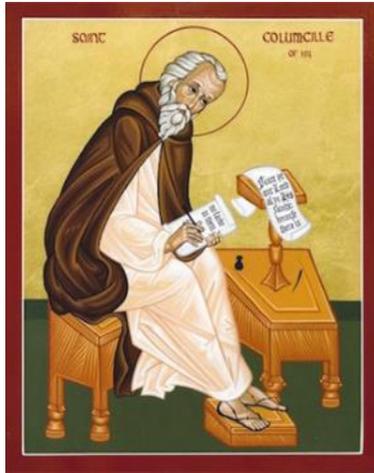


In Touch

Saint Columba's Parish Magazine

Volume 17 Issue 1

Summer 2018



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Dates for your diary

July

4 9.30 am Café St Columba

August

1 9.30 am Café St Columba

21-26: World Meeting of Families in Dublin
with visit by Pope Francis

September

3 7.30 - 9.00 pm Parish Council meeting.

5 9.30 am Café St Columba

5 8.00 pm Benediction followed by UCM meeting

7 - 9 Adoremus Eucharistic Congress in Liverpool.

30 10.00 am Uniformed Groups Mass

There is a UCM Mass at 10.00 am on Sundays July 8th, September 9th and October 7th, after which coffee and tea are served in the hall. All parishioners are warmly invited.

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.



The editorial team of **In Touch** always welcomes new members. This would involve attending four short and informal meetings in a year, and encouraging parishioners to contribute to the magazine. No previous experience is necessary!

If you are interested in joining the team,
please have a word with Deacon Philip.

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

From the Editor

Welcome to the summer edition of In Touch, with apologies for the long gap since the last edition. Father Roy writes of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Terry McCarthy describes the purpose and hopes for the new Parish Council. There are items about two important events taking place within the next few months – the Eucharistic Congress and the World Meeting of Families – in both of which parishioners are taking part.

As ever, we try to cover events in the parish so there are articles about celebrations of First Holy Communion and Confirmation, marking the 40th anniversary of the foundation of UCM at St Columba's and the activities of the Cubs and Beavers. In previous editions, we have had articles about a Catholic upbringing in different parts of the world so, following this theme, Maureen Melvin describes her background in Glasgow.

Thanks to the editorial team for their hard work in writing articles or cajoling others to do so. We wish you all a restful and enjoyable summer.

Chris Waring

c.waring@virgin.net

Parish People

We welcome into our parish family

Sebastian Boluwatito Kwasi Abina

Keanu Kelly Abeleda

Jacob Sepamalai

Bella April Rose St.John-Roberts

Olivia-Blue Wickenden



recently baptised.

Congratulations to all the confirmation candidates and to all those who made their First Holy Communion recently

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

Holy Land Experience

My trip to the Holy Land was indeed exciting because I had no clue as to what to expect. I arrived there at nearly nine o'clock with my fellow pilgrims and we took the coach straight to Tiberias, Galilee, to our hotel. The following morning the first stop was the place where Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount. I said the Mass there with the group and it was a strange because it was only at that moment that I *realized* that I was walking on the same piece of land that Jesus had once trodden. The difference was enormous because the words that I was saying were not just simple words but the reality it signified was alive and real. Before I did not fully understand why it was called Holy Land. I am aware that the place is where the biblical events took place. However the reality it signifies became more alive to me the moment I read the text of the scripture where Jesus taught the beatitudes. Looking at the place objectively does not mean a lot because, comparing it with other places I visited, there are plenty more aesthetically pleasing to the eye. Yet the aesthetic value is not the reason why it is called Holy Land but because of its direct connection with the Holy people of the sacred scripture.



It suddenly dawned on me that this is it, I am not just reading the special text but I am personally linked with it now. The experience is not just from a distance but it is taking place where my full senses are fully active participating in what is happening. The spiritual experience is more intimate because I am reading the text where the same event happened. What made my personal link with the Holy place more special was the feeling that the beatitudes are personally addressed to me by Jesus Christ. This is special also for because the beatitudes are the foundations of Christian life. To begin the pilgrimage with the beatitudes is a huge source for spiritual encouragement for all the pilgrims. This spiritual experience is followed by the visit to Nazareth and a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee. It is worth mentioning that, after the boat ride, we had the opportunity to try the fish of St. Peter as the main course for lunch.

We visited more Holy places mentioned in the sacred scripture but I do not have the space to describe my experience. However, the most outstanding experience in my first visit was Mass I said right at the tomb of Jesus Christ. The Holy Sepulchre is administered by the Orthodox Catho-

lic; they would normally allow the Roman Catholics to say Mass at the tomb from six in the morning till eight in the evening. Hence, during the day Catholics are allowed only a window of four Masses every day at the Holy Sepulchre. I felt so lucky that day because our guide managed to secure a slot for me to say Mass. I could hardly believe my luck that I got the chance to say Mass at the tomb. Our group was up early to make a short journey at the centre of Jerusalem. The time given to us was 6:30 am, the second Mass at the tomb that day. I went straight to the sacristy and prepared myself for the Mass. I wanted to cherish every moment of that morning. I was vested as early as 6 a.m. I organized the readers and distributed the readings to two parishioners. Right after the first Mass was finished I walked inside the cave. I waited for the earlier group to come out then I proceeded to the inner cave. I touched the tomb of Jesus, bowed my head in shame and sought forgiveness for all my sins.



I was aware at that moment that this was a once in a life time opportunity. From that moment I faced the tomb and started Mass. I could hardly explain the emotion running through my body when I was saying the Mass. I tried my best to be fully present on what I was saying. The overwhelming emotion at that moment was the feeling of unworthiness on my part being a sinner. Anyhow, I carried on with the Mass and cherished the mysteries unfolding right before me. I can fully attest that this experience will be forever in my consciousness. Not all priests get the opportunity to say Mass at the tomb of Jesus. I can say that it was a defining moment of my first visit to the Holy Land. I cannot just quantify the impact of that experience in my life. The only thing I can say at the moment is that I fully appreciate the gift of priesthood from Jesus Christ. I am grateful to God for this gift, I know that I am not worthy for this calling but I am fully committed to the priesthood for the rest of my life. I want to end this short reflection by saying that the death of Jesus did not end his ministry but it was an occasion for God to show His glory. I hope to show God's glory also by offering my life to the well-being of the parish community.

Father Roy

Join our trip to The Holy Land.

There will be a St Columba's parish pilgrimage led by Fr Roy to the Holy Land, leaving on November 26 and returning on December 4. The cost is £1,225 person.

More details from 01634 376 921 or email maria.breag1@btinternet.com

The Parish Council What's it all about?

In January, Father Roy announced that he wished to establish a parish pastoral council and invited parishioners to come to an initial explanatory meeting. Some 54 parishioners attended.

At the meeting, Fr Roy gave an overview of how he saw the council serving St Columba's parish. He explained that the usual model of the Church so far as an individual parish was concerned revolved round the priest administering the sacraments – baptism, confession, matrimony; conducting funerals and saying Mass. He was also expected to undertake the various roles traditionally expected of a parish priest such as visiting the sick, presiding at Benediction and so on. However, Fr Roy went on to say that he wants a parish here at St Columba's that not only more fully revolves round the needs of the parishioners but also involves everyone so as to make this parish a family.

At the end of the day, personally I believe that this is what we all want. We all have our own ideas about our faith, how we wish to practice it and what we hope to find at St Columba's. But for me, a church with a family atmosphere where we are all made to feel welcome pretty well sums it up.

When I first heard mention of all this by Fr Roy I could understand what he meant by a parish council but his references to a parish *pastoral* council left me a little perplexed. I had to look up the word 'pastoral' in a dictionary. I discovered that in this context it means caring and involving and I guess that is what we would all wish to see in our parish.

As you will have gathered from various announcements made at Mass over past weeks and from the weekly newsletter, the parish pastoral council has now been established. I am chair of the council, Fr Roy is the president, Deacon Philip is vice president, Gill Tomei, the secretary; and the balance of the council is made up of the chairs and members of the various committees. Those committees cover various aspects of parish life

including social activities, welfare, the liturgy, the uniform groups and other youth activities, building maintenance including health and safety and, of course, finance. Just in case you think it is going to be the same old faces all over again, I am pleased to say that new people have come forward to join the committees so hopefully we shall benefit from fresh thinking and ideas.



We all are anxious that our new parish council does not just work within itself and become a bureaucratic organisation but reaches out to, and reflects, the people and activities of St Columba's parish as a whole. To achieve that, we need to know what parishioners think about St Columba's and how they would like to see it develop.

With that in mind, at all Masses over the weekend of September 15/16 there will be no homily. Instead, every Mass goer will be given a questionnaire and a pen to complete it there and then during the homily slot. You will be asked to list what you think is good about the parish, what is not so good and, finally, the major challenges you think we are facing here at St Columba's. The forms will be collected after several minutes after which the Mass will continue. The comments will be collated and the results reported to the parish council to determine the approach the parish should take in the future. A short while later, a report will be made available to the parish giving you the results of the survey and the action planned by the parish council.

I have to make clear in all this that Fr Roy retains overall responsibility for the parish and he will always have the right to overrule the parish council in matters that affect the faith and how it is practised. However, you can rest assured that he is anxious that parishioners are fully involved in determining the direction the parish takes to try and meet their needs.

If any parishioner has a particular point they would like to make or an issue they would like to raise, please do not hesitate to contact Fr Roy, Deacon Philip or any member of the parish council (a list of names follows).

Finally, if anyone would like to be involved more closely in the life of the parish, I assure you that you would be very, very welcome.

Terry McCarthy



*Commissioning
of members
of the Parish Council
June 10th 2018*

The Parish Council: Who Does What

Each committee has several members: these are the points of contact

<i>Secretary</i>	<i>Gill Tomei</i>
<i>Buildings/maintenance:</i>	<i>Rob Adams</i>
<i>Children's liturgy:</i>	<i>Patsy McFarlane</i>
<i>Finance:</i>	<i>Mervyn Ramos</i>
<i>Health & Safety:</i>	<i>Brendan Fitzgerald</i>
<i>Liturgy:</i>	<i>Deacon Philip</i>
<i>Social:</i>	<i>Phillip Tomei</i>
<i>Uniform groups:</i>	<i>Yvonne Barnard, Naomi Eagers-Bee</i>
<i>Welfare:</i>	<i>Jenny Rayner</i>
<i>Youth activities:</i>	<i>Sean Ragoo</i>

A Family Affair

Families and individuals from all over the world – including parishioners of St Columba's – will gather in Dublin from August 21 – 26 to celebrate the World Meeting of Families (WMOF). Its theme, chosen by Pope Francis, will be "The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World". The objective of those attending

will be to share their experiences from different parts of the world, to reflect on the different challenges they face and to grow together in faith.

Started by Saint John Paul II and held every three years for the past quarter century, this ninth WMOF will celebrate family as the cornerstone of our lives and the fundamental building block of society and the Church. "The World Meeting of Families in Dublin will be a festival of witness to the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ," said Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin. "The vocation of Christian couples, supported by the Sacrament of Marriage, is a call to witness to that love and to experience the joy of bringing the love of Jesus to those who are troubled and challenged".

Sponsored by the Holy See's Pontifical Council for the Family, the World Meeting of Families is the world's largest Catholic gathering of families.



It has been described as a celebration of family life and of the Catholic Church's commitment to support families. Previous WMOF have been held Rome, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Manila in the Philippines, Valencia, Spain, Mexico City, Milan, Italy, and most recently in Philadelphia in the USA in 2015.

Pope Francis, who is expected to attend the WMOF in Dublin, has several times spoken on the theme of the family. He has raised the issues of education, child-parent relationships, employment and poverty. Speaking at the World Meeting in Philadelphia in 2015 he said: "We cannot call any society healthy when it does not leave real room for family life. We cannot think that a society has a future when it fails to pass laws capable of protecting families and ensuring their basic needs, especially those of families just starting out. How many problems would be solved if our societies protected families and provided households, especially those of recently married couples, with the possibility of dignified work, housing and healthcare services to accompany them throughout life? God's dream does not change; it remains intact and it invites us to work for a society which supports families; a society where bread, "fruit of the earth and the work of human hands" continues to be put on the table of every home, to nourish the hope of its children."

Pope Francis stressed that "the family which experiences the joy of faith communicates it naturally. That family is the salt of the earth and the light of the world; it is the leaven of society".

Deacon Philip

Adoremus: What's It All About?

Adoremus, which translates as 'Let us adore', is the name of a national Eucharistic pilgrimage and congress being held by the Bishops of England and Wales in Liverpool from September 7-9. It is expected to attract 10,000 or more Catholics from all over England and Wales.

Eucharistic congresses are gatherings of clergy, religious and laity which promote an awareness of the central place of the Eucharist in the life and mission of the Church. The last International Eucharistic Congress in England was held in 1908 when permission for a public procession of the Blessed Sacrament was refused by local authorities. Participants at Adoremus in September will engage in a series of sessions focusing on different dimensions of the Eucharist and the daily celebration and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Day One:

On the first day of the Congress, there will be a Theological Symposium,



with workshops for parish catechists (especially those involved in First Holy Communion programmes), RE teachers, hospital and prison chaplains, seminary communities and extraordinary Eucharistic ministers. The sessions will focus on Scripture, Ecclesiology, Eucharistic language and catechesis, rites and music for Eucharistic adoration

Day Two

The Echo Arena in Liverpool - which can accommodate 10,000 people - will be the home to a six-hour stage programme which will include a congress Mass, keynote speakers and a drama highlighting the beauty of reverence and devotion. The day will conclude with adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Day Three

On this, the final day of Adoremus, Sunday, there will be pilgrimage Masses and a street procession open to all.

In a pastoral letter to the diocese of Westminster, Cardinal Vincent Nichols wrote: "We seek to rejuvenate Eucharistic adoration in our parishes as the source of strength for our lives and for our mission, that of making present the love and compassion of Jesus in our society."

Every diocese in England and Wales will take part in the Congress – each parish is encouraged to send two delegates – and the Cardinal urges people to make the pilgrimage to Liverpool. Each diocesan bishop has nominated a representative whose task is to disseminate information to parishes, groups and religious communities about the pilgrimage and congress. In Southwark diocese that is Fr John Mulligan who gave a talk on Adoremus at St Columba's in April . As a result of that, a prayer group is being set up at St Columba's so that parishioners can be directly involved and pray for its success. Pope Francis has encouraged everyone to visit the Blessed Sacrament. Speaking in Genoa in Italy in 2016 he said: "I want to encourage everyone to visit – if possible, every day – especially amid life's difficulties, the Blessed Sacrament of the infinite love of Christ and His mercy, preserved in our churches, and often abandoned, to speak filially with Him, to listen to Him in silence, and peacefully to entrust yourself to Him."

As well as encouraging devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, this pilgrimage will bring people together from across the dioceses and further the service of the poor and marginalised in our midst. It also aims to provide practical resources to develop the mission of the Church in prayer, contemplation and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Deacon Philip

First Holy Communion



The day had finally arrived, 2 June 2018!

I had been very nervous during the week leading up to it as I was worried that I would mess my reading up. I was doing the 2nd reading.

When I arrived at church we were the first there, then my friend Marie from school arrived, I felt a little better. The photographer then arrived. I was the first to have my photo taken; it was fun! Gradually people started to arrive. I felt so much happier when my Godparents, Nanny, Auntie and Uncles arrived.

The time had come. We went into the hall to collect the bread to bring into the church to offer to Father Roy. We all sat down and Mass began and the next minute I was reading in front of a very full church. It went so well! The other children brought the Offertory, and then we all went up on the altar to be a part of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It was very exciting to be that close to the altar and to Father Roy.

The time had come to receive our Holy Communion and the whole church watched us take Communion. We all went and sat down and said a prayer.

I felt so happy at the end. We all left church and went home to celebrate!

Ella Chennall

And from a parent:

This was our first holy communion and it was wonderful to see families come together at this special time. The Mass was very personal from decorations to bidding prayers to Father Roy's final words to watch the children grow because before you know it they will be adults.

Angela was amazing with the children from November through to the communion day, she got all the children to open up and feel confident.

Kelly Wickenden

Extraordinary Ministers of the Holy Eucharist

As you are aware Fr. Roy would like to have communion offered under both kinds at all weekend Masses. This will require a significant increase in the number of ministers to assist the Clergy.

If you are a regular attendee at Masses and partake of communion, and if you consider that you are a willing and suitable person to perform this



very important ministry, please contact Fr. Roy, Deacon Phillip or myself. Training will be given and you will be required to attend a commissioning service usually held at Southwark Cathedral or Aylesford.

Roger Fenton

Receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation

On Saturday 21st April, 30 parishioners received the Sacrament of Confirmation at St Columba's Church. We had prepared for this important event as a group over many months and had learnt that this sacrament was sealing our covenant with God which was created at our Baptism. When we were baptised into the catholic faith as babies or young children, our parents and godparents made the declaration to God. It was the start of our journey. Confirmation was our opportunity to confirm the promises made on our behalf at our Baptism and to confirm our faith.

Bishop Paul Hendricks celebrated this special Mass with us. The Confirmation ceremony is in four parts – Presentation of the candidates (known as confirmands), Renewal of Baptismal promises, The Laying on of hands and Anointing with Chrism.

Together as a group, we stood and renewed the baptismal promises that our parents had answered for us when we were baptised. This was our declaration of our faith in God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Catholic Church. Bishop Paul asked the congregation to pray for us and extended his hands over us to symbolise the power and strength of the Holy Spirit.

Then, one at a time, we approached the altar with our sponsor. Our sponsor placed their right hand on our right shoulder. Bishop Paul called us by our chosen saint's name and asked why we had chosen that saint to pray for us and to be our protector and holy guide. He made the sign of the cross on our forehead with holy chrism oil, therefore sealing us with the gift of the Holy Spirit and strengthening our Christian life with God. The oil is a sign of being chosen by God and is also the oil used at Baptism.

This was a truly wonderful occasion shared with our families, friends and the wider congregation of St Columba's. Thanks are given to everyone who helped to make it so memorable and special



Sophie Rayner

The following parishioners received the sacrament of Confirmation –

Arnold Amado, Rebecca Anstee, Tania Augustine, Galvin Biju, Glenda Biju, Shannon Chapman, Lucy Finch, Alexandra Gonzales, Ella Koeppern, Jacob Lavin, Eliza Mamode, Shannon McCormack, Sheldon McFarlane, Ana Morgado, Joyce Mudjo, Prince Mudjo, Gladys Mulegwa, Stephanie Ngounou, Ryan O’Sullivan, Sophie Rayner, Alexia Rossi, Oliver Rossi, Megan Shakespeare, Haydn Smith, Katherine Smyth, Ellie St-John Roberts, Eleanor Torres, Susie Tucker, Grace Ussher, Lucy Vine.

Union of Catholic Mothers

Editor’s note: Apologies to Sam McCormack who wrote this item some time ago. Delay in publishing this edition of In Touch means it does not reflect the latest activities of the UCM



Well it’s now 2018 and we met up in January to start planning another busy year ahead with lots of festive leftovers. We are celebrating our 40th Anniversary for UCM on 2nd May and many dignitaries will be invited including past presidents and members. We will have a commitment in the Church after Benediction with New Members being enrolled that evening. We are all looking forward to this very Special Occasion and I’m sure it will be one of many highlights of the UCM Year.

In March we held our AGM and Gill Tomei sadly stepped down as Secretary which she has done for the past 6 Years; however she will remain on the Committee. We thank you Gill for all your hard work over the years.

Our Charity Fayre was on the 6th May after the 10am Mass and it was a wonderful event with lots of money raised. There was a great atmosphere with lots of new faces - it must have been the smell of the bacon rolls being cooked. Thank you to all that attended and helped set up and make the event a success. I’m sure all the Charities that will benefit from this will be most grateful. ***Update: The total raised was £916.20 .***

Samantha McCormack

40th Anniversary of the Foundation of UCM at St Columba’s

Way back at the beginning of the 1960’s the UCM was founded by Father Howley at St.Columba’s but he subsequently disbanded it in 1975. On May 3rd 1978 Father Edwards reinstated the UCM so we can only take the years from this time making 40 years.

We began our 40th Anniversary Celebration by Father Roy celebrating Benediction, after which Father Doug Bull enrolled 6 new members: Malliga Baladasan, Alison Guckian, Yolande Mallen, Fe Perfect, Brenda Barta and Bibiana Onyeachom. This was followed by Mary Burt presenting long service certificates to eight members, namely Margaret Charman (55 years), Monica Furk, Catherine Hendron, Tina Lee, Cora Litchfield and Maureen Melvin (all 40 years), and Mary Pond and Rene Barrett (both 30 years). Mary Burt also presented me with a 40th Foundation Certificate for our UCM. Photographs taken at the time will be submitted for publication in the UCM ‘Catholic Mother ‘.



was had by all!

Following the formal celebrations and enrolments we all went into the Hall for an excellent buffet with wine and soft drinks and a beautiful 40th Anniversary cake made by Cathy Burns. Richard and Cordelia entertained us with songs, poetry and a comical puppet show. We joined in dancing and a spontaneous conga around the room – a great time

Marion de Souza UCM President

St. Columba's Official UCM Banner

For years a banner has been standing in a shady corner of The Lady Chapel: you may have wondered what it was and what it represented.

There is a lovely story behind this banner. A long standing member of the Union of Catholic Mothers was invited to go to a meeting and to bring her Church's banner. This was rather awkward as St.

Columba's did not have a Church banner. She thought, I'm going to make one myself for our Church.

So, with some of her mother's curtains and buying other material she set to with needle and thread. The design is taken from the stained glass window above the sanctuary. It has the dove, wheat sheaves, chalice and Pax made and sewn on to the red cloth.

Now, it has come out of the shade and placed on the left side of the sanctuary for all to see.



Marion de Souza



Missio 2017

Thank you for your contributions in the Red Boxes in 2017. St Columba's total to MISSIO for 2017 (excluding Gift-aid) was £1,618.02, slightly down on 2016. This includes red boxes, standing orders, cheques and the annual World Mission Sunday collection. Thank you!



Contributions last year helped to build St Thomas's church in Kumpasta, Malawi. The "Thank you" poster in our porch shows a picture from that parish. Parish priest, Fr Henry, says, "Your help has enabled us to begin to be self-supporting." In fact, parishioners themselves (young people, members of the choir, anyone who was able) went to fetch stones from the hill and sand from the river (to make their own bricks) to build the foundations. Your support helped them to buy the concrete, metal sheeting and supporting pillars. And now the church has been built.

Anne lives in a remote village and is visited by Fr Henry, thanks to support from your red boxes. She says, "The priest brings to our village Christ's presence in Holy Communion and forgiveness. Jesus stays with us until the priest can come again."

The work of MISSIO/APF (for those who don't already know) APF, the Association for the Propagation of the Faith, is a worldwide organisation and is the Catholic Church's official missionary support charity. It is the only organisation to guarantee support to every one of the Catholic Church's 1,069 mission dioceses and territories, to provide pastoral care and preach the Gospel effectively. Without APF mission dioceses would not exist. As a mission bishop said some years ago: "If MISSIO/APF could no longer support me, my diocese would have to close down".

Until 1909 the Catholic Church throughout Britain received support from APF in order to re-establish itself, grow, flourish and become financially independent. APF makes it possible for us to give other dioceses and countries the same opportunity.

APF helps those dioceses in most need and ensures that those who do not have the means to make their own appeals are not forgotten. Help from APF is absolutely safe, secure and reliable - the basis of the Church's life and outreach, sharing God's love and changing lives. APF supports local people to build their local church. It also enables them, and us, to live in prayer and solidarity - to be partners in mission.

So, your prayers and your donations in the **little red boxes**, are important. Please keep them coming - *every little helps*. If there is anyone

who hasn't yet got a box and would like one, do please ask and one will be provided (my telephone number is in the back of this *In Touch*). And if anyone has a "forgotten" red box, don't be shy - do bring it in since *every little helps*.

Donations via MISSIO's website: There is a lot of information about MISSIO/APF on their website at www.missio.org.uk which I would encourage you to read. In particular, you can donate online by searching www.missio.org.uk/donate-apf.

Finally I would like to thank Dani Gonek and Ann Arnold again for helping me to count the box money, which we do twice a year (their willing and cheerful help continues to be a blessing) and to thank you red box holders for your continuing generosity.

Edmund Tame

Working in Interfaith Relations

Editor's note: We are fortunate that a parishioner has family contact with Archbishop Emeritus Kevin Mc Donald and he kindly agreed to write an article for In Touch about his work .

I want to begin by talking about how I came to be involved in interfaith work and then say something about why I think it is so important today. From 1985 until 1993 I worked in the Vatican in the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity which is the office that deals with relations between the different Churches and Ecclesial Communities. My particular responsibility was relations between the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion and the Catholic Church and the Methodists. That of course is a different matter from interfaith relations which are relations between the Church and other religions. Whereas with other Christians the eventual hope is Christian Unity - however distant that prospect may seem - with other religions the goal is different. It is more to do with working for peace and harmony between the different religions in the world - something that is vital today when many of the conflicts that beset our world have a religious dimension

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue was housed within the same building as my office and there is a clear connection between the two. Both offices are in different ways concerned with peace and reconciliation. There is a particular arrangement for the office for relations with the Jews. It is housed within the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity because Christians have a unique and special relationship with the Jews. Judaism is our "parent" religion. If it were not for Judaism there

would be no Christianity and when we relate to the Jews we are engaging with our own roots and origins.

In 1993 I returned to England and was appointed parish priest of English Martyrs parish in Sparkhill in Birmingham. This parish was once a mostly Irish parish but when I arrived there the area was mostly Muslim and my neighbours were all Muslim. One of the local Anglican clergy organised monthly meetings with the Imams at the local mosque in Sparkbrook. They were friendly meetings and I felt that that contact was an important part of my work in the area. We then created a Diocesan Commission for Interfaith relations and I became the chairman.

In 2001 when I was appointed Bishop of Northampton I took over the chairmanship of the Bishops Conference Committee for Interreligious Relations and the Committee for Catholic-Jewish relations. This has been an important part of my work ever since.

Why are interreligious relations so important? In 1964 the Second Vatican Council produced a groundbreaking document on relations with other religions called *Nostra Aetate*. This was an important document because it talked about other religions in terms of the connectedness between Christianity and other religions and not in an adversarial way. As well as talking about the Jews, *Nostra Aetate* drew attention to the affinities between Christianity and Islam. It also talked positively about the Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. They are quite different from Judaism, Christianity and Islam but the Council wanted to affirm everything that is good and holy in those religions as well.

The Catholic Church takes its commitment to good relations with other religions very seriously. In 1986 Pope John Paul convened a meeting of Christian leaders as well as leaders of other religions to pray for peace. It took place in Assisi.



Meeting of church leaders. Assisi 1986

The Christians prayed together and the other religions prayed their own prayers in the presence of the Christians. The idea was to bring spiritual and religious leaders together in the cause of peace. As I have said there are many conflicts in the world that have a religious dimension and it is clear that for there to be peace in the world there must be peace between religions.

Building up relations between religions is a task for all Catholics. It has been a central concern of all the Popes since the Second Vatican Council. It is an intrinsic part of the mission of the Church today. It is something to pray about and - when opportunity presents itself - something to get involved in.

Archbishop Emeritus Kevin McDonald

Childhood Memories of Glasgow

I was born in the fine city of Glasgow, a large city of beautiful buildings, lovely parks, wonderful museums and many elegant, independently-owned department stores. Every amenity was provided for the residents who were very proud of their city. However, there was a darker side to Glasgow, as it was a deeply divided city—religious bigotry and racial prejudice permeated all aspects of society.

Some historical background

These attitudes probably arose from historical events far too numerous to mention here, which go back as far as the Reformation and the deposition of Catholic Mary Queen of Scots, on through to the Irish famine of Victorian times, which brought a huge influx of Irish emigrants to Scotland.

The real catalyst, however, occurred in the early part of the 20th century, when Ireland was partitioned. This political upheaval, plus an economic downturn, brought to Scotland a flood of emigrants, Catholic and non-Catholic from both Ulster and the Irish Republic. They settled mostly in Glasgow and the west coast. It was commonly accepted that, sadly, both sides brought their prejudices with them, and were culturally known simply as Catholic and Protestant. This rancour was concentrated in Scotland's central belt from Glasgow through to Edinburgh in the east and encompassed the mining towns and villages around both cities.

The other ethnic minority group in Scotland was the Italians, who did not incur the same level of hostility as the Irish; possibly being fewer in number, they posed little threat to the demographics of Scottish society. Also they were purveyors of the most delicious food served in ice cream parlours, cafes, delis and fish and chip shops which abounded in Glasgow!!

Examples

It would be naive to think that the bigotry was one-sided. Not so, as manifested by the two main Scottish Premier League football clubs, Celtic and Rangers. These teams and their supporters detested each other and still do, to this day. Basically Celtic is the Catholic team and Rangers the Protestant team, both known as “the old firm”. The former was founded in 1888, the latter in 1872. Antagonism would regularly flare up at “old firm” games and violence would erupt, causing injury and several arrests. A similar situation existed for many years in Edinburgh with the football teams Hearts and Hibernians (Hibs), but now their supporters are less polarised.

In sermons, Catholic priests would often denounce “ mixed marriages “ - meaning inter- faith marriages **not** inter-racial ones. Couples like these were treated very harshly. Their wedding ceremony always took place in the vestry rather than at the altar. Not surprisingly, this caused sad, dreadful divisions and estrangements in families.

Another example of prejudice was found in boy-meets-girl situations. The question always asked within minutes of meeting was “What school did you go to? This was to identify religious denomination. The answer would determine whether any interest in a romance /friendship would develop or be abandoned. Despite all these undercurrents, most of us simply accepted the situation: that was how life was and we carried on, not really worried or feeling victimised . The terms “racial or religious abuse “ and their meanings were never mentioned or even considered.

Our family had lovely, friendly neighbours, friends and work colleagues, who did not share our faith, but always treated us with kindness and respect. My memories of my youth in Glasgow are very happy ones.

My parents were from Ulster and were devout Catholics. The church, with our faith, formed the centre of our lives. Like many other families around us, church attendance was not limited to Sundays. We went to evening services like Novenas, Devotions and Benediction. My parents were members of several parish organisations. My father was a lifelong member of the SVP, and my mother a UCM member. Both helped organise many parish activities which provided a good social life. Dances, concerts, socials, Buffet Supper nights and parish trips to the coast, sailing down the River Clyde on a paddle steamer were some of the highlights.

When I was about seven, I was thrilled to be a Maid of Honour in the May procession. Six girls and six boys walked in procession into church behind the May Queen, who was to crown Our Lady’s statue .The girls wore beautiful, long white dresses of satin and lace and the page boys wore velvet trousers and white satin shirts. Before entering the church, we walked around the grounds while a pipe band played Marian hymns.



I shall never forget that day. The congregation began to sing the hymn ” Bring Flowers of The Rarest” and at the crucial moment when the words “ Oh Mary , we crown Thee.....” were sung, Sarah, the May Queen, placed the circle of fresh flowers reverently and lovingly on the head of Our Lady’s statue. The maids of honour and the page boys moved to their allotted places on the altar. From my vantage point, I saw the whole congregation fervently praying and singing hymns and I suddenly felt a

great sense of pride. Despite my young age, and my limited, childish understanding of the world, I felt very proud to be a Catholic and knew that I was part of that community and that was important.

A few months later, at my First Holy Communion. I had a similar feeling but not quite so emotional. However, I shall never know if that was because I was wearing the beautiful May Procession Dress again !!

Years later, when Tony and I were married, we left Glasgow. That was many years ago, so I cannot tell if the divisions still exist in the community. Friends there assure us that things **are** different now. With education, hard work and with media coverage addressing the issues, many outdated prejudices have been overcome. Such behaviour and overt racial and religious hatred now result in criminal prosecution.

Apparently the visit of Pope St John Paul II caused a great sense of euphoria in Glasgow with the city almost closing down for the day due to huge crowds attending his Mass in a city park. Similarly as I watched TV footage of Pope Benedict's arrival in Edinburgh to begin his UK visit, I was amazed to see Alex Salmond, then First Minister of Scotland, wearing a newly created papal tartan scarf, as he welcomed the Pope. Deo Gratias.



Maureen Melvin

Ahotokurom - 'Place of Serenity'

I have been asked by one or two new Parishioners of St Columba's "what is Ahotokurom?". In summary, Ahotokurom is a village in Ghana, established to support and rehabilitate sufferers from leprosy and their families. The disease leaves sufferers usually disabled and disfigured, and unable to work. A treatment has been developed to arrest the disease but it is long term, and the village requires external support. Saint Columba's adopted Ahotokurom as a parish charity and for over 10 years now, we have raised funds and through the Friends of Ahotokurom provided some much needed help.

Some examples of the caring work that Ahotokurom carries out can be found at www.ahoto.org/stories. If you can take a few minutes to have a look I'm sure that you'll agree that the support we as a parish provide is put to good use.

One way in which we raise money is through the "100 Club" which is a draw that takes place four times each year. Half the funds raised from the



£10 yearly subscription is paid out in prizes and the remaining half goes 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

Congratulations

Four couples from St Columba's celebrated special wedding anniversaries by attending the special Marriage Mass at St George's Cathedral on June 16. Each had received a personal invitation from Archbishop Peter Smith, who presided at the Mass. They were part of a congregation of more than 900 people made up of over 400 couples plus members of their families, all from Southwark diocese and all celebrating special wedding anniversaries by attending the Mass.



All the couples were able to renew their marriage vows during the Mass. The celebrations were followed by refreshments in Amigo Hall for everyone. A good time was had by all.

Many congratulations to the St Columba's parishioners:

Danielle and David Rooney, marking their first wedding anniversary;
Venky and Nohemie Venkatakrishnan along with **John and Sharon Fennell**, both couples celebrating their silver wedding anniversaries; and
Michael and Linda Watson marking their golden wedding anniversary.

Well done, one and all.

A report on the day written by one of the couples attending this Mass at the Cathedral will appear in the next issue of IN TOUCH.

Deacon Philip



Cubs and Beavers at St Columba's

Are you aged between 6-10.5 and fancy trying something new? Scouting offers fun, challenge and everyday adventure to half a million people in the UK. 17th Selsdon and Addington are looking for new members! Our Cubs and Beavers groups offer a fun and engaging programme including Pond dipping, sleepovers, grass sledging, archery, climbing and much, much more. If you are interested and would like to come and give it a go, please contact Naomi (our Group Scout Leader) on 07875414331 or n.eagersbee@gmail.com.

Beavers

This term the Beavers have an exciting programme to look forward to. They will be taking part in their first sleepover! In a joint venture with 1st Purley they will be staying at their HQ followed by a fun filled day at Purley Downs working on their Outdoor Challenge badge. Last term the Beavers took part in a district event at Crystal Palace park.

Toby has written a report about the day:

District Beaver Dinosaur Fun Day at Crystal Palace Park

When we got there, we walked to the maze and we got some chocolate when we got to the middle! Next, we played some wide games. They were great. Then we found the dinosaurs in the park. There were LOADS of them. Then we had lunch, I loved my crisps! Then we saw a real dinosaur, it didn't eat anybody though. I can't believe dinosaurs are still real. It was really little, and it hatched out of an egg. Next, we made some bouncy dinosaurs. Last we went on the bouncy castle. I had the BEST day.

Toby Eagers-Bee (age 6)

Cubs

The Cubs are looking forward to a busy term too. This week they have been grass sledging at Frylands wood. An exciting (if a little cold) time was had by all and we are looking forward to trying it again soon. Earlier in the year, the Cubs went Canoeing at Pinewood Scout Centre. This was a chance for a few of the scouts to brush up on the skills they learnt last time but was also an opportunity for some to try it for the first time. We are so lucky to have so many diverse activities on our doorstep.



Naomi Eagers-Bee

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A Nonsense Poem

A tremulous toon
Was sitting doon
By the side of a silky sea.
When a perfumed plondo
Floated by,
Drinking a cup of tea.

Oh My! Said the toon,
(Dressed in tights maroon),
What wonder do I see?
Wonder, indeed, said the perfumed one,
You ass, it's a cup of tea.

Maureen P. Coffey

Look out for the Autumn 2018 edition of In Touch.
All contributions welcome
Please send them to Chris Waring
at c.waring@virgin.net or the Parish Office