

# In Touch

## Saint Columba's Parish Magazine

Volume 19 Issue 1

Spring 2020



Feast of the Presentation

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## Dates for your diary

### February

- 15 10.15 am Retreat for all Readers and Eucharistic Ministers  
19 7.30 pm Finance Committee meeting  
26 Ash Wednesday  
29 9.30 am A Day with Mary

### March

- 1 10.00 am Mass: Guild of St Stephen altar servers' presentation.  
4 7.30 pm Benediction followed by UCM meeting  
7 2.00 pm Healing Mass and cream tea  
11 7.30 pm Parish Council AGM  
29 10.00 am Uniformed groups' Mass

### April

- 1 7.30 pm Benediction followed by UCM meeting.  
4 9.45 am Building a Better Marriage. (St Theresa's., Ashford )  
10 10.00 am Good Friday. Churches Together service at Jubilee Church, followed by Walk of Witness to Selsdon Baptist Church.

### May

- 6 7.30 pm Benediction followed by UCM meeting.  
31 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.*

*Second Sunday of each month 12.30 pm Filipino sung Mass with lunch in the hall afterwards*

### Guidelines for contributors

The editorial team have produced guidelines for contributors to **In Touch**. If you would like a copy, please contact the editor, or have a word with Deacon Philip. 020 8657 9394

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

## From the Editor

Welcome to the Spring 2020 edition of **In Touch**. Now the parish is in possession of an all-singing all-dancing photocopier, **In Touch** will be printed in house. However, it has taken some time to master some of the intricacies of this wonder but I have yet to find out how to add a cover of a different colour. In order to avoid further delay this edition will be printed entirely on white paper but I hope to improve my skills in time for the next edition and return to the usual format.

For the first time we are able to publish the parish accounts and hope this will be a regular feature in future years; Deacon Philip adds some comments on aspects of the accounts. Seeing how our donations to the offertory collection are used, and seeing the size of the deficit for 2018, may prompt us all to consider our contributions.

Father Shierwin writes of his journey to the priesthood while Father Roy reflects on his years since ordination. Terry McCarthy keeps us updated on the work of the Parish Council and a whole section is focussed on the various parish events and activities. It is encouraging to receive items from new contributors; long may it continue!

Thanks as always to the editorial team and all the contributors

*Chris Waring*  
*c.waring@virgin.net*

## Parish People

### *We welcome into our parish family*

Liam James Ernest Highams  
Carla Rose Cahill-Samuels  
Elijah Everton Samuel Stuart  
Isabella Bea Morayo Yaa Abina  
Emily Mary Antoniazzi  
Leoma Amelie Simkins-Singh  
Summer Aurelia Hobbs  
Jasper Luca Hobbs



*recently baptised.*

### *Congratulations to*

Simon Robert Charles Highams and Laura Maria O'Donnell

*recently married.*



## 24 years ordained and counting...

I cannot imagine that I will be celebrating my Silver Jubilee as a priest on October 25, 2020. The question is where did those years go? I cannot help reflecting on the day I was ordained in October 25 1995; everyone was excited. My parents were so happy that the twelve years of successive hard labour paying for my seminary education was culminating in my ordination. The celebrations lasted almost two weeks because every day friends and relatives were visiting our home to congratulate us. Sadly, my mom and my dad are no longer around to celebrate my silver jubilee as a priest with me. God has reason why life does not last long in the case of my parents. I know that it will be different this time because I belong to a bigger family - my parish. That day was so exciting and stressing because aside from the ordination liturgy itself, I was worried also where to find the food to feed the people who would be attending to my first mass.



The first mass of the newly ordained priest is always as important as the ordination day. The primary worry on the part of the family is feeding a thousand people who will flock to the reception after the mass. I depended so much on the resourcefulness of my mother. She went around informing our relatives of the occasion of my thanksgiving mass and eventually help came in to support us for the big day. So far, I was satisfied that everyone had sufficient food for the day and some men enjoyed the availability of free beer and spirits. The first mass was a huge success because the whole town supported me and a good number of priest friends came to support me for the big day. A former formator arrived to preach on that day and his message revolved around the mystery of priesthood.

A few weeks later I reported to the bishop. I was expecting the bishop to send me to a parish where I could start my priestly ministry. The bishop surprised me by sending me to the seminary to teach. I did not ask for it but he told me that my formators in theology recommended that I was fit to be a formator in the seminary. Initially, I was upset but I used the situation to make a deal with the bishop that I will follow his order on the condition that he will send me to Rome for further studies after my term in the seminary. It was a huge sacrifice on my part because I entered the seminary at the age of 12. I was ordained at the age of 24. No one wants to go back to the seminary if you have lived half of your life in the seminary.

I felt the twelve years of formation were not enough because I had to

spend a few more years in the seminary. These extra years in the seminary turned out to be a blessing for me because I considered these as the most fruitful years of my life. Academically, I felt more motivated to study and I felt that I had come to know myself better as a person. I finished my tenure in the seminary more confident to face the outside world. When I reported to the bishop to remind him of our deal, he informed me that I will have to wait for my brother priests who are due to finish their studies in Rome. Instead, he gave me a chance to have an extraordinary experience of a remote and rural parish. I cherished this experience because it made me who I am now.

As in anyone's life no one can really tell where it will end. I never thought that I would end up in England. But God really has his own plan for each individual. Time has passed so fast since I arrived in my adopted country. On the one hand, I know it could have been a totally different life for me if I had stayed home. On the other hand, I have no regret that I have chosen this path. It is tough but I assume that this is really God's plan for me. For the next, 25 years I pray that I will always be spiritually, physically and pastorally fit to minister to my beloved community.



*Father Roy*

## Your Parish Council

The Parish Council met four times in 2019 - in March, May, September and November and it was very pleasing that all the Committees of the Parish were represented at all these meetings. The Committees consist of Liturgical, Social, Welfare, Maintenance, Youth, Finance, Children's Catechesis, Uniform Groups and Health & Safety. An AGM which will be open to all the Parish to attend has been set for 11th March at 7.45pm and certainly all are welcome to attend. Any questions, comments and suggestions would be welcome.

The purpose of the Parish Council is to revitalise the life of the Parish by bringing all the different aspects of the Parish together and publicising the various events and activities. Clearly, the website was a core feature of this communication and I am delighted that it is being kept up to date with all the new and the events taking place in the Parish. If you have not yet visited our website, I urge you to do so. It is probably one of the very best parish websites in our diocese. It is easy to use and navigate. The web address is [www.stcolumbaschurchselsdon.uk](http://www.stcolumbaschurchselsdon.uk)

The Maintenance Committee has overseen the refurbishment of the Presbytery which is now complete.

The Youth Group have organised several meetings and I am delighted that our youngsters are meeting each other on a regular basis. Congratulations must go to Rachel MacFarlane for this initiative.

Christmas saw several events which were all a great success. The International evening, the Big Band Concert, The Carroll Singers and the Childrens' Concert before the vigil mass on Christmas Eve all drew great participation and support from the Parish. If you missed them, make a note to come at the end of this year.



I am sure that other aspects of the Parish will be featured in this edition of In Touch so I will not go into further detail about other activities within the Parish Council.

Please attend the AGM in March - it would be very encouraging to see more of our parishioners there and certainly, all ideas and suggestions will be welcome. If you wish to notify me or our Secretary, Gill Tomei of any issues or suggestions in advance, they would be most welcome.

*Terry McCarthy*

## Ahotokurom — 'Place of Serenity'

Ahotokurom was set up in 1983 near Cape Coast in Ghana as a centre of Christian hospitality for the disabled and disadvantaged. St Columba's adopted Ahotokurom as a Parish Charity some years ago and raises funds for the Friends of Ahotokurom to support their work in providing health care, social care and education.



Ahotokurom's December newsletter includes the news that the purchase of a new bus went ahead and arrived in November. The old bus had pounded the potholed roads for 10 years and was on its last legs. The new bus will ensure that children and adults with disabilities will continue to be transported to the centre to receive the support they need. Other news included an update on the installation of solar panels at the village. This scheme has made an enormous difference to the running costs at Ahotokurom with electricity bills reduced to almost nothing! The Friends of Ahotokurom and a grant from the Irish Government financed the project. These are just two examples of initiatives being supported by the funds provided by the parish to the Friends of Ahotokurom. Take a look at the website [www.ahoto.org](http://www.ahoto.org) for further information. In the near future we hope to have Trudy Kilcullen from The Friends of Ahotokurom to speak to us after mass to give us a first-hand account of activities at the village. As well as the '100 Club', 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!

*Paul Natrass*

## The Cost Of Running Our Parish

How much does it cost to run St Columba's? Where does the money come from? How much do parishioners give in the Offertory collection every Sunday? Is it enough? Those are all questions which are significant for every parishioner. Answers can be found in the latest parish accounts printed here. For the first time in the history of this parish, they are being published so that parishioners can see where the money comes from and where it goes. This transparency is important. St Columba's is our parish. It is our responsibility. It is financed by our money. As parishioners we have a right to know what the figures are and whether they add up. That is why these accounts are being published.

Some important facts are evident from these accounts.

Parish income, effectively the Offertory collection, amounted to just under £59,000 for the year. More than a fifth of that, nearly £12,500, had to be paid to Archbishops House. The rest was swallowed up by the running costs for the church and the presbytery, with heating and lighting taking a whopping £7,400.



As you can see from these accounts, the day-to-day running costs of St Columba's are only just covered by the weekly Offertory collection. There is little if anything left over for 'eventualities'.

And during the year, we had some big eventualities: more than £53,000-worth of repair and maintenance work which was essential to keep church and presbytery in a good state of repair; safe and habitable. Fortunately, St Columba's had some reserves and they needed to be called on in order to pay these big bills. We were fortunate to have those reserves. But once they are gone, they are gone.

All this needs to be borne in mind when we decide how much to put in the collection basket at Mass on Sunday (or commit to paying by monthly standing order), hopefully linked for taxpayers to Gift Aid. It's important that we each take responsibility in deciding how much we give. We all want a healthy and vibrant parish. If we didn't contribute financially or didn't give enough, our parish would not be able to function. And don't forget either the fifth commandment of the Church: contribute to the support of your pastors.

*Deacon Philip*

## Income and Expenditure Account : Year ended 31st Dec 2018

### Income

		£'s
Offertories (inc standing orders)		44,130
Tax refunds on gift-aid		6,830
2nd Collections for buildings etc		774
		51,734
Diocesan Second Collections	5,171	
Paid and due to the Diocese	(5,171)	-
Parish Collections and Appeals	1,262	
Paid and due to recipients	(1,262)	-
Sales from Repository, candles, etc	3,838	
Cost of Sales	(3,177)	661
Income from Hall lettings		1,243
Interest Received		5,198
		58,836

### Expenditure

Diocesan Development Fund	9,000	
Bishops' Fund	622	
Clergy Support Fund (Retired Priests)	2,833	
Paid and due to Diocese	12,455	12,455
Donations to local charities /societies		1,200
Clergy in-service training		551
Church: repairs and maintenance		21,014
Presbytery: repairs and maintenance		32,034
Presbytery: household expenses incl cleaning		2,768
Church & Presbytery: Insurance		2,462
Church & Presbytery: Heat & Light		7,412
Church & Presbytery: Phone & Stationery		5,297
Travel and Car Expenses		3,820
Priest's Remuneration		8,665
Supply Priests Fees		5,672
Deacon's Charges Expense		1,295
Miscellaneous and Lay Expenses		594
		105,239

## Details of Second Collections

<b>Diocesan Second Collections</b>	<b>2018 £'s</b>
Catholic Assocn. for Racial Justice	218.62
Poor Parishes	414.68
Cafod	624.95
Holy Places	269.54
Ecclesiastical Education	369.55
St George's Cathedral	319.89
World Communications Day	315.14
CaTEW	277.28
Day for Life	310.70
Peter's Pence	167.42
Apostleship of the Sea	282.82
Catholic Education Service	270.60
Home Mission	177.79
Cafod Family Fast Day	173.70
Missio	280.94
Archbishops Admin Fund	314.77
Catholic Youth Service	260.40
Crib Jan 2017 and 2018	122.23
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,171.02</b>

## Parish Collections and Appeals

Mission Sisters	718.22
Add the Passage	543.84
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,262.06</b>

## Donations to local charities /societies

Churches Together in South Croydon	200.00
Contact	1,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,200.00</b>

*Continued overleaf*

## Analysis of Deficit

Income	58,836
Ordinary Expenditure	(63,606)
Deficit, Ordinary Expenditure exceeds income	(4,770)
Major Expenditure on Church and Presbytery	(41,633)
Total Deficit, Expenditure exceeds income	(46,403)

## My Journey from Childhood to Priesthood

I thank Deacon Philip for inviting me to share my thoughts and feelings regarding my “faith journey from childhood to ordination.” This topic is not new to me, although I must admit the difficulty of linking childhood and ordination. Each time someone who enquires about this journey, I feel enthusiastic on the one hand, and hesitant on the other, to engage.

My enthusiasm is stimulated by a belief in the power of story-telling to inform and confront. While a story-telling unveils information about specific issues and concerns that shape or break someone’s life, generates significant and insignificant decision, and creates convergences and diversities for healthier communication, it clarifies biases and prejudices, corrects flawed perceptions, and creates new insights. Story-telling thus educates and transforms views, and enriches beliefs. These claims are very promising, but easier said than done.

However, I hesitate often, as well. This is motivated by a strong tendency to make loose connections between my childhood life and ordination to the sacred order. It isn’t very easy to connect the scattered dots to present a coherent view and clear picture of the matter. Probably, this is not a problem, but it makes me uncomfortable. Torn between these feelings, and with the thought that the outcome could be murky, I still intend to revisit this journey. While it might not be as comprehensive as I would want, this could probably help me discover something valuable for my growth and relationships.

The society I grew up with is multiculturally diversified. It was a gold mining company in Sangilo, Itogon, Benguet. For many years, Sangilo Mines had been the home of families coming from different provinces and regions in the Philippines. Inter-tribal marriage is not surprising in

this context. My parents came from different ethno-linguistic groups, only to meet and build together a family of their own in this place. Because of the presence of diverse cultural traditions, norms, values, and practices, the upbringing a child receives could be a hybrid one. At a young age, we heard and learned to speak different languages. Every child understands typically and speaks three. I was not aware of a time when I had to distance myself from other children because of ethnic or linguistic differences. Life in the mines allowed people to interact and eventually support each other naturally.



My late maternal grandmother, Celestina, was well-known in the mining community, probably, more famous than the company president. Apart from her work at the company's hospital, she was very much engaged both in civic and religious activities. From facilitating children's religious instruction to preparing the multi-purpose hall ["Bahay Saleng"] for the eucharistic celebration, from bathing the bodies of dead miners to visiting families in their houses for prayer vigils among others, my grandmother was visibly active. The school is a stone's throw from the hospital. During school days, she prepared our lunch together. Also, her two sons went to the seminary but did not push through with the formation. Grandma prayed a lot, probably to fill up what was lacking in her children and grandchildren. Praying the holy rosary, for example, was a daily nourishment. Unfortunately, my family is not as expressive as our grandma regarding religious practices. She was loved by almost everyone, even those who held on to other confessions. It would be an understatement to say that a hundred people would turn up every day in her wake that lasted for the nine days.

Also, the mining company provides almost all of the basic needs: shelter, water, electricity, free shuttles, free primary education, a six-monthly ration of one sack of rice, among others. Everyone seems to be on equal footing, except for the salary each employee gets. Some families, though, are good entrepreneurs. Others, including our family, raised free-range chicken and pigs to earn extra income and augment expenses. Taking care of three to four pigs is hard. Since we do not rely on feeds to feed the pigs, we collect food wastes in the neighborhood and mix these with sliced banana plant trunk. Another source of income for children is selling ice candy. This is the rhythm of our life until the mining operation stopped for good.

My father, along with most employees, was retrenched (*made redundant*). With heavy hearts, we packed our things and left for Apugan, Irisan Baguio City, in a house that my father and mother started to build some years

back before the retrenchment. The house is unfinished, although we are more fortunate compared to some families who had to be accommodated in the homes of their relatives. In Baguio, our family will begin a new chapter. Also, by this time, I was a freshman student at the University of Baguio. A year after, I followed a search-in program in the seminary. This was unplanned, but I was admitted.

I studied in the seminary for ten straight years. This comprises a pre-college year, four years of philosophical studies, a four-year theology program, and a spiritual-psychological formation year. I had many concerns in the seminary, but God's providence is always at work. It was a test of faith and trust in God. Aside from my family, some kind-hearted persons assisted me. Several attempts to leave the formation did not succeed because of the encouragement of formators, although I left after theological studies. I worked in the hospitality industry and met new acquaintances, but God had a different plan. I was received back in the Diocese and ordained after a year of re-integration.



With the picture I painted above, I am still unsure whether my childhood really had a direct and significant influence on my decision to become a priest. However, it is an immense joy to share in the ministry of Christ's priesthood. Glory to Jesus Christ, whose love calls us to work at his vineyard.

*Father Shierwin*

## The God Who Speaks

Did you know that 2020 is the Year of the Word? It has been dedicated as such, a year of special focus on the Bible, by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. As well as our own new Archbishop John Wilson here in Southwark, all the diocesan bishops in both countries have signed up to it. Why now? Because 2020 is the tenth anniversary of Pope Benedict XVI's apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini* (The Word of the Lord). It is also the 1600th anniversary of the death of St Jerome. One of the foremost Scripture scholars of the Church, he translated the Bible into Latin.

The initiative focuses on celebrating, living and sharing God's word. By doing that, the bishops want to encourage us to create new and renewed encounters with Christ through the Scriptures. During this year, we are called to explore and celebrate the Word of God through the Scriptures, share the Word with others and, in the way that we live, respond to the 'God who speaks'.



The God who speaks? As the evangelist John wrote, 'We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life'. Scripture is at the centre of everything the Church does. The word of God shapes our prayer and our worship. The Bible shows us how to understand the world, how we are called to live and relate to each other.

Throughout the 2020 Year of the Word, there are a range of events, activities and resources to participate in all around the country. To help achieve transformation in our hearts and in our communities there will be three themes of celebrating, living and sharing God's word.

To find out more, visit <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/home/events/the-god-who-speaks/>

*Deacon Philip*

## **Tuesday Adoration**

In September 2018 a national Eucharistic Congress took place in Liverpool. It was a gathering of clergy, religious and laity from all over England and Wales. They came together to promote an awareness of the central place of the Eucharist in the life and mission of the Church. From our parish, Gerlinde Symons, Deacon Philip and Mary Pond went to represent St Columba's. Margaret Charman made a beautiful banner to mark the occasion which has been displayed in the church ever since.

As a result of all that, Eucharistic Adoration now takes place at St Columba's every Tuesday starting after 9.30am Mass and continuing until 8pm, finishing with Benediction. It followed a visit to St Columba's by members of the Apostolate of Eucharistic Adoration who spoke at every Mass one weekend and encouraged parishioners to commit to an hour spent with Jesus, truly present, concealed in the Host, every week. Some 46 people signed up and were put on a rota so that there would always be 3 or 4 people adoring and the Holy Sacrament never left unattended during the ten-hour period.

Jesus is always pleased to see us and we gain many graces from Adoration, for ourselves and others. Ann, a lady I met at the Apostolate meeting, told me how her son suffered from depression. She had made him a GP appointment but he had not been out of bed for 2 weeks. So she attended the GP appointment and was given a prescription for him. On the way home from the doctor's, she passed two pharmacies without going in but went into church for Adoration. When she got home, her son was standing in the kitchen. It was an answer to her prayers.

The Blessed Sacrament, Jesus, is held in the monstrance. On entering the

church, we genuflect on both knees or bow reverently. We can sit in silence with Our Lord. He does the work. We can pray, praising, thanking and interceding for others. We can examine our conscience. We can look at the Scriptures where God speaks to us and teaches us. There are books and other materials for adorers on the shelf at the back of church.



I opened the Mass book yesterday and a line in a Psalm stood out to me: 'Let your face shine on your servant'. This is how I feel when I am at Adoration, focussing on Jesus through the window of the monstrance.

It is an hour of peace in our otherwise busy lives and we can then go out giving God's peace and love to others. I also feel a fellowship and sense of community being with the other adorers.

I am grateful to Father Roy for agreeing to have weekly Adoration as we are one of the few parishes in the Southwark diocese to do this so far. Do come and spend an hour with Jesus each week. It is very worthwhile.

*Fiona Stas*

*We need more parishioners to commit to Tuesday Adoration. Recently the Blessed Sacrament was left unattended, with no one watching and praying. Do sign up for the rota, committing to one hour every Tuesday, if you can (contact Deacon Philip). If that isn't possible, feel free to call in when convenient on a Tuesday and spend at least some time before the Blessed Sacrament, even if you can't make it every Tuesday. If you are already on the rota and something prevents you from doing your one-hour slot, feel free to come along at a different time.*

*Deacon Philip*

## **Building A Better Marriage.**

This is an invitation to all married couples with average to good marriages. It's an invitation to a day trip; a day just for you; a day spent focussing on your relationship as husband and wife. Here's your chance to spend some quality time as a couple exploring your relationship more deeply and gaining valuable insights into your communication and the call of the Church to the married.

Whether you have been married a few years or decades, you will benefit from this day. All of the couples who have attended it in the past have come away afterwards full of enthusiasm for it. 'Every married couple should experience this' and 'We found it really beneficial' sum up the sort of comments which are made about Building A Better Marriage.

Why not experience it for yourself? What have you got to lose? The date is Saturday April 4, from 9.45am to 4.30pm. The venue: St Teresa's Church hall, Ashford, Kent. For more details telephone Carole and Pete on 07983 524 727 or email [mflkent@rcaos.org.uk](mailto:mflkent@rcaos.org.uk)

## Feast of the Presentation

On February 2<sup>nd</sup> the Church celebrates the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. It is the feast that reflects the one light of Christ from different angles and in different ways. Historically the feast has been known by different names, each stressing different aspects of the same mystery: the mystery that God has chosen to dwell among us.

40 days after the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph travelled to Jerusalem to present Him at the Temple. This was the first time that Jesus entered the Temple that years later He would cleanse of merchants with great zeal, the same Temple where He would teach His disciples and challenge the Pharisees, the same Temple where Judas would receive the 30 pieces of silver.

Mary and Joseph presented Jesus with grateful hearts and offered the sacrifice prescribed by the law of Moses for the poor; two young pigeons. God fulfils that prophesy of Malachi, when Simeon identifies the Child as the awaited Messiah. Simeon's words are at first joyful and triumphant, "the Child is a light for revelation, the glory of Israel", but then he turns to the Blessed Mother and his tone becomes sombre, speaking of suffering and sacrifice, "this Child will be contradicted and a sword will pierce your heart".



This Feast invites us to celebrate with Simeon that all prophesy has been fulfilled, while at the same time it invites us to remember that Jesus was born to die as a sacrifice for our sins.

(A homily given by Fr. Pablo in 2014)

*Martin Baile*

## Silent Night

In 2018 we celebrated the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Silent Night, Holy Night (*Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht*), a song known worldwide. It was created in a quaint parish church near the city of Salzburg, Austria called Oberndorf and was later given the name *Stille Nacht* chapel.

Joseph Mohr (1792-1848), the lyric writer of *Stille Nacht*, was born in December 1792 to a mother who was a knitter and a father employed by the princely Archbishop Coloredo in Salzburg. It was shameful to be born an illegitimate child, and he was brought up by his mother Anna Schoiber, grandmother and stepsister in a damp, run-down, rented flat. The conditions were unhealthy, especially for a small baby. In those days,

most people were very poor with not many jobs and little food to eat.

Little Joseph was soon baptised, with the executioner judge of Salzburg Joseph Wohlmuth acting as godfather, as he did for all children born out of wedlock in Salzburg and the surrounding areas. When he started school teachers quickly realised young Joseph's precocious gifts, so the curate of Salzburg Cathedral made it possible for him to study at the Academy of Salzburg, where he joined the cathedral choir and played the violin.

Between 1808-1810, Joseph began to study Philosophy. In 1811, as a 19-year-old boy, he decided to join the priesthood and entered the seminary. However, because he was an illegitimate child he had to receive permission from the Archbishop of Salzburg. In 1815, aged 23, Joseph was ordained with special dispensation as you had to be 25 to become a priest.

Joseph's first parish post was assistant priest in Maria-Pfarr Lungau, near Salzburg. The little church there originates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and acts as a place of pilgrimage today: his father's birthplace can still be visited on the same site. As Mohr was closely connected with the Church of Our Lady and the villages, it is believed the quietness of the place inspired him to write what was initially a Christian poem: *Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht*. Originally, the poem had six verses written in 1816 in the stillness and tranquillity of the Maria-Pfarr church.

The young priest became ill in the harsh climate, so had to be moved to another parish in Oberndorf, Salzburg in August 1817. In those days parishes did not have presbyteries, meaning priests had to search for board and lodgings themselves, and Joseph went to different pubs to eat. The Oberndorf villagers didn't particularly like him as they felt he was far too clever for them. However, the Bishop of the Salzburg diocese soon realised Joseph's talent and invited him to preach and give talks at the Cathedral of Salzburg. This was a prestigious honour and he became a great success.

Joseph's best friend Franz Gruber (1787-1863) was a teacher, and composed the world-famous melody for Silent Night. They would often meet, and just before Christmas 1818 Joseph asked Franz whether he would compose a melody for his poem written two years prior. The organ was out of order in the little chapel, so the two friends instead sung *Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht* for the very first time just after midnight mass accompanied by Joseph playing the guitar. The country of Austria has given the world *Stille Nacht*, as well as the composers Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, Bruckner, Mahler, Schoenberg, and Strauss.

*Margit Symons*

*Editor's note: With apologies to Margit. The delay in publishing this edition of In Touch means the article has lost its seasonal topicality*

# The Society of St. Vincent de Paul



It is now nearly a year since I joined the SVP of St Columba's. I didn't really know what to expect beforehand but just thought I might be useful in some way. I knew I had the time to help out when others might not be able to.

Regular visits are made; this involves just one or two hours a week. Two SVP members visit together, which as a beginner I found very reassuring. Gradually one gets to know those visited and instead of being strangers they quickly become friends, friends who are on their own who would just like some company in what otherwise might be a very lonely and bleak week. There may be some who are disabled in some way and need help with the shopping or perhaps the garden or would like to have a hair-cut. It's the little things that can often make a big difference.

Many times when two of us make a visit, we get offered biscuits and cake or cups of tea and the atmosphere can become very jolly. Conversations lead off in all sorts of directions. Often with older people it will be about memories of the early days or strange journeys and starting a career, which then developed over many decades. Some of the stories can become very amusing and I sometimes feel the whole process is a kind of therapy. It is for me anyway. There are of course sad moments as in any life and we are there to be part of that too; to hold a hand or just to listen.



Technology is so useful today making our lives easier and helping us to keep in touch with family. It is all there at the touch of a button. If however you are not part of that, through circumstances or old age; if there no children or better still, grandchildren to be your guide, then it can become very daunting. I know from recent experience how frustrating it can be. I was trying to watch a rugby game which had been recorded but all I got was a frozen TV screen. None of the buttons I pressed helped. Fortunately my wife came to my aid. She worked out what the problem was and got it sorted. She doesn't even like the game! But what about those trying to pay a bill or arrange some help through the local council or attempting to get faulty central heating up and running? It can be a minefield; an area fraught with uncertainty if you are not familiar with texting and e-mails etc. The SVP members are there to help where they can and to brighten what may be a rather lonely existence.

The SVP also make visits to care homes and nursing homes. Often one can't do too much but it's being there that's important. Perhaps having a conversation is difficult but there is nearly always some way to reach out;

joining in a game or looking at pictures which are proudly displayed. In these homes I am always full of admiration for the staff who are so caring and dedicated, and are able to understand the needs of each person. They are saints!

To sum up, I know the SVP is doing a valuable service in the community and it is worth all the time we spend. I feel very fortunate to be part of a group of such dedicated and truly kind people.

If anyone feels inspired to join our group please get in touch. (See contact list inside back cover).

*Martin Baile*

## Congratulations!



One of our very own parishioners has featured in the Queen's New Year's Day honours. Bertram Leon was awarded the Order of the British Empire for his services to the St Lucian community in the UK and abroad. Bertram was born in St Lucia but moved to London in 1971 at the age of 10. One of Leon's most valuable but unnoticed contributions to St Lucia was the award of a multi-purpose Blood Mobile Vehicle Unit which was given to the Ministry of Health in St Lucia. He is pictured here alongside the unit.

## National Marriage Week: what's that?

It runs from May 11-17, a UK-wide annual celebration of marriage which is such an important and central part of our lives both as Catholics and members of society. National Marriage Week was started in 2012 by a former judge in the Family Court, Sir Paul Coleridge. The idea, as valid now as it was then, is to tackle the problem of family breakdown by championing stable relationships within marriage.

The basic message is: marriage is worth investing in. All the research shows that stable families make for happier children and grown-ups, which makes for a happier, more stable community. It's in all our interests. Married couples who work at their marriages are more likely to stay together and become that stable family which leads to a happier society.

Marriage Week is a much-needed reminder of all that and an opportunity



and incentive for us as Catholics to do whatever we can to promote and encourage that message. If you would like more information about National Marriage Week 2020 visit <https://marriage-week.org.uk/marriage-week-home/>

*Deacon Philip*

## Parish events and activities

### Union of Catholic Mothers

Members of the Union of Catholic Mothers wish all in our Parish a very happy and healthy 2020.

We had our annual Christmas Party for our ecumenical friends and UCM Members on Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> December. The members laid on a scrumptious buffet and drinks for our guests, and Marion de Souza, our President, organised a table quiz with prizes. Our guests were treated to a sketch about a Non-PC Pantomime – basically Snow White and her 7 Dwarfs. Patsy, Eileen, Claire and Tina did a grand job and entertained our audience. A Heads and Tails game was carried out to gather in donations for CRISIS at Christmas and a few Christmas gifts were given to the person on the 'lucky chair'. We ended the evening with Margaret Charman playing a variety of carols. Our thanks go to all who contributed and helped make the evening a great success.

Otherwise, a number of causes were supported with donations of food and money in November, which were received with thanks and appreciation. We greeted January with a hilarious Reindeer drive led by Gill!

The Programme of Events throughout the year is on the UCM notice board at the back of the Church and also in the Church Hall. If any lady is interested in joining the UCM then do get in touch with me, my email is at the back of this magazine or come and talk with me. We meet once a month on the first Wednesday at 7.30pm. Our monthly Mass is on the first Sunday of the month at 10am.

*Marion de Souza, UCM President/Media Officer*



### Café St. Columba

We had a successful Harvest Lunch in October with 25-30 guests sharing a 2 course meal. Some of our parishioners attended along with SVP beneficiaries but most of our guests came from our regulars who attend

Selsdon Baptist Church and St. John's in Upper Selsdon Road. We had support from some of our ladies who work on the Café rota and without them this lunch couldn't happen.

On Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> December, the last session of the Café this decade, we continued with our annual Christmas lunch. We had 37 mouths to feed and it was a fabulous afternoon. We had 8 helpers, cooking, washing up & serving. Our guests were treated to a traditional Christmas dinner with all the trimmings with a choice of 3 desserts, wine and coffee, mince pies and mints plus a little present for each of our guests handed out by Terry the Elf. Everyone said what a wonderful time they had, so we felt that box was hugely ticked!



We are able to donate to many charities with the support and generosity of our clients. This year we supported SVP, Marie Curie, Lily Pad Appeal, St. Christopher's Hospice, HCPT, AMECA, Honey-pot and Alzheimer's; giving a massive £1,150.00.

We have also helped various events and projects within our own church. We have been working hard on the little garden at the rear of the church so that in the spring 2020, we can open the doors to sit out in the sunshine amongst the flowers and enjoy a little piece of paradise. (Well that's the plan!) A big thank you is due to Peter Pearce who has helped with the planning of the garden and doing some hard labour.

We closed the December Café with a huge thank you to all our parishioners and friends who supported Café St. Columba in any and every way. Our doors are open to you all and we'd love to see more of you there. Why not make a weekly, fortnightly or monthly visit with a couple of your friends on a regular basis. We can assure you, you will be well looked after and fed! Look out for our new advertisement on the outside wall. Every Wednesday from 9:30am – 1:30pm. Lunches are served from 11:30am

*Gill Tomei*



## **Autumn Charity Fayre**

We hold this event annually and this year we had five of our church's charities take part. On Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> November after the 10am Mass the hall was set up with various stalls covering a wide range of goods for sale and some activities including face painting, tattoos, guess the name of the teddy and guess the number of sweets in the jar. A marvellous amount of over £1500 was raised and divided equally between SVP, UCM, Ahotokurom, the uniformed Groups and the Youth Group.

We thank all our parishioners, friends and families who gave their donations and time to make this event the success that it always is.

*Gill Tomei*



## **Art Exhibition**

The display boards were spruced up with a new coat of paint ready for the Art Group's 17th annual exhibition in October. This year's contributions, although not quite so many, were up to the usual high standard. This was evident from the very favourable comments made in the visitor's book: 'Excellent as always, I feel inspired', 'a joy as ever; well done, St Columba's'.

As our founder member, Maureen Coffey, has never missed an exhibition but is now unable to attend weekly meetings, a couple from the group collected and hung some of her paintings.

Apart from the paintings and greetings cards, visitors enjoyed cheese and wine on Saturday and home-made cake, courtesy of Cathi Burns, and tea on Sunday.

Anyone interested would be most welcome to join us in the hall on Fridays from 10.30 am to 12.30 pm.



*Eileen Bowden.*



## **International Evening 14th December**

A great evening was laid on by the Social Committee for the above and a gastronomic array of food was bought along to share with others. Only 30 parishioners and friends attended but we had a marvellous evening with entertainment from Fe Perfect and her dancing ladies all the way from the Philippines. They went to so much trouble to show us how to jump in and out of blocks of wood to the beat of the music. An art to say the least.

Some of our parishioners had a go and came away unscathed. It was a delight to meet different people in the Parish and get to know them in a social way.



## **Wintershall Nativity Play**

On Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> December, 19 of our Parishioners, families and friends took to the road at 3:15pm in hazardous weather conditions to undertake

the largest nativity outdoors in Europe, near Guildford - not Nazareth!  
The cast were amazing – standing in the torrential rain – shepherds



attending their flock and awaiting a sign – Angel Gabriel in a nearby tree, telling them that a child would be born in a stable. So, we crossed the mud quagmire to the stable and drank up the atmosphere of what was to happen – which we all knew about! We then trundled into the barn, a few hundred of us and carried on watching the rest of the nativity story

together with sheep, lambs, horses, donkeys and of course the marvellous choir and actors. After the story unfolded we were treated to a Radio BBC4 director of music asking the audience to sing some more carols so that they could air it on Christmas morning at 9am. Fame at last, so we all sang our hearts out, I think the Musical Director was trying hard to give us plenty of second chances to get it right, which proved hilarious when the donkey started braying at the end of *O Come All Ye Faithful*. – Good old donkey!

We were all muddy, soaked but full of praise for the Cast and Animals and had a brilliant introduction to the Christmas Season about to happen.

*Gill Tomei*



## **CLOJ - Christmas Lunch on Jesus**

On Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> December 5 parishioners delivered hampers to needy families in the Purley area. This was organised by 2 wonderful ladies from Purley Baptist Church. 150 hampers are delivered by groups of 3 people – a driver and 2 delivery people, delivering 4 families a hamper which contains a turkey, vegetables, gravy, non-alcoholic wine, Christmas pudding, chocolates and other wonderful goodies. The hampers weigh 6 kg and are packed by some of our parishioners and others in Tolworth, 2 or 3 days before, leaving the turkeys in the freezer until it is time for delivery. It is a very well organised event that you feel very humble to be part of. The food is mainly donated by supermarkets and other sponsors. If you are interested in helping next year, it only takes around an hour, please let Gill Tomei or Richard Mills/Ken Lee know – we can pass on your details to the ladies who organise CLOJ.



*Gill Tomei*



# Church of St Columba

Queenhill Rd, Selsdon, South Croydon CR2 8DW

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Parish web site: [www.stcolumbaschurchselsdon.uk](http://www.stcolumbaschurchselsdon.uk)



## How much should I give?

I strolled down the road with no thoughts of my own  
I'm financially safe now - not even a loan.  
On the pavement before me I saw someone new,  
"Any change, mate?" he whispered, "Even pennies will do".

We're in all sorts of trouble - me and my wife  
I've got all kinds of problems at this stage in my life."  
I pondered how much I should give him that day  
I hoped he was needy and not drink it away.

But then I remembered what Jesus had said;  
That those coming to him would always be fed  
That he'd always be near us, in trouble and strife  
And for all of us here he had given his life.

So it wasn't a question of giving or not  
I was ready to help him - to improve his lot  
The beggar was trying his best not to fall  
So I emptied my pockets and gave him it all.



*Keith Sandland*

Look out for the Summer 2020 edition of In Touch.

All contributions welcome

Please send them to Chris Waring  
at [c.waring@virgin.net](mailto:c.waring@virgin.net) or the Parish Office