



St. Patrick's Church

Broad Green/Cowley Drive Woodingdean BN2 6TB

# St. Patrick's Newsletter



Our Lady of Lourdes

Whiteway Lane Rottingdean

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**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/StPatricksWoodingdean>

**Our Lady of Lourdes See website:** <https://www.ololandstp.org/>

MASS is streamed live from Our Lady of Lourdes : 09.30 Mon, Wed, this week; Tues Funeral Mass (Millie Fitch R.I.P.) 11.00; **Mundy Thursday** 20.00 Mass of the Lord's Supper; **Good Friday** Liturgy of the Lord's Passion 15.00; **Easter Vigil** 20.30 Saturday; **Easter Sunday** Mass 10.30 & 12.00.

Church open for Private Prayer Wed, Thurs, Sat: 10-10.30 and 2-3.30 pm; Good Friday 10.30-11.30

**St Patrick's – Mass on Sunday 28th March 9.00 am – Palm Sunday; and Easter Sunday 9.00 am**

**Welcome to the twenty-sixth "apart but together" e-newsletter (28th March 2021): Palm Sunday**  
**"Because where two or three have come together in my name, I am there among them." Matt 18**

## On Suffering

**Barbara Bond**

**"My soul is sorrowful to the point of death"** (Mark 14)

Whilst we look forward to the culmination of our Lenten journey, there has also been a great deal of looking back over the past year, with the Day of Reflection on March 23rd. News broadcasts have been banned in our house, but from snippets I have heard, people were asked what they would keep from the ways of lockdown.

I had this fresh in my mind when I went to the hospital in Eastbourne to get my second vaccination. The staff canteen has been appropriated for the purpose, and whilst I was in the queue I noticed something that symbolised the whole year for me. I saw healthcare professionals having a break from their duties – in isolation. If you know anyone who does a stressful, people-facing job, you will know that a major coping mechanism is the support of their team. At work we have weekly meetings to discuss our patients – currently, given that it is a Hospice, we are still talking about numbers I have never experienced before, each person the centre of a ripple of loss and grief.

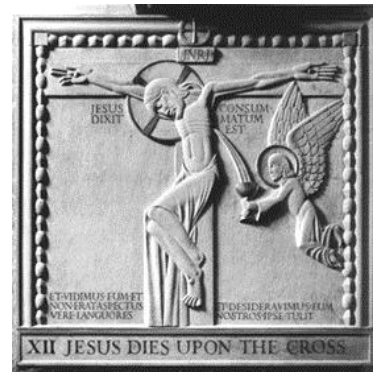
I have always found the journey through Holy Week profoundly challenging. I wonder if this is because I have always tuned into the very human experiences of Jesus, imagining the fear, sadness and pain. Maybe this is a diversion, as it stops me from really seeing that it is Jesus' willingness to embrace the suffering that was upon him, that teaches us to live life fully and freely. We are to trust that in the deepest realms of life where we dwell in and with God, all is well, even in the midst of life's pain and suffering.

**Jesus who bore such pain upon the cross,  
And suffered the nails in your feet  
And in your hands  
Turn to me and I will turn to you  
And may I never turn from you again.**

*Saltair, from Celtic Daily Prayer Book 2, Collins 2015*

Meister Eckhart says of Jesus' words, "take up thy cross and follow me" – that it is not a commandment, but a promise and a prescription for a person to make all his suffering, all his deeds and all his life happy and joyful. – More reward than commandment.

I am more than ever aware of solidarity in suffering: in facing our own and other people's suffering we can find strength. We find God – God who is closer to us than ourselves.



*Eric Gill Stations of the Cross  
Westminster Cathedral*

*The newsletter appears fortnightly. For the next issue, please send contributions by 9th April to Barbara Bond:  
[bond\\_barbara@ymail.com](mailto:bond_barbara@ymail.com)*

# CAFOD Lent Appeal: Questions for Lent



## Holy Week Prayers

### Walk with Us

*Jesus, you know what it's like  
to feel abandoned  
lost and afraid.*

*Walk with us!*

*And show us how to walk with others,  
who live in fear,  
who face death  
through hunger or war.*

*Show us how to pray  
for those we do not know  
and will not meet  
but who are always loved by you.*

*Walk with us Jesus! Amen.*

*(Linda Jones/CAFOD)*

### Prayer at 3 o'clock on Good Friday

**Jesus, you are my Lord and my God,  
you endured such pain and suffering for  
me, you died for love of me.**

**I kneel beneath your cross  
and beg for mercy.**

**Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.**

**O blood and water flowing from your  
side, sanctify and cleanse me.**

**Lord, I love you with all my heart  
and place all my trust in you. Amen**

**Diana Ng-Sutherland/CAFOD**

### The Darkness of the Tomb

**Jesus, in the darkness of the tomb, you  
were surrounded by love, by grief and  
by fear, as your body was prepared for  
burial.**

**Walk with us!**

**May we feel the comfort of your love for  
us. And may we turn outwards to share  
that love with others, with the same  
generosity and gentle loving kindness  
that you showed to all.**

**Walk with us Jesus! Amen.**

**Linda Jones/CAFOD**



To help people like Abdella

**Text LENT to**

**70460**

to donate £10 to  
CAFOD's Lent Appeal

**Or visit**

[cafod.org.uk/give](http://cafod.org.uk/give)

**CAFOD**  
Catholic Agency for  
Overseas Development

### A Night Reflection for Maundy Thursday

*Jesus arrested, judged, found guilty and condemned to die,  
is held captive overnight.*

*If I were arrested and held this night, what would I be found  
guilty of?*

*That I made friends with people irrespective of their  
colour, creed or class... that I shared my bread with the  
poor... that my words and actions brought healing and  
forgiveness...*

*That I made justice and didn't count the cost ... that I  
sought the truth and then spoke of it... that I recognised  
my neighbour and loved them as my very self...*

*That I met God along the way, in the healing and  
forgiveness I received... that I accepted hospitality at  
many different tables... and that I was changed by the  
lives of others... and often repented my arrogance and  
foolishness in encountering their wisdom ... that friends  
and strangers sometimes paid the price for me...*

*That I never sought out suffering... but journeyed with it to  
the best of my ability...*

*That the love of those about me taught me to love myself  
before God.*

*You call us out of brokenness to mend and remake your  
creation.*

*Grant us the courage to stay with all those who are held  
captive this night.*

*In the name of Jesus who is good news, Amen.*

**Pat Pierce/CAFOD**

*“Look, my servant will prosper; he will be lifted up, will rise to great heights. Just as many people were appalled at him – he was so inhumanly disfigured that he no longer looked like a man – so will he astonish many nations. Kings will keep silence before him, for they shall see what had never been told, understand what they had never heard.” Is 52: 13-15*



My Dad's version of the Stations takes a circular route around the railway stations of Central London starting at Victoria and finishing close to Paddington. Each station has a church nearby, and for each of these he wrote a meditation and prayer, as a modern-day re-visioning of the Way of the Cross. He has left me something very precious in this: the opportunity to follow his pilgrimage again (once lockdown has ended), and to appreciate both the continuity of faith and the contributions from many different cultures through time, that still live and breathe in our world today.

**The Third Station – Charing Cross (Jesus falls the first time)** The church linked to this is Corpus Christi, Maiden Lane. It is in Covent Garden and you have to go inside to appreciate its beauty. It is known as the Actors' Church. In 2018 it was designated as the Westminster Diocesan Shrine to the Blessed Sacrament. You could so easily just walk past...



**Prayer: Lord, place our feet back on the first rung of the ladder after each one of our first falls; remind us always of how dubious is our moral superiority to those who have fallen further.**



**The Fourth Station – Holborn Viaduct (Jesus meets his mother).** The church linked is St Etheldreda's, Ely Place, a tiny church tucked away which dates back to between 1250 and 1290 and is one of only two that have survived from so long ago. This is a very unshowy place – it doesn't need to be showy, as it has the atmosphere of a place that has steadfastly held the prayers of centuries. My Dad notes that we are close to a bridge which spanned the malodorous Fleet Ditch, fed by the purer rural waters of the "Hol-Bourne" stream.

**Prayer: Lord, let us mingle our tears with those of your blessed mother in expiation for the mess we have made not only of the waters of the earth but of the entire planet.**

**The Tenth Station – King's Cross (Jesus is stripped of his garments)**

The linked church is St Peter's, the Italian Church. Opened in 1863, it was at the time the only church in Britain designed in the Roman basilican style. The Irish architect John Miller Bryson worked from plans drawn by Francesco Gualandi of Bologna, modelled on the Basilica of San Crisogno in Rome. It has a tranquil feel and one could spend hours there, soaking up the prayerful atmosphere and admiring the stunning painted ceilings and artwork.



**Prayer: Lord, strip us of our pride, the most deadly and insidious of our many sins.**



**The Twelfth Station – Euston (Jesus dies on the Cross)** This church is St Aloysius. It is the most modern church on the route but I remember that it had a very warm feel to it. It is fascinating that it has its roots in the work of another group of European emigrés – this time French, who first established a chapel on the site in 1798. The current 1960s building has some very notable art works, including glass from the Whitefriars studios, a ceramic mural by Adam Kossowski, and several fibreglass statues by Gordon Bedingfield. My Dad notes that we are close to Primrose Hill – a green hill without a city wall.

**Prayer: Lord, do not let us hide in ivory towers. Shake us free from our sloth, flush us out into the blood, sweat and tears of the real world, where every day you are crucified anew.**

My Dad's final prayer, to be said after all 14 stations, is the one outside the Convent at Tyburn:

**Lord let us share in your victory, but we can only do that by sharing in the battle. Give us the strength to be Christians in more than name.**

*"Who would believe what we have heard? To whom has the Lord's power been revealed? He grew up before the Lord like a sapling, like a root in arid ground. He had no beauty, no majesty to attract us, no appearance to win our hearts..."* Is 53: 1-2

**Maintenance work completed!** That's what one likes to hear. The new soakaway for the church's rented house has been constructed in the grounds.



(top right): pipes from dummy drain and real soakaway combined and sent to the right under the wall

(above left): the bridge under the wall and into the church grounds

(above right): 5 metres from the house, the soakaway crates

(far right): some of the spoils

Pipes lead to it from the roof guttering downpipe and from an isolated drain near the back door of the house. These combine and cleverly go under the brick wall.

There are twists and turns in the pipework leading to the chamber with soakaway crates, but we are confident that surface water on concrete will not be a problem again when the rains come.



**Planting up the bare ground patches in St Patrick's church grounds.** We have a picture of the furthest part of the grounds showing a sunny area and a shaded area where there is no grass.

The ground has a covering of soil or chalk taken from the soakaway construction.

If parishioners have a wish to see a variety of plants grown there or provide plants or seed let Bernadette or Irene know.

Plant list includes herbs whose flowers are usually bee attracting, plants with edible flowers, downland species of low growing native flowers, attention-seeking flowers and known nectar producers for bees and other insects.

Plant preference for the site probably excludes invasive self-seeding annuals.

In that small area of the church grounds, where there are two 40 year old large trees, the grass will be left uncut during the summer.



*"He was despised, shunned by the people, a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering, one from whom people avert their gaze, despised, and we held him of no account. Yet ours were the sufferings he bore, ours the sorrows he carried." Is 53: 3-4*



**Week 4:** You can read all the transcripts of the series on the website

<https://www.abdiocese.org.uk/invited>

I think the diocese is to be congratulated on putting together a programme for the next 4 years. This year we have had the first of two sessions (5 over 4 years).

Each Thursday we are randomly allocated a Zoom room after the initial plenary session. This is the tricky bit – wondering who you will get to discuss with. In week 4 there were 9, led by a genial Lewes parishioner (who was also a convert). The 9 Zoom screens had the highest frequency of men (yet), with three men on their own and several married men with their wives. There were a total of 3 converts in the group. Individual testimonies from people were memorable.

The discussion was to be on a sense of mission, partnering God, living life for God, not being a “Jonah”. There were some erudite discussions on Jonah, his proposed travel to Tarshish, the Ionian sea, Ninevah in Iraq, Jonah’s name – Greek and Arabic translations.

Fr David King mentioned *Gaudete Exultante* all about holiness. Our group mentioned *Amoris Leticia* where the Pope addressed the pastoral care of families, so we skipped around a lot

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amoris\\_laetitia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amoris_laetitia)

The following day was the feast of St Joseph so our erudite zoomers mentioned *Patris Corde*

[http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap\\_20201208\\_patris-corde.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap_20201208_patris-corde.html)

The reading from John 12 20:33, “unless a wheat grain falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain etc”, seemed to fit the mission theme for the evening. You can see what the suggested questions for discussion are, these are used to varying extents.



**Week 5:** I have been reading the Gemma Simmonds book “The Way of Ignatius - a prayer journey through Lent” published in 2018. It contains concepts which have appeared in these diocesan episodes including of the church as a field hospital, and the liturgical year(s) in one’s life likened to a spiral. The speaker in week 5 was Eleanor Oliver, founder of Colour and Shape (for families) which is beautifully done on YouTube and Facebook <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdJNyn5xOrOB5634uplhcQg> The transcript of her talk as usual is online, it is about the journey through Holy Week and the unique services of the Triduum <https://www.abdiocese.org.uk/invited>

Questions included, where or how do you meet God? My Zoom group was led by a teacher and it had the greatest diversity in terms of people’s age, life experience, ethnicity and nationality. Some hated the concept of being alone, stillness, silence because they lived alone and got too much of that. Individual testimonies in the group were superb. One devout lady followed the Walsingham 24-hour live stream <https://www.walsingham.org.uk/shrine-home/>

Several people were happy that they meet God in scripture, in nature, in silence, in other people and sure that he was willing to meet them. We talked about areas of fear and darkness.



In almost every Zoom session there are people who have lost their spouse, this intensified their faith, some have ill members of their family and basically tough lives. The reading - the Passion of our Lord – was followed by questions - what the passion was like in real time, crowds, uncertainty, political differences, and this led to another question on betrayal, with good testimony by different people.

One of our group teaches migrant workers and asylum seekers, usually young men, and they are aged 15-17. They are learning English, are very appreciative, they are tolerant of other faiths. The teacher’s story was riveting. I watched Harry Potter actor Jason Isaacs talking about his experience (and extensive knowledge) of British migrants, in his work as an ambassador for the Red Cross, it’s well worth a watch, see link, puts things in perspective, but I thought it was a coincidence coming face to face with this important topic two evenings in a row this week <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FGpYIRVEYNU>

The Diocesan Zoom is always an education. I find it hard at times to extract the meaning (aim and conclusion) from the transcript material, but then, it isn’t science.

**“We thought of him as smitten, struck down by God and afflicted; yet he was wounded for our rebellions, crushed on account of our evil deeds. The punishment that made us whole was on him: his wounds brought healing to us. We had all gone astray like sheep, each taking our own way, and the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all” Is 53: 4-6**

## Snippets

**Fund raising St Patrick's** In 2020 from June-December we raised a staggering £2,200.80 with our sales tables and individual sales of plants, jams, home baking. We gave a donation to the Woodingdean Food Hub and paid for plumber before banking the rest. This year the fund raising pot has £12, and £45 donations. Please support us after Easter in our endeavours, but ensure that you give something regularly to the church, gift aided if relevant.

**Fund raising at Our Lady of Lourdes** In Rottingdean the church has set up contactless payments, which can be gift aided. This is a system called DONA. We don't have wi-fi at St Patrick's so it isn't an immediate option.

**From the OLOL newsletter last week:** We are organising another 'Easter Grab'n'Go' Table for cakes and bread. Please enclose payment with your order form & return it by Saturday 27 March or Sunday 28 March at the latest. Pickup dates for your order: Saturday 3 April after 6.30pm Mass & Sunday 4 April after 10.30am Mass. Order forms are available at church. Any queries please contact Jose on jonathanandjosesharp@virginmedia.com (if mobility is an issue). \*\*Nut allergy –Please be aware that cakes may have been made in a kitchen where nuts are present.

### COVID and Schools

Irene Green

This is a new high (or low) in constructive paranoia from the Green ménage. The link is to a very long article, suggesting that some of the data may be misleading and schools may not be as safe as we think. What one would like to be true and reality do not always coincide.

[www.nakedcapitalism.com/2021/03/new-cdc-guidelines-to-reopen-schools-based-on-outdated-cherry-picked-and-misinterpreted-data-puts-students-teachers-and-communities-at-risk.html](http://www.nakedcapitalism.com/2021/03/new-cdc-guidelines-to-reopen-schools-based-on-outdated-cherry-picked-and-misinterpreted-data-puts-students-teachers-and-communities-at-risk.html)

These quotes from the comments particularly struck husband Michael. A Texas trauma surgeon says it's rare that X-rays from any of her COVID-19 patients come back without dense scarring: Dr Brittany Bankhead-Kendall tweeted, "Post-COVID lungs look worse than any type of terrible smoker's lung we've ever seen. And they collapse. And they clot off. And the shortness of breath lingers on... & on... & on."

"Everyone's just so worried about the mortality thing and that's terrible and it's awful," she told CBS Dallas-Fort Worth. "But man, for all the survivors and the people who have tested positive this is — it's going to be a problem."

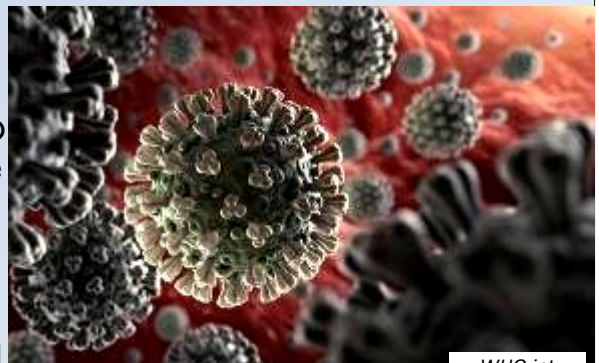
Bankhead-Kendall, an assistant professor of surgery with Texas Tech University, in Lubbock, has treated thousands of patients since the pandemic began in March.

She says patients who've had COVID-19 symptoms show a severe chest X-ray every time, and those who were asymptomatic show a severe chest X-ray 70% to 80% of the time. "There are still people who say 'I'm fine. I don't have any issues,' and you pull up their chest X-ray and they absolutely have a bad chest X-ray," she said.

In X-ray photos of a normal lung, a smoker's lung and a COVID-19 lung that Bankhead-Kendall shared with CBS Dallas, the healthy lungs are clean with a lot of black, which is mainly air. In the smoker's lung, white lines are indicative of scarring and congestion, while the COVID lung is filled with white.

"You'll either see a lot of that white, dense scarring or you'll see it throughout the entire lung. Even if you're not feeling problems now, the fact that that's on your chest X-ray — it sure is indicative of you possibly having problems later on," she said." (Jan 21)

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/covid-lungs-scarring-smokers-lungs/>



WHO.int

*"Afflicted and humbled, he never opened his mouth; like a lamb led to the slaughterhouse, like a sheep dumb before its shearers, he never opened his mouth. Forcibly, without justice, he was taken, and who gives a thought to his fate?" Is 53: 7-8*

## Snippets (2)

### News of Distant Parishioners

Bridie Reynolds (from Bernadette)

The news of Bridie is that she has had a couple of bad turns but she has bounced back. Marion (her daughter) was going to visit her at the care home – and at last be able to touch her – but another resident has developed Covid so the meet up has been delayed. She's very happy in herself although her sight is very bad but her appetite is still hearty! She sends love to all.



The pandemic has impacted Bridie's family, in that her granddaughter, who has cancer, has had an operation cancelled at the last minute because of Covid, and so is back on chemo. She is being very brave but please pray for her and her two children.

Ann Claridge (from Carole Claridge via Bernadette)



I'm afraid my mum has had a tough few months. She was admitted to hospital after a fall on New Year's Day and fitted with a pacemaker. Discharged too quickly, she fell again and broke her wrist. Moved to a care home in Worthing to free up a hospital bed at the peak of the pandemic, but sadly got Covid herself. Amazingly she has recovered! But it's taken a lot out of her.

Decisions need to be made soon about whether she can go back to her flat but she's still very frail. So not sure what will happen next. The worst part has been the isolation – as she's been moved around a lot, she's had five spells of Covid isolation.

Mum misses you all but was delighted when I read out your email to her this afternoon and to hear that Bridie has rallied. They are a tough generation!

**Free Iris!** (From Jane Moore) I have dug up a clump of the Iris pictured below, from my garden.



It is split into 3 pots if anyone would like some for their garden. It has flowers as the picture and in the autumn it has orange berries which are very decorative. It will spread quite easily via the orange berries. It is good for growing in a shady spot especially under trees. If anyone would like a pot please collect from my house at 100 Greenways, Ovingdean - Tel: 01273 305331 Please give a donation to St. Patrick's. Jane Moore



*From Patrick Elliott*

### Dementia, A Prayer

It steals upon our loved ones,  
it steals when we do not understand  
what is happening;  
why it is happening?  
The happening is that slow dying, the taking away  
of a precious loved one.  
We see someone we loved and treasured,  
someone who won our respect,

we see that person denied  
of dignity and slowly losing  
an awareness of life and living.  
It hurts... oh, how it hurts.  
Let prayer be our help  
let prayer be our strength  
let prayer rise like a fountain of love.  
May we come together in prayer  
for our cherished ones.  
Dear God, we pray, may your will be done. Amen.

**“He was cut off from the land of the living, the sin of his people visited upon him. He was given a grave with the wicked and his tomb is with the rich, although he had done no violence, no deceit upon his lips. It was the Lord's good pleasure to crush him.” Is 53: 8-10**



I have a very dear friend, Jenny, and over the years (30-odd years) we have stayed at some very interesting guesthouses, in search of tranquillity and quiet time to think! Some Catholic, some Anglican. Some were run by monks, some by nuns, and some by lay people. Jenny is a devoted and 'real' Christian – her background is Church of Scotland. She was a teacher like me, now retired, and an ideal companion!



I think the first place we visited was St. Cecilia's Abbey on the Isle of Wight. The sisters are Benedictines and are enclosed. They have a charming, self catering guest house within the grounds. Mass and all their services are available to attend. They sing beautifully – Gregorian chant in Latin! Even now I think they still follow that path. They were one of the few orders doing well – over 30 nuns! A real feeling of peace. Open to female visitors only!

We then ventured north – to Nunraw Abbey in Haddington, Scotland. An enormous guest house run by the Trappist monks. They live in their quarters as they are contemplative, but the guest master was there to welcome everyone. It was very popular! Many people and families from Glasgow visit, and the order provides food and lots of games and time to chat. We were able to attend services in the monastery – so peaceful-such love and devotion. The monks tend and live off the land. Alas, the guest house has now been sold, replaced by a modern building! A great adventure as we had to go to Edinburgh by train then wait for the infrequent bus! A memorable place.



We did visit Iona but only for the day so it does not really count!

Craig Lodge near Dalmally, north Scotland was another northern trek. The 'House of Prayer' there is off the beaten track and the community were so helpful with lifts! Their life is inspired by Our Lady's visitation to Medjugorje. They have a very simple life style (all lay members) with a room devoted to prayer, and sometimes Mass. A quiet and lovely place. Restful and in a beautiful area.

We ventured to Alnmouth – an Anglican Franciscan Friary. Enormous old building with a spectacular library, and gardens with views out to sea. Kindly monks and a true sense of peace and calm. A lot of visitors came regularly and some worked for their keep. We ate with the community and prayed with them at their services. I seem to remember all meals were taken in silence except lunch!



Our final trip (so far) took us to Holy Island! Lindisfarne. A real place of pilgrimage – trains, buses, taxis and walking are the order here. We stayed at the 'Open Gate' a Christian guest house which welcomes everyone regardless of faith. They are very low key and you stay in an old fashioned house with steep stairs, with a lovely lounge and



delicious food. They run retreats as well. They have a library and bookshop. The walks around the island are wonderful and just what a tired spirit needs for restoration. Plenty of birds and seals! St. Cuthbert's island is a mini pilgrimage in itself – only accessible at low tide! You do feel nearer to God here! We met a Catholic nun there – she 'ran' the RC Church but there were only services if a priest was visiting. She took daily prayer sessions. She was very

hospitable and invited us to lunch!

I have valued these places as the people we met were like us. Searching, finding friendship, resting and enjoying the peaceful atmosphere. Some were under great hardship and mental stress but were hoping for solace. We all got something.

Maybe we will do some more 'pilgrimages' but life does get in the way now, and we are older. I feel lucky and blessed to have visited these places and to have met such wonderful people.

Next time..... Pilgrimages abroad!!!!

*"If he gives his life as a sin offering, he will see his descendants and live long. Through him the Lord's good pleasure will succeed. After his anguish, he will see the light and be content. By his knowledge my servant, the righteous one, will justify many by taking their guilt on himself." Is 53: 10-11*



# Seeds and Reflections

## The Missing Father

Patrick Bond

My Lenten penance this year was a resolve to do something extra, something positive rather than giving anything up. My problem is that a week after giving up chocolate, I forget that I ever wanted it in the first place, and it isn't a penance any more.



So I decided to read a "good book", actually from cover to cover. The book was "The Mystery of Death" by Ladislaus Boros S.J. It is a work of philosophy and theology and I was hard pressed to keep up with the author: far from skimming it, I had to read most of it twice over, at least. I found ideas brilliantly explained, and a view that was both encouraging and exciting: a new way to understand time, human life, and death, in the context of the death of Jesus, our redeemer.

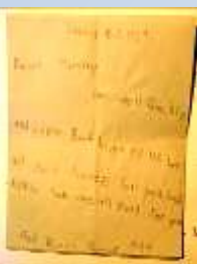
You may wonder why I should want to dwell on what might seem a morbid subject. Perhaps the recent death of my mother, Liseby, led me to think this book might be appropriate, and I was right.

But then I started thinking about the death of my father, George Bond, which happened 54 years ago when I was just 14. His passing was no surprise: he was in his mid 60s, and had a heart weakness, caused by Rheumatic Fever when he was a child. When I was nine, he had a major heart attack and we nearly lost him; from then on I lived with the knowledge that he could die at any time. There was no heart valve surgery, or fitting of pacemakers in those days.

And I have been thinking about that boy, who knew well enough that this was serious and final, but could not know that he would spend the next 50 years missing his father, in different ways as the different phases of life passed by; and that for 50 years he would live with the after-effects of having grown up far too soon – a serious boy who tried hard to understand, and refused to smile in photographs. Now that I have neither parent alive, I am somehow free to reassess what happened to me.



Amongst my mother's papers I found a note from me to her that she had carefully preserved. It is dated Sunday 9th August 1959, and says: "Dear Mummy, Get well quickly and come back home to us. We all said prayers for you last night. We are all good for you. God Bless. Patrick+++". She was in hospital with appendicitis. Seeing this note was, for me, a glimpse of a childhood in a whole family, not yet touched by death; a memory which had been blotted out by all that followed. I have to say that although my writing slopes drunkenly down the page, and the words have mirror-image letters and lots of random capitals, I am in awe of the instinctive grasp of how to compose a message.



Anyway, my father was also a deeply religious man, a man who was not afraid to seek to deepen his faith. I inherit something of both my parents in faith. Although I hardly knew him – he was of a reserved nature, and he was ill, and old enough to be my grandfather – he left me certain memories which are crucial to the way I think about him. Once, at Mass in the church of the Sacred Heart in Caterham-on-the-Hill (as we used to call it) – I must have been about six or seven – he leaned over as we knelt, and at the Consecration he said to me quietly, "Bow your head and say, 'My Lord and my God'". That voice of complete conviction and quiet authority has stayed with me my whole life. Maybe he has not been missing after all.

May he, and my mother, rest in peace.



Sacred Heart Church

***"Hence I shall give him a portion with the great and he will share the spoil with the mighty, for having exposed himself to death and for being counted among the rebellious. Yet he was bearing the sin of many and interceding for the rebellious." Is 53: 12***

# Afterthought

## Cold Winds and the Promise of New Life

Patrick Bond

As I write, the garden is full of sunlight but the clouds overhead are very dark; if I open the window, I know that the wind is bitterly cold. It's March, after all! Yet the roses are starting to flush out, the buds exploding into fountains of wine-red leaf, with orange and light green tones. They come out on bare stems which had seemed to be completely barren and dead.

The sense of promise beyond the wintry chill is palpable, and you can detect it everywhere. The birds are in full springtime courtship livery, with added nesting behaviour.

Our back garden is now hosting the nests of three different birds. The thrush is nesting inside the little bit of cypress hedge which screens our composting bins; last year a blackbird built a nest in the very same place. The song of the thrush has been dominating the mornings and evenings for at least a month, a heart-stopping promise of spring. Our untidy garden is a good place for snails, and so a good place for thrushes to feed; nationally, their numbers are falling, and they are on the RSPB's red list. We are privileged to have them.



Song Thrush RSPB

A blue tit keeps popping in and out of the nest box which I took down a few weeks ago to clean out, and found to be in pristine condition, full of fresh moss and grass already.



Dunnock RSPB

Two little dunnocks have been very obvious, just six feet from our kitchen window, building inside a low dwarf conifer which is only about a metre high. They approach by landing on a long, straggling buddleia which overhangs the nest site, and it is the jerky shaking of the buddleia which attracts the eye. For two days they have been arriving with lengths of twig, wisps of dry grass, withered bindweed stems, and beaks-full of moss. Now it has stopped: all their

blithe busy building has completely ceased, and they are flitting about as a couple, feeding up as fast as they can.

Their work is purely one of faith – they are far too small and vulnerable to have any defence against predators, or even against the weather should it turn bad; but they have no choice. They must follow the season and its imperious demands.

I cross the Winterbourne stream every day to pick up my paper, and on the metal bridge (the trip-trap bridge) you are suspended in mid air with water below and the bushes above and around and below. Almost from one day to the next, the pussy-willows have come out. In the north of the UK, willow branches are used instead of palm branches to celebrate Palm Sunday.

“And through the leafless underwood, rich stains  
Of sunny gold show where the willows bloom  
Like sunshine in dark places, and gold veins  
Mapping the russet landscape into smiles...” (John Clare).



Credit: Pete Holmes WTML (Woodland Trust)

And the whitethorn bushes have moved from swelling buds to fireworks of brilliant lime-green; they darken a little as the leaves mature, but that initial burst of colour is my favourite shade of green, especially when the flowers appear.

Suddenly the view along the deep banks of the stream is no longer clear-through: it is complicated, as your eye weaves in and out of the branches which are now holding clusters of leaf and flower, lacing back and forth across your line of sight. Far above, a robin is sitting on the topmost twig of an ash tree, his piercing, ringing song lighting up the day.

*“But as for me, I trust in you, O Lord; I say, ‘You are my God. My fate is in your hands, deliver me from the hands of my enemies and those who pursue me. Let your face shine on your servant. Save me in your merciful love. Let me not be put to shame, O Lord, for I call on you.’” Ps 31: 15-18*