

In Touch

Saint Columba's Parish Magazine

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Spring 2019



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Dates for your diary

March

- 5 7.00 pm Parish Council meeting
- 6 Ash Wednesday
- 13 7.30 pm Benediction followed by UCM meeting
- 31 10.00 am Uniformed groups Mass

April

- 3 8.00 pm Benediction followed by UCM meeting
- 19 Good Friday
- 10.00 am Churches Together joint service at Selsdon Baptist Church followed by Walk of Witness to Croydon Jubilee Church
- 21 Easter Sunday
- Grand Lottery Draw after 10.00 am Mass
- 28 10.00 am Uniformed groups Mass

May

- 1 8.00 pm Benediction followed by UCM meeting.
- 4 10.30 am Country Walk organized by Churches Together
- 5 11.00 am UCM Charity Fayre
- 26 10.00 am Uniformed groups Mass
- 30 Feast of the Ascension

June

- 5 8.00 pm Benediction followed by UCM meeting
- 8 Healing Mass and Strawberry Tea
- 9 Pentecost
- St Columba's Feast Day Parish BBQ and social
- 22 11.00 am First Holy Communion
- 30 10.00 am Uniformed groups Mass

Café St Columba is open every Wednesday from 9.30 am to 1.30 pm for tea/coffee, cakes, a light lunch, good company and conversation.. All are welcome.

The St Vincent de Paul group (SVP) meets in the parish hall immediately after 10.00 am Mass on the first and third Sundays of the month.

Please note that the views expressed in this magazine are those of the contributors

From the Editor

Following the parish pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Father Roy reflects on a spiritual aspect of a boat trip on the Sea of Galilee. This is followed by a report on the highlights of the pilgrimage and personal memories from many of the pilgrims.

Father Vincent has written on his faith journey while Margarete Evans has written of a very different life journey. At the parish level, Terry McCarthy brings us up to date on the activities of the Parish Council and some of the outcomes of the parish survey. (A list of 'Who's Who' on the Council can be found on page 22). Many other regular parish activities have a mention including the important work of Café St Columba and its gradually increasing clientele.

If you have any ideas for items for In Touch the editorial team would be glad to hear them. Thanks are due to the team for their hard work in producing items and coercing others to do so.

By the time you are reading this we will be in the first full week of Lent so it only remains to wish you all an uplifting Lent and a happy and joyful Easter.

Chris Waring
c.waring@virgin.net

Parish People

We welcome into our parish family

Henry Peter Kevin Laho
Coen James Ryan Howell
Cerys Kay Ryan Howell
Kyle Luc Leslie
Leo Joseph Laker Bryand



recently baptised.

***There have been no marriages since
the last edition of In Touch***

A Spiritual Dimension of the Boat Trip on the Sea of Galilee

My second trip to the Holy Land was full of enthusiasm because this time I was able to see it from a different perspective. I had the luxury this time of looking at the spiritual aspects of the holy places. The visit was not just looking at the physical side of the place but this time I got the chance to internalise and see the opportunities beyond what the naked eye can see. One particular experience was the boat ride at the sea of Galilee. Our sailing kicked off with extremely calm water but as soon as we got into the middle of the lake, the wind started to become wild. Everyone was enjoying the rough ride knowing that we are all safe in a relatively big mechanized boat. Looking at it with hindsight, I enjoyed the company of the parishioners but the idea that seized me at that moment was the image of the disciples of Jesus paddling with their raw strength struggling to cross the sea from one side to the other of the sea of Galilee. The disciples might be familiar with the temperament of the sea but it was not a guarantee that they were safe all the time as they cross it. All these fears however are relegated as soon as we hear the name of Jesus because the power of the storm yields to the presence of Jesus.



The Sea of Galilee

We are all aware that the sea of Galilee is an image of Christian life. The boat is the image of the church. The mission of the boat is to take us to the other side of the sea safely. The water of baptism represents the beginning of the journey of a Christian life. The succeeding sacraments support and nourish Christians in the journey. The boat ride of life is never a calm sailing journey. Common experience tells us that it is normal for everyone to encounter storms in life to strengthen our grip with Jesus Christ. Storm does not come in one form. At times the storm lasts a few minutes, others days, others weeks, few terrible storms last months or years, if they like us most. The idea is to keep our vision above the water hoping that our destiny will be always in sight. The sea of Galilee reminds me that life is never an easy sailing from one side to the other. The attractive dimension of the sea of Galilee is the fact that the other side is always within reach of our vision. I think this is what makes Christian life interesting also because we are all aware that our faith and hard work are guaranteed that it will be rewarded by God. There is no mistake in our belief that if our faith is solid it will never go unrewarded.

This is the advantage of the followers of Christ that many amongst our

generation are unable to appreciate because their attention is focused on the things of this world. This is the struggle of the church today: how to awaken the present generation with the realisation that life after death is more important than the present life? Sadly, we have to admit that even amongst our families we struggle to sell the idea of salvation and life after death. Well, we have to accept that to be able to win this generation towards Jesus Christ we have to do better than we normally show to them. This shows that our faith is not deep enough to make a difference in the lives of the people around us. It is frustrating indeed but we have to accept the truth that we cannot do this on our own, we need the power of Jesus to make an impact in the lives of our loved ones.

It is never too late, my dear parishioners; we have to pray more and internalise the gospel values into our lives. I fully believe that if we pray regularly before the Blessed Sacrament and study the word of God there is no storm in our life that can defeat us. With Jesus we have all the power and strength to sail above the storms and reach the safe harbour of eternity in the Kingdom of God.

Father Roy

Following In the Footsteps Of Jesus

That's what St Columba's parishioners were doing just before Christmas: following in the footsteps of Jesus. Over nine days, 14 of us along with a group from several other parishes explored the Holy Land on the first St Columba's parish pilgrimage ever. And it was uplifting.

Think of a place name mentioned in the Gospels and we visited it: Jerusalem, Capernaum, the Sea of Galilee, Judea, the River Jordan, Tiberias, the Garden of Gethsemane, Cana, the Mount of Beatitudes, Nazareth, the Via Dolorosa, Samaria, the Upper Room, Jericho, the Dead Sea, Bethlehem, the Mount of Olives. We saw them all.

Seeing these places 'in the flesh' brought Scripture alive. It was fascinating and oh-so-thought provoking to realise that this was where Jesus lived 2,000 years ago. It was here that he was born, grew up, called the apostles, taught, preached, performed his miracles, was crucified, suffered and died - then rose again. So uplifting.

Having flown from Luton Airport to Tel Aviv (around five hours' flying time) we travelled by coach to our first hotel in Tiberias. There we stayed for four nights before transferring to another hotel in Jerusalem for the second half of our trip. Most days followed the same pattern: a buffet breakfast (with hot and cold dishes) followed by a coach trip; daily Mass,

a stop for lunch (St Peter's fish was a local speciality), then more sightseeing and exploring and dinner back at the hotel in the evening.

Throughout, we were given spiritual guidance by Fr Roy and a fascinating insight into the historical and Scriptural background to the area by our



The Church of the Nativity

Israeli guide, Amnon, a secular Jew. As well as being uplifting and spiritually enriching, it was also great fun sharing those nine days with such a wonderful group of people.

Highlights? There were so many, but when I think back, certain memories stand out...

- * Celebrating Mass at 6am in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on the site of Calvary.

- * Fr Roy, caked with mud (it's claimed to have curative properties) paddling in the Dead Sea.

- * Parishioners, enveloped from head to foot in white baptismal gowns, being re-baptised in the River Jordan.

- * Our Israeli guide, Amnon, chivvying us along with good-natured cries of 'Chop! Chop!' if we were running late.

- * Mary and I renewing our wedding vows during Mass at the church in Cana.

- * Cruising on the Sea of Galilee which changed from mill-pond smooth to windy and choppy in the blink of an eye.

- * Celebrating Mass in the open air at Shepherds Fields.

- * The roadside trees laden with oranges, pomegranates and bananas.

- * The Christmas tree, decorations and lights in Manger Square, Bethlehem.

- * The stark and brutal wall separating Israel from the Palestinians of the West Bank.

So many memories and so much to think about. Celebrating Mass and proclaiming the Gospel with its references to all those wonderful places we visited will never be the same for me again.

Deacon Philip

Memories from other members of the group:

Sense Of Peace

One of the many highlights for me was the open-air masses at the Mount of Beatitudes and at the Shepherds Fields - there was a very profound

sense of peace and spirituality. Another was carrying the Cross on the Via Dolorosa, an experience I will not forget. - *Bridget Oxley*

1,060 Photos

Firstly, I would like to thank all those pilgrims who helped me up and down the many steps throughout my trip. They were very caring and I appreciated all they did for me. The events that remain in my memory were the Masses said by Father Roy at the various beautiful places we visited. Then at the river Jordan some of us were baptised by Father Roy and, yes, the water was cold! At the Dead Sea Mick and Deacon Philip helped me to float. That is where I lost my glasses on the beach! Amnon, our guide, was wonderful and knew everything there was to know and Maria looked after us all well. And yes, I took 1,060 photographs with my Canon camera! - *Marion de Souza*

Wow Factor

We had no idea how the trip was going to pan out. It started off without any sleep the first night due to travelling through the night. So sleep deprivation crept in immediately. Although timings were gruelling with early (6am) starts and our not finishing until 6pm, we had a very interesting, fact finding trip, seeing fabulous sights in the company of an amazing group of people. Our tour guide, Amnon, was fascinating; his wealth of knowledge, humour and tenacity (he is 78 years old) exemplary. Father Roy was a great spiritual director and every day Mass - in various places such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Crusaders' Church, the Church of the Good Shepherd, the Mount of Beatitudes, Stella Maris Monastery was enlightening. Carrying the cross through the streets of Jerusalem doing the Stations of the Cross was unforgettable. In Jerusalem the men were separated from the women at the Western Wall (also known as the Wailing Wall) so that we could place pieces of paper with our intentions written on them into gaps in the wall - that was an experience. Floating on the Dead Sea and seeing Fr Roy covered in mud to make himself look 20 years younger was also memorable. Renewing our wedding vows in Cana had the 'Wow!' factor. And watching some of our group renew their baptism vows in the River Jordan was also very moving! Altogether, an amazing experience and one we shall never forget. - *Gill & Philip Tomei*



Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Come Alive

Galilee, Capernaum, the Mount of Temptation, the Dead Sea, the Mount of Olives, the Room of the Last Supper, Bethlehem - it was a great pleasure to walk in Jesus' footsteps. It makes the Gospels come alive in a way that nothing else can. The greatest highlights for me were the renewal



The pilgrims with Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem in the background

of baptism and wedding vows in the River Jordan and Cana. - *Shaun Lightman*

Happy, Humbling...

The pilgrimage highlights for me were several. For example: renewing our marriage vows at Cana brought back very happy memories. Carrying the cross with Shaun along the Via Dolorosa was memorable - it seemed to become heavier going up steps but thinking of Jesus carrying His cross renewed my energy. Receiving Holy Communion in the locality of the Last Supper, knowing that I would soon become a Eucharistic minister, was very humbling. - *Andrea Lightman*

One Highlight

One highlight of many for me was the Basilica of the Nativity, the church in Bethlehem marking the place where Jesus was born. It was full of God's presence. The mixed-faith school next door may have had hateful graffiti on the walls but it was nonetheless a sign of hope for the future. - *Janet Adams*

Privileged

There were several highlights. Our tour guide, Amnon, had a very good knowledge of every area we visited in Israel. I think we were privileged to have him. A cruise across the Sea of Galilee was a memorable and marvellous adventure - the St Peter's fish lunch afterwards was very nice

and tasteful. Having my baptism along with other pilgrims in the River Jordan was a blessing. Zacchaeus' sycamore tree in Jericho is a story I heard as a small girl so I was particularly pleased to have my photo taken in front of the tree. And a final highlight: the Mount of Olives where we saw the Lord's Prayer written in more than 60 languages and viewed the whole city of Jerusalem. - *Beatrice Abiodun*

Dream Come True

Visiting the Holy Land was something I had always dreamed of doing. However, focusing on raising my family and a demanding nursing career had always taken priority. Finally, at the age of 74, my having decided to retire from nursing, the opportunity arose to join the pilgrimage from St Columba's. With my sister from Ireland joining me, the timing was right to make my dream come true

We were blessed with a lovely group who made the whole experience so special. Our knowledgeable guide, Amnon, brought the places we visited to life. I cannot believe that we actually visited the Lord's birthplace, carried the cross along the Via Dolorosa and witnessed the sites where He suffered death and ascended into heaven. The presence of Fr Roy and Deacon Philip leading our daily Masses in some of the most breathtaking churches I have ever stepped foot in made the whole experience overwhelmingly emotional and spiritual.

Our action-packed schedule was demanding and tiring yet so worth it. Falling and fracturing my hand added to the challenges but certainly didn't spoil the experience. I have so many wonderful memories and lovely photos of the pilgrimage to reflect on. The sights and the many friendly people I encountered made this a trip I will always cherish. - *Teresa Spragg*

Your Parish Council

It is just over a year ago that Father Roy proposed the idea of a Parish Council and the first meeting took place on the 25th January 2018. At that meeting Fr. Roy said that the accepted model of the Church revolved round the Priest, the Sacraments, the Mass and the various roles the Priest would carry out in his every day life. However, he wanted a Church that revolved round the Parish, involving everyone, to create 'a family'.

He was concerned about our children continuing their faith and believed that Evangelisation was a means of winning back the hearts of those who had left the Church and concentrating on obtaining a better understanding of our faith. He believed a Parish Council could be the tool that enabled

more parishioners to become more involved with the Church and create a family atmosphere to benefit everyone. Clearly, given the disruption our Parish has experienced in recent years, something is needed to recreate the warmth and generosity our faith should instil in us.

The Parish Council believe that this is particularly important as far as the children are concerned. The ability for children and their families to meet and develop friendships that continue from Children's Liturgy at the 10am Sunday Mass through to First Communion, hopefully the uniform groups and into Confirmation are important in helping our children to grow their faith and carry it through their teenage years. If this is supported by attendance at local Catholic Schools the Parish can only benefit from the individual and family friendships that will develop.

With a few minor changes, the Parish Council was set up with Fr. Roy becoming President and Deacon Philip, Vice President. Terry McCarthy became Chairman and Gill Tomei the Secretary. Committees were established for Social Activities, Liturgy, Welfare, Building, Youth and Uniform Groups, Heath & Safety.

The Council has met 4 times and one initiative that was agreed was to undertake a Parish Survey. This took place last Autumn and the results were most revealing. There were, in fact, two surveys, one for adults and another for children. The

most popular request was for a return to the days of Fr. Barry, when the children



joined him on the altar to sing the Our Father before returning to join their families for the sign of peace. This now takes place every Sunday morning at the 10 am Mass. It is wonderful to see so many children on the altar every Sunday and especially when one sees older siblings leading their younger children to the altar and holding their hands. Another initiative, prompted by the survey answers, was to involve children more in the Mass by taking up the Offertory and also reading at Mass. Rotas have now been set up for both of these and are in operation as I write this.

A third initiative came from the request for more Eucharistic Ministers and I am glad to say 11 new Extraordinary Eucharistic Ministers were commissioned at St. George's Cathedral, Southwark, last year. A further 6 were commissioned early in February and several more are in the pipeline. As a result, Communion will shortly be available in both kinds at all four weekend Masses and soon at all weekday Masses.



Some Liturgical initiatives that arose from the Survey are weekly expositions of the Blessed Sacrament from 6-7pm every Tuesday finishing with Benediction. This complements the Exposition every Friday after the 9.30am Mass..

In addition, a fortnightly Scripture Prayer Group was introduced in January. This meets on Mondays from 7-8pm and the dates appear in the weekly newsletter.

One suggestion which would be wonderful to achieve was that we establish a young person's choir. Having experienced a tremendous children's service with readings and hymns on Christmas Eve, one can easily imagine how this would be a truly meaningful addition to the Parish. However, finding a choir master to manage this is likely to be very difficult. If anyone knows someone who might welcome this challenge, please let Fr. Roy or Deacon Philip know.



There were many mentions in the survey about the state of the ceiling in the church. This has been taken on board and plans are in place for the ceiling to be replaced together with more insulation, so the church should not only look a lot better but also be warmer. This will happen after the Easter Celebrations.

The Social Committee organised the first function - the International Dinner before Christmas. Visitors were asked to bring a national dish for a sharing table. The variety of food was most impressive with plenty for everyone. The highlight of the evening was a dance demonstration by a group of Filipino ladies. With over 70 people attending it was a most enjoyable occasion.

The survey also highlighted the need for more youth orientated activities and discussions are happening now to achieve this. Hopefully, announcements will be forthcoming shortly.

Dates have been established for many Parish events and these will be published very soon to give everyone the chance to enter them in their diaries. (*See inside front cover for some of these dates*)



Finally, there was much mention of a website for the Parish and clearly this could have a major impact on our communication and interaction within the Parish. We had an unexpected delay in setting this up but I am happy to advise that work is now well under way as I write and information is being gathered to represent all the activities of the Parish.

Clearly, not everything can happen at once but a solid start has been made and I very much hope we can build on this in the coming months. As always the Parish Council would be happy to receive suggestions and comments so do please make contact if you have something to offer.

Terry McCarthy

See page 22 for a list of Who's Who on the Parish Council

Community Café St. Columba

We have been so thrilled with the way the Café has taken hold. We started back in September 2018 serving lunches and extending our usual hours of the Café. It was decided to have two different soups and then we started adding light lunches including toastie sandwiches, pasta bakes, quiches, tandoori chicken, shepherd's pie, and noodles.

Our customers vary from our own parishioners and visitors from neighbouring churches, St. John's and Selsdon Baptist Church plus passing trade, even the Posties. We don't have huge numbers but we hope by advertising and having banners we may bring in more interest.

In December, we decided to give our guests a Christmas meal for £5. This was met with great delight and we filled our list of 30 places within half an hour! The meal was a great success with folk giving more than £5 as a donation and we made a profit on the day which was not expected. Our helpers were tremendous and fulfilled a harsh hour of serving soups, turkey with trimmings or salmon, and Christmas pudding with custard or fruit salad and cream, followed by mince pies and coffee and mints and a little bag of sweets from Santa. (Well, his elves actually). Some of our customers wanted to put their names down for next year! Some said it was the best Christmas dinner they had eaten.



The feeling of joy was overtaken by the fact that the Baptist church couldn't serve their usual Christmas Meal on Christmas Day as there were too few volunteers. They know where to come next year!

We have been blessed that our profits helped charities such as HCPT (Handicapped Children's Pilgrimage Trust) by sending 2 children to Lourdes this coming Easter - £850, and by helping the great charity Mary's Meals by giving 10 children a chance to have a meal and education every day for a year - £139.

In helping us to succeed with donations of food we asked Waitrose if they could help and they let us have a Community Matters box (the green discs by the door for 3 charities) during the month of August. We didn't get many discs but enough for Waitrose to donate £186 to us in December. They said we could do it again the following year if we wished. We have sourced help from Food Banks for our produce but as we are not a huge concern we feel we can survive at present with help and donations from our own parishioners and let the Food Banks help other deserving cases.



We opened our doors and hearts to help the lonely and generally give folk a warm place to come and sit and chat and drink and eat good food.

We couldn't do what we do without the help and support of all our friends. If you ever want to help or just come along for some light refreshment - you all know where we are.

Gill Tomei

Ahotokurom — 'Place of Serenity'

2018 was a busy year for Ahotokurom. In the UK, the Friends of Ahotokurom celebrated 21 years of supporting the project with a Mass and afternoon tea at Catford Parish. In the village in Ghana the team have also had a busy year, working to become more self-sufficient and less dependent on donations to cover the basic costs of the village. Various initiatives and projects have been progressing, more than there is space here to explain, but details can be found at www.ahoto.org/stories and from the Newsletters on the same web site. Take a look and I'm sure you'll agree that the support we as a parish provide is put to good use.

The "100 Club" is still going strong thanks in particular to Edmund Tame and Dani Gonek in their efforts in collecting the subs. A draw takes place four times each year, with half the funds raised from the £10 yearly subscription paid out in prizes and the remaining half going to Ahotokurom. Your continued support of the 100 Club is much appreciated.

In addition, we aim to raise money from social events throughout the year but we urgently need volunteers to join the committee and help out at these events. So if you feel like lending a hand, please call me. Mobile 07841 145 790

Paul Natrass

Union of Catholic Mothers

Well, it's 2019 and another year has come around again so quickly. Christmas seems a long time ago but we had a fantastic Christmas Party and were thoroughly entertained, lots of food and games to keep us entertained. The Christmas Food Appeal was a great success with many donations to the Salvation Army, a thoroughly worthy cause, and we should be very proud of this. We met back in early January with lots of mulled wine and mince pies to eat and Marion led the Reindeer Drive. Monthly meetings are 7.30pm so any new members wishing to come along please free

to do so. If you like Line Dancing we have that arranged for April and I'm sure that will be a fun evening. In May, the evening will include a talk on the recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land, with lots of photos. Please look out for the programme of Events in the Hall and also at the back of the Church.

*Samantha McCormack
UCM Press Officer*

Girl Guiding at St Columba's



5-7 years
(from 4 Northern Ireland)



7-10 years



10-14 years

We have very active sections of guiding in our church. Each section offers a wide range of activities to suit the age group.

Rainbows is all about developing self-confidence, building friendships, learning new things and having fun. Girls get their hands dirty with arts and crafts, get in touch with nature and play games - it's all about learning by doing.

We meet on **Tuesday at St. Johns, Upper Selsdon Road, 4.30 – 5.30** in the guide hut

Brownies is about trying new things that teach girls aged seven to 10 about themselves, their community and their world. Brownies introduces girls to a world of new opportunities, challenges and fun. Girls go along to holidays, day trips and sleepovers. They get together with their friends at regular meetings where they learn new hobbies, get creative, explore other cultures and have outdoor adventures. As well as trying activities at meetings, girls choose from interest badges related to things they want to know more about.

We meet on **Monday 5.45 – 7.15 at St. Columba's Church Hall.**

Guides What you do in Guides is up to you, from taking part in lots of exciting activities at regular meetings to special events and trips away. You will choose from different badges and awards which will help you learn new skills and try new challenges. You can do some of this on your own and others you'll do in groups in regular unit meetings.

We meet on **Friday 7.15 – 9.00 at St. Columba's Church Hall.**

If you would like to know more about Rainbows, Brownies or Guides

please log on to www.Girlguidinguk.org.uk and register your daughter at the sections for your daughters age.

We look forward to seeing you and your daughters soon at one of our active and enthusiastic meetings.

News from St Columba's Girl Guides

After a successful (if slightly damp) camp in West Sussex last summer, the Guides have been back in full swing! Last term we wrote, rehearsed and performed our biennial pantomime in the church hall, which was enjoyed by all! This time, we chose to base our story on Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, in which our protagonist, Ebelisa Scrooge, must see the error of her ways and join her local Guide unit. Needless to say, much fun was had during our rehearsals, set designing and on the night itself! The girls also had the opportunity to go ice skating on a brisk Saturday morning in November: a challenge which was met with enthusiasm and perseverance from everyone. They were a credit to the unit!

This term, we have been working on our Mixology badge - yes, you heard it right - which is one of the new badges commissioned for Guides. We have been learning about different food types and dietary requirements, as well as experimenting with a range of ingredients. We will be making our own 'mocktails' later this term and the tasting night is greatly anticipated.



Plans are already in place for our camp this summer, so we shall keep you posted on our adventures!

Vicky Keohane

A Special Wedding Anniversary?

Are you celebrating one this year, for example your first, tenth, 25th, 40th, 50th, 60th or any number thereafter? If so, Archbishop Peter Smith would like personally to invite you to celebrate Mass with him. The date of the celebration Mass, an annual event in Southwark diocese, is Saturday July 13; the time: 3pm; the venue, St George's Cathedral, Southwark. There will be an opportunity to renew your marriage vows during the Mass. Afterwards refreshments will be served in Amigo Hall, next door. You will also get an opportunity to have your photograph taken with Archbishop Peter, just the three of you. If you bring close family, who are also invited, then you can all appear in the photograph. (Don't



forget to bring your camera or smartphone.)

To book your places for the Mass at St George's Cathedral, simply fill in your contact details on the form on the noticeboard at the back of the church, or email them direct to Deacon Philip. If you do, you will receive a personal invitation to the Mass from Archbishop Peter.

What a way to celebrate that special wedding anniversary.

My Life's Journey

I recall an old missionary being asked this very personal question: "Father, if you were to live your life all over again, what would you like to be?" His answer was plain and simple: "If I were to live my life all over again, I would not change a thing."

That answer of his left a deep impression on me; one which is very relevant to my own life's journey of love, faith and hope. I was born on February 12, 1974, to a poor family in the mining town of Mankayan, Benguet in the Philippines. I was the last of eight children. My father was a security guard who always made sure that there was food on the table. He was a tough disciplinarian.

My mother was a simple housewife who managed the upkeep of the house and looked after the daily needs of her family. When I was seven, our family had to move to Bontoc in Mountain Province and it was there that I continued my education and spent most of my childhood. Despite the tough situation my family had to live with, we still managed to keep smiling.

My attraction to the priesthood started when I was still very young. It was an old Belgian priest who introduced me to the idea. As the years passed it became more and more intense, especially when my mother introduced me to daily Mass. I soon became an altar server.

After high school, I had to go to college because my father would not allow me to enter the seminary. He wanted me to be an engineer. Only my mother was supportive of my vocation. Eventually, after a year of pleading, I got my father's approval and entered the seminary in 1992. I started my priestly formation at St Francis Xavier Seminary; my sole possessions, just a few clothes. I had little else and very little money. A few months later, my father passed away. Things were difficult but God's providence came through the generosity of a few good people.

A year later, I moved up to San Pablo Seminary for my philosophy studies and, in 1997, was awarded my bachelor's degree in philosophy.

I then started studying at the Jesuit Loyola School of Theology at Ateneo de Manila University; continuing my formation at San Jose Seminary. I enjoyed seminary life. However, before my diaconal ordination, my mother also passed away. Losing both of my parents so young was difficult but it did not discourage me from moving on with my life's journey.

I was ordained to the diaconate on August 25, 2001. Nine months later and after graduation from theology, I was ordained a priest on May 22, 2002. At my ordination, the bishop explained to me that my life now was neither my own nor my family's but for the Christian community to whom I would provide pastoral care.

Appointed to a parish in the Philippines, I travelled to every corner to bring the people pastoral support. I gave myself wholeheartedly to helping and supporting them. Sadly, they were often victims of abuse, neglect and injustice by rich opportunists and by those in authority, especially corrupt public officials. My championing of them led to my bishop (not the one who had ordained me) moving me out of my parish. Disappointed and with a heavy heart, I ended up in a different diocese where I stayed for some time. It was an unfortunate situation, not at all ideal, but it did enable me to prepare myself for further studies abroad.



Thanks to Aid to the Church in Need, I ended up in Belgium in 2010 studying for a degree in canon law. Yet I needed still to keep myself on an even keel both as a priest and as a student. Struggling financially, I often experienced God's graciousness through the generosity of the Filipino Catholic community. It was then that I came to know Fr. Roy who invited me to the UK where I met several friendly parishioners. My beautiful experience in the UK though was short-lived as I needed to get back to Belgium to finish my studies.

Now, looking back, I recognise that God has been so good to me. I never doubted Him as it was always His love that kept me going through all my difficulties. My faith in Him sustained me and filled me with hope. I came to recognise the reality of the priesthood: that my life is not my own but is for the benefit of the people I serve. Just as importantly, I discovered that there are people out there who will always stand strong, not for themselves but for the people they love and care for. I am so grateful to them.

Father Vincent

Safeguarding: what's that all about?

Sadly, we have all become only too familiar with stories in the media about child abuse. The Church's response has been to tighten up its procedures and enforce strict guidelines to protect not just children but also vulnerable adults. They come under the general heading of Safeguarding. So, for example, anyone in a position of authority in the Church who has dealings with children or vulnerable adults - the elderly and infirm who live alone, for example - has to be vetted by the civil authorities to make sure they don't have a criminal record of abusing people.

The vetting is carried out by the Disclosure and Barring Service, part of the Home Office. The DBS enables organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors (such as the Church), to make safer recruitment decisions by identifying candidates who may be unsuitable for certain work, especially that involving children or vulnerable adults.

These are common-sense precautions designed to protect everyone. In St Columba's and other parishes throughout the diocese of Southwark and the country as a whole, DBS clearance is required by all clergy, Extraordinary Eucharistic Ministers, uniform-group leaders, anyone who has regular and frequent dealings with children and vulnerable people on behalf of the Church. As with all other parishes, details of the members of St Columba's Safeguarding team, who are there to deal with any issues which may arise in the parish, can be seen on the noticeboard at the back of the church.

Deacon Philip

Margarete Evans: My Story (Part 1)

Editor's note: The full story of Margarete's fascinating life, starting in war torn Europe, is too long for one edition of In Touch. This part takes us to the end of World War II. The second part will appear in the next edition.

This is a brief account of my life and the various ways it has been affected by events in Europe.

My family name was Knippschild and we came from Wuppertal in Germany. It is north of Cologne and south of Dortmund. My mother was from Poland and other branches of the family were Hungarian and Jewish.

I was born on 3rd of February 1930 in Wuppertal but by the time I was four my father had cancer and two years later he died. It was a very

traumatic time. My mother was in deep mourning and wore black all the time.

With the rise of the Nazis, things generally became more and more fraught. Every year on Hitler's birthday we, like everybody else, had to hang out the swastika flag. The police were always checking on things like that and it was too dangerous not to comply. In school it was normal to prepare for University at the age of 16. In my case, because I had done rather well, when I was still 13, my mother and I were called to see the headmaster. He suggested I should start my studies when I was 14 and wanted to know what I had in my mind for my future. I had not discussed this with my mother or anybody else but I said I intended to go in the diplomatic service and wanted to learn French and English. He said that would definitely not be possible. There was a war on. Perhaps I would like to learn Latin. I certainly didn't intend to do that. In my father's library I had found a book about London. That was the start of it.

In 1944 I was with my mother in the East (the part of Poland Germany had invaded) and it was obvious Germany was in a mess. There were the Allies coming from the south and west and the Russians approaching from the east. The authorities announced that all old women and children would have to leave. My mother had to stay. We became evacuees. I left with one of my Godmothers. She had a big estate; farms, property, money. They packed as much as they could on waggons, each one being pulled by two horses. My Godmother and I were in a coach, which was drawn by four horses. We also took as many other horses as we could; they were used as pack horses.

That winter of 1944/45 was a very hard one and I was still aged only 14. There was deep snow everywhere and it was very cold. As we travelled we managed to keep just ahead of the German troops who were retreating. We could hear the Russian advance, the artillery and the sounds of battle, which were not far off. When it got dark we stopped wherever we could because the horses had to rest and be fed. The big problem at this point was that I became seriously ill with pneumonia and we had to stop travelling. I remember they got an army doctor to look at me. He said I would have to stay in bed. If we travelled any more I would die. I had a very high temperature. We stopped for just two days. Meanwhile the German troops were retreating and getting further and further away from us. We were trying to reach the Americans who were coming up from Italy and the south. In due course we had to abandon everything; the coach, the horses and all our luggage. We got on a train that was going to the Sudetenland, (the border area of Czechoslovakia) which had been annexed by Hitler in 1938. Nobody was pleased to see us. Everybody was getting desperate. The whole train journey was like a nightmare. The

carriages were packed with deserting soldiers who had abandoned everything, as well as many others. And then the train was bombed. It was terrifying; we wanted to get out but were told that that would be much more dangerous. Those who had got out before were being machine gunned and killed instantly; eventually the attacks ended. The engine had been badly damaged and had to be replaced. A long time later we could eventually move again. When we got to the end of the journey the Americans were in charge; to all intents and purposes the war was over. We had money and were able to stay in a hotel. After all we had been through it was so calm and so unreal. Sometimes I sit at home and think 'did I really do that?' It was so bizarre. I remember to this day we were having lunch in the dining room and these American soldiers came in. I thought they were going to shoot us. They just sat down and ordered a meal. One of the waiters came up and said the town had capitulated. Not a shot had been fired and the Americans had taken over. Our war was over. I said "What is going to happen to us"? This must have been at the beginning of May just before the Armistice. We were somewhere west of Prague in what is now the Czech Republic.

Margarete Evans

Fideliter Servienti Award



Margarete was awarded the Southwark diocesan Fideliter Servienti Medal for faithful service to the Church. She received the medal after the 10 o'clock Mass on Jan 20th, accompanied by her daughter Jo

... and displayed the medal at the small celebration afterwards.



Lent and Easter Wordsearch

P	S	R	T	L	N	A	B	O	Q	R	Z	Y	S	L	V	E
M	E	Y	L	B	P	O	N	T	I	U	S	S	D	B	F	X
P	V	D	O	I	N	R	I	B	H	W	O	H	L	R	S	J
Y	L	A	O	X	T	S	L	T	Y	R	N	P	Q	I	D	U
C	R	F	N	N	A	V	D	Z	C	K	S	B	O	H	A	L
V	S	F	L	Z	K	P	U	N	L	E	G	X	Y	E	T	N
C	R	O	W	N	V	E	H	K	W	X	R	G	T	N	I	Z
B	T	D	G	F	J	S	Y	G	B	S	H	R	B	O	V	A
U	L	I	K	T	Z	W	T	E	U	P	A	J	U	T	I	W
K	Z	L	T	C	E	A	S	T	E	R	P	D	E	S	P	E
M	P	F	B	H	Y	I	V	J	X	I	T	A	Z	R	E	Q
B	I	H	L	I	O	G	S	R	O	N	I	B	L	V	D	R
V	L	N	X	A	F	R	V	E	G	G	S	Q	C	M	F	A
J	A	O	H	N	L	B	N	V	R	C	U	D	L	S	S	R
C	T	R	O	J	K	T	J	S	M	S	P	T	W	T	Q	V
M	E	W	Q	D	C	R	U	C	I	F	I	X	I	O	N	X
W	P	F	N	L	R	H	D	N	J	A	O	B	D	R	B	P
A	M	X	L	B	O	M	A	L	W	M	B	P	M	O	T	W
R	K	G	D	M	J	I	S	N	W	A	O	S	Q	A	Y	S
L	A	S	T	S	U	P	P	E	R	L	P	J	Z	N	L	G

Can you find the words below in the table above?

**EASTER
CROSS
STONE
BLOOD
NAILS
INRI
SPRING**

**THORNS
RESURRECTION
CRUCIFIXION
PONTIUS
PILATE
LAST SUPPER
DAFFODIL**

**EGGS
CROWN
PALMS
DONKEY
LAMB
JUDAS
RABBITS**

New Email Addresses

Have you noticed?

The parish email address has changed and so have Father Roy's and Deacon Philip's. You can see them both on the back cover of this magazine as well as on the front page of the weekly parish newsletter.

Common to both new email addresses is the suffix *rcaos.org.uk*. In fact, that same suffix is used for all parish email addresses right across the diocese of Southwark. Not just those, either, but all clergy in Southwark now have an rcaos email address as do lots of parish and diocesan departments. It's part of a major reorganisation of administration by the Church. As a rough guide, if you want to email a member of the clergy or a parish, simply type the name of the person or place (e.g. philippond or selsdon) and, in Southwark, follow it with *rcaos.org.uk*

Why rcaos? Because it stands for Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark.

Deacon Philip

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Compassion

Compassion asks us to go where it hurts,
to enter into places of pain,
to share in brokenness, fear, confusion and anguish.
Compassion challenges us to cry with those in misery,
To mourn with those who are lonely,
to weep with those in tears.
Compassion means full immersion
in the condition of being human

Henri Nouwen

Look out for the Summer 2019 edition of In Touch.
All contributions welcome
Please send them to Chris Waring
at c.waring@virgin.net or the Parish Office