Mk 16:5-7).

Where is Galilee? It was the disciples' home region and their starting place. The risen Jesus has gone ahead of them back to the beginning of their story. He has gone back to their everyday normality. We are told that the first reaction of these women is to run away scared and to say nothing to anyone (Mk 16:8). And there the story ends, but what comes next? That is up to us to discover.

So, let's leap forward two thousand or so years to my daily reality. I live in a small Christian community in

Birmingham city centre. That same Risen Christ of 2000 years ago is also ahead of me. I have become very aware that being part of a Christian community can never be about trying to bring Jesus to the people around us. We are not giving Christ to the city. No, the Risen Christ is already ahead of us. To be present here as Christians is to trust in the promise that we will find him here in Galilee. This simple insight transforms everything. It is not my responsibility to bring the hope and joy and love of the resurrection; that presence is already here. My role is to try to discover the new creation and to live according to it.

It is very easy to see where the Crucified Christ is present: in the homeless who sleep all around us, in the addiction both to drugs and to consumerism, in the aggression and violence I see and hear through open windows as I lie in bed at night, in the military recruitment stands, in the banks which promote unethical investment, in the shops which invite us to buy the fruits of global exploitation. We see the Crucified Christ in the fear and lack of welcome so commonly directed to the most vulnerable and damaged. The discarded Christ is everywhere.

But where is the Risen Christ? This same Christ is also present in all those

places and situations listed above. We are called to believe that in every person, no matter how broken and discarded, there is the presence of God, and that this presence is a source of hope, joy, peace and love. Each person is a place of incarnation. If we really believe this then it means that we must live in a different way.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu writes about how we ought to genuflect to each other as we are all the presence of God. If we could really believe such a reality,

then it would inevitably fill us with a sense of celebration. If we are able to see the Risen Christ in each person then the unexpected becomes possible. We begin to interact with each person as a sister or brother rather than as a stranger or enemy. Each encounter becomes a place of grace. We can transcend fear and anxiety.

Such is the vision and such is our faith. The challenge is in living it.



'The most convincing apologetic the Christian Church has to offer for its credibility should be its unconditional solidarity with the suffering powerless. Such solidarity, I believe, is the road into the fulness of understanding and loving – the mystery of being human. This drags us away from the conceptual into a world of active compassion' (Austin Smith – 'Mercy Vespers')

# PRAYER FOR LENT

The Coventry Litany of Reconciliation

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

The hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class

*Father forgive*

The covetous desires of people and nations to possess what is not their own

*Father forgive*

The greed which exploits the work of human hands and lays waste the earth

*Father forgive*

Our envy of the welfare and happiness of others

*Father forgive*

Our indifference to the plight of the imprisoned, the homeless, the refugee

*Father forgive*

The lust which dishonours the bodies of men, women and children

*Father forgive*

The pride which leads us to trust in ourselves and not in God

*Father forgive*

Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.