



fraternitas

Ars Gratia Christi

Official Newsletter of The Fraternity of St Genesius, St Mary's Presbytery, Dublin Road, Drogheda, Co. Louth, Ireland.

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Issue 2

**Every Grace and Blessing to All Our Members
this Christmas Season**

The Fraternity of St Genesius

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Co. Louth, Ireland.

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The Fraternity of St Genesius is an approved association of the Catholic Church in which its members commit themselves to supporting the men and women of the theatrical and cinematic arts through their daily prayers and sacrifices. In this way, recognizing their role within the Mystical Body of Christ, they participate in the renewal of culture as called for by the Servant of God, Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, and spiritually accompany their brothers and sisters in Christ. The Fraternity was founded in Drogheda, Ireland, on 19th January 2007 and is under the patronage of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and St Genesius, the patron of the theatrical arts.

Fraternity Council

The Fraternity is governed by a Council under the Father Director. Its current members are:

Father Director: Fr John Hogan. **Secretary:** Christopher McCamley, OCDS. **Treasurer:** Jim McGivern. **Membership Secretary:** Michael Barden. **Media Secretary:** Donal O'Sullivan-Latchford. **Member Relations Secretary:** Mary Cahill. **Cllr. Epilepsy Apostolate:** Sr Eucharia Kenny, RSM. **Assistant, Apostolate for Epilepsy:** Elizabeth King. **Cllr. Religious Goods:** Sr Carmel Casey, DC. **Culture Secretary:** Kevin Dolan.

Fraternitas

Fraternitas is the official Newsletter and magazine of the Fraternity. Published quarterly, it aims to keep members informed of what is happening in the association while providing articles of interest on spiritual and cultural matters. Contributions, be they articles, letters, testimonies etc., are always welcome and will be considered for publication. Contributions can be sent to: Editorial Committee, *Fraternitas*, Fraternity of St Genesius, St Mary's Presbytery, Dublin Road, Drogheda, Co. Louth, Ireland or by e-mail to info@stgenesius.com.

Donations

The Fraternity is a non-profit organization and does not charge membership fees or a subscription for the Newsletter. Since it has no source of income it depends entirely on donations to cover the printing of the Newsletter and literature and postage. We would be most grateful if you could send a donation to support us in our work. The Fraternity is a registered charity.

Thanks to all

We would like to offer a sincere thanks to all those who sent donations to the Fraternity in honour of St Genesius to assist us in our work. The Fraternity is a non-profit charity, and we depend on donations to cover our expenses which consist mainly of printing the newsletter, our prayer cards and other literature and postage. Your contributions will help us keep up the work. All our benefactors are remembered in a special Mass which is offered each month by the Father Director for their intentions and needs. May the Lord bless you for your generosity. Please continue to remember us and if you would like to help sponsor a newsletter or any of our works please let us know.

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Fraternity News

Novena 2009

This year's novena to St Genesius proved to be the biggest and most popular yet, with participation not confined to Ireland, but worldwide as the Fraternity website hosted an Online Novena. Various religious and cultural events marked the nine days. The annual Opening Mass of the Holy Spirit, Mass of the Sick and feast day Mass, were accompanied by Solemn Vespers on the evening of the 24th August, an exhibition of icons over the weekend of the 22nd /23rd August, and an evening at the movies where the Hollywood epic, *Quo Vadis* brought film buffs to the parish hall.

Opening Mass of the Holy Spirit

A large crowd attended the Opening Mass of the Holy Spirit on the 17th August, in which prayers were offered for the outpouring of grace. The theme of the novena was *To know Christ Jesus* and his homily, Father Director, Fr John Hogan, spoke of the forthcoming Solemn Exposition of the Shroud of Turin believed by many to bear the face of Jesus imprinted into its weave. Many will come from all over the world to gaze on the image of Jesus revealing the human desire to come and know Christ, to gaze upon him and love him. The novena would be an opportunity to reflect in a deeper way on this: as members of the Fraternity, we seek to bring Christ to others, but we ourselves must also come to know him in a deeper way.

Mass of the Sick

A Mass for the relief of the Sick was offered on Tuesday 18th August. During the Mass the Sacrament of the Sick was given those who were seriously ill, and blessing with the relics of St Genesius.

Icon Exhibition

Culture Secretary, Kevin Dolan, organised an exhibition of original Icons in the hall of Fátima Primary School over the weekend of the 22nd /23rd August. Over a dozen beautiful works of art were donated by iconographers for the duration of the exhibition. Icons of the Pantocrator Christ, our Lady with Child, St Joseph and other saints, and an original of the Divine Mercy formed the works which were on display in a prayerful setting. Each evening visitors and those staffing the exhibition prayed Vespers, before which was a short talk on icons, their history, and their significance, with information on how they are written. It is hoped that the exhibition will be repeated next year.

Solemn Vespers and Blessing of Linen

On the vigil of the feast of St Genesius, Vespers were celebrated in St Mary's Church, followed by a Holy Hour of prayer and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. A large crowd joined Father Director and members of the Council for the evening. During the Vespers a ceremony of blessing of Linen took place. Continuing an ancient

tradition in the Church, one which has its origins in Acts of the Apostles, the Linen was touched to and blessed by relics taken from the bones of St Genesius, making the Linen a third class relic. The Linen is available for the devotion of the faithful, most especially for the sick. If you would like some, please contact the Fraternity.

Solemn Feast Day Mass

The feast day Mass took place on the evening of the 25th August. Bishop Smith, Protector Bishop of the Fraternity joined members of the Fraternity and others, for the celebrations. Music was provided by members of St Peter's Male Voice Choir who sang Gregorian Chant, motets, the new Hymn to St Genesius and a new *Ave Maria* composed by Timmy Regan.

In his words of welcome, Bishop Smith encouraged the work of the Fraternity and expressed his delight that each year the association is growing in strength. Referring to the pilgrimage to Rome, the bishop spoke of the pope's words of support and hoped that they would inspire the members to promote the aims of the Fraternity and their prayers for those in the theatrical and cinematic arts.

Father Director delivered the homily, in which he reflected on St Genesius' patronage of conversion, seeing it not merely as conversion to the Christian faith, but conversion to Christ which concerns the baptized as much as those who do not know him yet. The Pauline Year, he said, refocused our attention on the person of Christ and the need for daily conversion, as seen in the life of St Paul and St Genesius, and this is to be our daily project. At the heart of this daily conversion is encounter with Christ. He said: *"...conversion [is] to be a life-long experience – not in the sense that we can leave our conforming to Christ until later... But rather, conversion is a growing in virtue, a growing in grace in which we seek to be as close to Christ now as we can be, and do all he wishes us to do now. This programme of conversion, we can call it the spiritual life, is in the hands of God, and so trusting in him, knowing he knows us better, he teaches and leads us on. At the heart of this, then, is our relationship with God, with Jesus"*.

St Genesius is the model of such a conversion, and as such he is a model and patron for us. Our conversion is important given the world we are living in, when many will become disillusioned with modern society and materialism: we have to have something to offer them. Our conversion may well bring suffering, even martyrdom in the ever more hostile western secularism which is developing. *"We Catholics"* he noted, *"may have the make the same choices our martyrs made. Realizing this, the examples of St Genesius, St Oliver Plunkett, St Thomas More, become ever more relevant, and necessary."*

Following the Mass, there were refreshments in the parish center. Members traveled from various place in Ireland to participate in the celebrations. Our thanks to all who made the novena and its ceremonies such a success.

Online Novena

This year's novena saw the advent of an Online Novena to St Genesius to allow those on the world wide web, members and non-members, participate in the devotions of the nine days leading to the feast day. Each day a meditation was offered based on theme of the novena, "To Know Christ Jesus", with novena prayers to St Genesius. Data from the website shows that numerous people from around the world logged on each day to join in the prayers. It is hoped that through the novena more people will come to know the Fraternity, and hopefully join in the prayer and works of the association.

Death of John Cahill

On the 18th June last our dear friend, founder member and Council Treasurer, John Cahill passed away. John had been suffering from cancer for nine years, and while he was seriously ill for those years, he continued to live a normal life as far as possible. He never lost his optimism and was always willing to help in his parish or in the Fraternity. His advice and assistance during the founding of the Fraternity were invaluable, and he established the association on a sound economic ground, pushing for and getting Charitable status for the association in record time. Devoted to his faith, his spirituality was one of suffering with Christ for the love of God and the Church. He will be missed, and we are grateful to him for all that he has done for our family of prayer. The Fraternity offers our sincere sympathies to Mary his wife, and Sarah-Louise and Melanie, his daughters. May the Lord grant him eternal rest. (See Fr John's tribute on page 7)

Father Director on EWTN

Forgotten Heritage: Europe and the Eucharist, Fr John's television series has been airing on EWTN this autumn. Co-hosting a series of reflections on the Eucharist with Fr Owen Gorman, Fr John's series aired first in the US, beginning last September, and then in Europe last November. Many positive emails and letters have been received into the Fraternity office.



of God. Plans for a third series to air in the autumn of 2011, are already at an advanced stage. *Forgotten Heritage: Europe and Her Saints* will continue the theme established

Frs John and Owen have just returned from Alabama where they recorded their second 13-part series, *Forgotten Heritage: Our Lady and Europe*, due to air in autumn 2010. Following the format of the first series, the priests will look at various shrines and people in Europe who reveal the continent's ancient traditions and devotion to the Mother

in the first two series, but over sixteen programmes, examining the lives of sixteen saints from Europe who have made outstanding contributions to the Church.

The first series has just been released on DVD on EWTN's own label and is available from www.ewtnreligiouscatalogue.com. European members please note that the DVD is in US format, so a multi-region DVD player is required to view it.

Pilgrimage to Turin in 2010

Councillor Mary Cahill and her pilgrimage committee have announced plans for the Fraternity's pilgrimage for the Solemn Exposition of the Shroud of Turin. In June 2008, Pope Benedict announced the exposition, and for a period of forty-three days from April 10th to May 23rd 2010, the cathedral in Turin will open its doors to welcome millions of pilgrims from all over the world who will come to venerate the ancient cloth. The Holy Father will visit the Shroud on the 2nd May.

The Fraternity pilgrimage will take place between the 20th and 27th April and will include a visit to the Shroud among other shrines in Turin, Milan, Padua and Venice. Among those shrines will be the Basilica of Our Lady Help of Christians, Turin, to visit the tomb of St John Bosco, that of St Augustine in Pavia, the tombs of St Gianna Beretta Molla and St Ambrose in Milan, St Anthony and St Leopold Mandić in Padua, and St Mark and St Lucy in Venice. Further details are available from Joe Walsh Tours in Dublin (see back page for contact details).

New Treasurer

At a meeting of the Fraternity Council on the 8th October, a new treasurer was appointed. Jim McGivern, a native of Belfast now living in Dublin, was elected unanimously: he is an accountant by profession. We would like to thank Jim for his generosity in accepting the post, and wish him every blessing.

Deceased Members

Please remember in your prayers members of the Fraternity who have recently died: Oblatory Member Anne McGovern (Drogheda), and Cooperators Mary Daly (Clara, Offaly) and Brid Higgins (Galway). As we pray that the Lord may take them into the light of his kingdom, we ask that he may grant their families every consolation.

Would you prefer to receive *Fraternitas* by e-mail?

Some members have expressed an interest in receiving this Newsletter via an e-mail link - if you would prefer that, please let us know. Drop us an e-mail with your request and details to fraternitas@stgenesius.com.

From the Father Director

The Shepherds of Bethlehem

I remember a number of years ago, when out shopping for a new crib for our family home, I was laying down a few suggestions about the set we were to get, and quite strict about it too (foolishness of youth!). Most of the sets tended to feature the Magi but with only one token shepherd: this was not good enough. Even as a child I felt it was unjust that the Shepherds were left out, after all they had already seen the glory of the Infant Christ while the Magi were still traipsing across the desert. So when the old crib had disintegrated – figures having disappeared one by one, as they do, the criteria for the replacement was established – three shepherds (at least) to match the Magi.

My request was taken on board by the powers that be and that Christmas our family crib was a rather crowded affair: the Baby Jesus had a full house. In fact I got more than I bargained for – two of the shepherds had brought their musical instruments and were shown in full flight entertaining the Infant! I notice today that many sets still stick to the Magi and the one token shepherd. Of course, in Italy whole villages are included in the crib: shepherds galore, midwives, farmers, bakers, washerwomen, girls, boys, etc, and a whole array of animals – all life is represented. There is more than an artistic or sentimental meaning to that. The shepherds of Bethlehem do, in a sense, represent all of life – the ordinary folk of the world, but also in a particular the ordinary Jewish people who longed for their Messiah.

The story of the revelation of the Lord's nativity to the shepherds is an important one – notice the Holy Magi followed a star, they saw no angels, yet God in his providence sent angels to these Jewish shepherds to announce that their Messiah had come. The shepherds were a rather curious group of people, not entirely trusted by the urban dwellers in Israel. The nature of their work meant that they spent long periods in the wild, looking after their sheep, traveling around the land seeking out the best pasture land. This semi-nomadic type of life seemed to raise suspicions in the village and town dwellers, and they looked on these shepherds as outsiders, perhaps even outlaws, and certainly not to be trusted. It is true they lived outside civilization, by necessity, and that had its influence on their lives. How interesting that it is these outsiders who should be chosen to represent the ancient people of Israel at the crib of the new-born Messiah.

Reflecting on this we have to note that it was society which saw these shepherds as strange, as altogether different and untrustworthy. Not as influenced by the

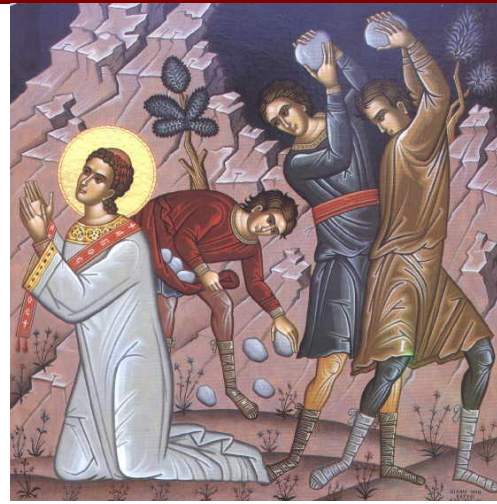


agreed norms of urban living, these poor ones may have been uncouth, wild, perhaps even not very observant of the moral laws, but it is to these that the angels appeared, just as later Jesus would walk among sinners, tax collectors and lepers: the outcasts of the chattering classes. Indeed as we know from our Church history, for the first few centuries of the Church's existence the disciples of Jesus were themselves the outcasts of society, and this has been repeated many times since then, most notably in the secular societies of today.

What is the lesson for us in this revelation to the shepherds: why did God choose these? First of all, they were the poor, and God has always chosen the poor and humble as his messengers. They are the ones who tend to be reliable, as we see quite clearly in the stories of Our Lady's apparitions. Another reason may be that these shepherds represent in their solitariness the human condition in all ages – they needed to be redeemed, to be reintegrated into God's society, to be taken out of the wilderness and brought back into the garden prepared by God for his children. This reminds us of the state of the people of Israel at the time of the Exodus: an exiled people who needed to be led into the Promised Land. Another reason, I would suggest, is that God has gone to those are outside in order to begin his renewal of the world – those within the city have too many concerns, too

much to lose, have dug out safe enclaves within the Law of God, to be convinced by the apparition of angels and the birth of the Baby-Messiah. If that was one of God's reasons, the experiences which lie ahead would prove him right – those shrouded in their respectability rejected the Messiah, but the poor, the sick, the outlaws, the sinners accepted him because they were all too aware of their hunger, of their weakness, of their need for a Saviour.

Today is no different from Our Lord's time. Today a great reform is underway, Christ is renewing his disciples, but many of them, comfortable in their enclaves, are not prepared to enter this reform. I see this in my country, Ireland: sadly many are too comfortable and their faith is waning, but there are others who are growing strong in their faith, hearing the call to holiness and taking up their roles in the proclamation of the Gospel. So I believe that today, God is appealing to the poor shepherds of our time: the little ones. I see the signs of the new springtime for the Gospel sprouting up in the Church; I see a new fidelity which is not understood by many in the Church, not even understood by many of her bishops. I see the efforts of Pope Benedict to lead this reform, and while many in the Church ignore him and some even despise him, the little ones are listening, they are inspired and they are following. It is a small group (not as small as the little band crossing the hills of Bethlehem to find the Infant in the grotto on the first Christmas night) but this group is growing. There is a great spirit of confidence in the air at this time. Yes, there is much to be concerned about, and in some countries, notably in the West, orthodox Christians are becoming the outcasts, but as the history of the Church, and the example of the shepherds show us, this has always been the perfect starting point for a new evangelization. If this is so in your country, then know you are called to the grotto of the nativity to see the Divine Child and be inspired by him, to follow him and proclaim him.



Christmas and Martyrdom

The joy of Christmas also fills our hearts today, while the Evangelist's wonderful announcement continues to echo throughout the Church: *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us"* (Jn 1:14). The reason for our joy is precisely this: today Christ is born for us: he brings the world peace.

In the mystery of Christmas, the paschal mystery is already present. Jesus comes into the world to fulfil his mission of salvation which will culminate in his crucifixion and in the extraordinary event of his Resurrection. The martyrdom of St Stephen, which we are commemorating today, brings us somehow to contemplate this reality leading us to the heart of our faith.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, the proto-martyr Stephen was stoned for confessing his adherence to the divine King, born in the stable of Bethlehem. The Only Begotten One who comes into the world invites every believer to choose the path of life (cf. Dt 30:19). This is the profound meaning of his coming among us. Loving the Lord and obeying his voice, the deacon Stephen chose Christ, Life and Light for every man and woman. By choosing the truth, he became, at the same time, a victim of the mystery of iniquity present in the world.

As in times past and even in this century, the Church, in witnessing to the truth, finds herself experiencing the supreme trial of martyrdom in many of her children. She is aware that, in accepting the Son of God, she is called to share his destiny: as she lives the joy of his birth, united to him, so she is also ready to follow him in the supreme act of Paschal love.

In making room in our heart for the Son of God, who is given to us at Christmas, we also renew our will to follow him faithfully on the way of the Cross, certain that our ultimate goal is the blissful encounter with the Father.

We pray to the Virgin Mary, Mother of God and Queen of martyrs, that she may guide us and sustain us on our journey to Christ whom we contemplate in the crib.

The Servant of God, Pope John Paul II.
Angelus on the Feast of St Stephen
 26th December 1996

Farewell, Dear Friend

In Memory of John Cahill

On 18th June last our Council Treasurer John Cahill died after a long battle with cancer. In this article, Fr John Hogan reflects on John's life, his faith and his contributions to the Fraternity.

On the 17th June last, the Fraternity lost one of its founder-members and Councillor, our dear friend, John Cahill. John had been suffering from cancer for nine years, yet still living as vibrant a life as possible. I would like to share a few thoughts with you on John, since many of you were praying for him, some of you may have met him, perhaps were brought into the Fraternity by him. He was a remarkable man, a generous soul, a man of deep faith, a devoted husband and father and a loving friend; he was also an enterprising businessman – and these mixed together made an outstanding individual.

John was Dublin born and bred – born in 1954. Like all Dubs he was tremendously proud of his background which was ordinary working class. His parents John and Mamie did the best they could for him, his two brothers and sister, putting them through school and college – no easy task in the 1960's. Recognising John's abilities, they got the money together to send John to Blackrock College, one of the most prodigious schools in Ireland. He was an avid rugby fan, and played for his school. While there he contemplated a career in the sport, perhaps he might even have the honour of playing for his country, but he opted for business career instead and specialized in accountancy. In business he was successful, and ran his own company for many years. In the meantime he met Mary and together they had two beautiful daughters, Sarah-Louise and Melanie. Living first in Julianstown, Co. Meath, they moved to Drogheda, where he became an active member of the parish, assisting in various roles, eventually helping found the Fraternity. For nine years John struggled with cancer and while he faced the pain of his illness and some dreadful treatments which seemed worse that

the condition, he did so with great serenity. He died on the 17th June at 5.30am.

This brief outline gives you the facts, but there was more to John Cahill, and I would like to share some of my reflections on the man and his life.



One of the secrets of John's life was his generosity. John willingly gave of himself out of his love for Christ and his concern for others. As he suffered, he offered his sufferings for them, so they could come to know and love Jesus Christ. I recall a conversation we had perhaps about six months before he died. He was finding the burden of his suffering almost insurmountable, but instead of giving in or getting angry, he said he wanted to become an Oblatory Member of the Fraternity. Our Oblatory Members are often very ill people who offer their suffering for the mission and intentions of the Fraternity. Archbishop Fulton Sheen once said

that there was nothing worse than wasted suffering – John understood this and he was determined to be of service. As a generous man we will never know the extent of his generosity be it material or otherwise – he never let his left hand know what his right was doing.

As Christians we are called to live the Beatitudes, to become Beatitudes in the flesh: for me, John Cahill was the Beatitudes in the flesh: for him they were the plan for his life – he would choose the Beatitudes as the Gospel for his Requiem Mass. Through his prayer, his life of service to this family, his Church and those around him he sought to live the Beatitudes. He was thoughtful of others, forgetful of self because that is what is required in order to live the Beatitudes, and he knew that in living the Beatitudes he would become more like Jesus Christ whom he loved. When we read the Beatitudes, and if we take them to heart, we see that

the Gospel is an instrument designed to disturb and transform, and this is how John understood the life of Jesus and his teaching and the mark that life and teaching should make on his own life. He knew he could not change himself – he had to trust in God and allow Him do the transforming, it was John’s task to pray, trust and follow.

In this John was very Augustinian, like the great Doctor of the Church John understood that the love of Christ was everything – it would transform everything: that grace would be given for every need and difficulty. Heeding the teaching and example of St Pio, whom he also loved, he saw his sufferings in the context of Christ’s own sufferings. John had a tremendous devotion to the passion of the Lord for this reason – in contemplating the suffering and death of Jesus he saw the meaning of his own suffering and was prepared for his death.

All of this stirred John on to become an apostle in as far as that was possible, and his devotion to St Genesius provided him with the impetus to go out and to bring Christ to those who need to meet him. His evangelical heart saw tremendous possibilities when he became a founder member of the Fraternity of St Genesius. Members of the Council often groan now when I say I have an idea for the Fraternity (it usually means work!), but John was keen to do all he could to promote the mission of the association. In fact, many of the ideas I had came from him, and at our meetings he was always making suggestions, pushing us on with great zeal. That zeal was a blessing and it kept us on our toes. I am humbled by his generosity and his commitment to the Fraternity and we owe him a great debt. But of course, an accountant by training, he had an accountant’s caution and his feet were well and truly fixed on the ground: if ideas seemed flimsy, possibly unworkable or expensive, he was in like a shot to advise: the mission was too important to flit away with dreams. And yet, he was also a dreamer, but one who could also see what needed to be done to make those dreams a reality.

The Fraternity appealed to John because it appealed to the showman in him – and he was a showman. Many, many times we have had to endure his singing in all sorts of strange situations: he was a born entertainer, but, we might say, nature forgot to give him the full sweetness of the nightingale. After dinners, or out with friends or, to be honest, anywhere, he was liable to burst into song, having a great laugh at our mortification.

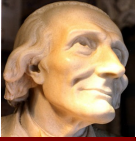
From dressing up in Elvis suits and gorilla suits to pranks, John was always in the middle of it. His surreal take on life was refreshing and emerged not from a devil-may-care attitude, but from a genuine joy, a joy founded on his faith. As he grew in faith, his joy increased even when his suffering increased. I think of St Philip Neri, one of the Church’s great saints and a real prankster himself whenever I think of John’s antics: the two could be soul mates – both determined to live



devout, radical Christian lives, but both possessed of a wicked sense of humour. In these secular times many do not see that comedy and faith are connected (not in a positive way), but they are. The great Italian poet Dante called his poem about Hell, Purgatory and Heaven *The Divine Comedy*, and quite rightly: Christ is our joy and once our lives are grounded in him, then life can be a joy, a comedy: John understood that: he understood he could never take himself seriously so he could to leave room for God to work within him.

I found myself asking the question after John’s death – is he a saint? I am personally convinced from what I know of the last days and hours of his life that he reached an extraordinary degree of holiness, a holiness which was nourished at the foot of the cross. I am also personally confident that the Fraternity has another intercessor in eternity, though I know such judgements are not for me to make, and that we will have his assistance in the years to come. I have learned so much from this man and I believe it was the providence of God which brought him into my life – I know many people feel the same. We miss him but our faith in Christ and in the communion of saints consoles us. I think of the antiphon from the Liturgy of the Hours for St Martin of Tours, and I think of John as we pray it: *Martin, once poor and lowly, enters heaven with riches*: I pray that John may be found by God to have been poor in spirit, may likewise enter heaven with the riches of his faith, love, suffering and good works.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a ainm dhilis



Annus Sacerdotalis

19th June 2009 – 11th June 2010

The Year of the Priest

On the 16th March last, the Holy Father proclaimed a Year of the Priest, and opened the celebrations with Vespers on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart, 19th June, in St Peter's Basilica. The purpose of the Year, the Holy Father said in his Letter proclaiming the celebration, is *"to deepen the commitment of all priests to interior renewal for the sake of a stronger and more incisive witness to the Gospel in today's world"*. This year has been chosen because it marks the 150th anniversary of the death of St Jean-Marie Vianney, the Curé of Ars, the patron of parish priests.

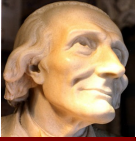
Quoting St Jean-Marie's saying *"The priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus"*, the Holy Father explains in his Letter, *"This touching expression makes us reflect, first of all, with heartfelt gratitude on the immense gift which priests represent, not only for the Church, but also for humanity itself. I think of all those priests who quietly present Christ's words and actions each day to the faithful and to the whole world, striving to be one with the Lord in their thoughts and their will, their sentiments and their style of life. How can I not pay tribute to their apostolic labours, their tireless and hidden service, their universal charity? And how can I not praise the courageous fidelity of so many priests who, even amid difficulties and incomprehension, remain faithful to their vocation as "friends of Christ", whom he has called by name, chosen and sent?"* The Holy Father then invited priests to enter into the spirit of the Year: *"I would like to invite all priests, during this Year dedicated to them, to welcome the new springtime which the Spirit is now bringing about in the Church, not least through the ecclesial movements and the new communities."*

Just before the opening ceremony during the Vespers of the Sacred Heart, the heart of St Jean-Marie Vianney (pictured below), brought especially from the sanctuary of the saint in Ars, France, was led in a procession in to St Peter's Basilica, where it was exposed for veneration in the Choir Chapel. Pope Benedict spent some time in prayer before the relic, and then went to lead Vespers. During his homily, the Pope reflected on the pierced Heart of Jesus from which priestly ministry flows, a mission which calls for complete fidelity to Christ, constant union with him and striving for holiness as seen in the life of St Jean-Marie



Vianney. Addressing the priests directly, he said: *"As I invited you at the conclusion of my Letter: 'in the footsteps of the Curé of Ars, let yourselves be enthralled by Christ. In this way you too will be, for the world in our time, heralds of hope, reconciliation and peace!'...To be completely enthralled by Christ!"* Offering them the example of St Jean-Marie, now the Patron of All the Priests of the World, the Pope said: *"A few moments ago, in the Choir Chapel, I was able to venerate the relic of the saintly Curé of Ars: his heart. A heart that blazed with divine love, experienced amazement at the thought of the dignity of the priest, and spoke to the faithful in touching and sublime tones, telling them that "after God, the priest is everything! ... Only in heaven will he fully realize what he is". Dear brothers, let us cultivate this same amazement, in order to carry out our ministry with generosity and dedication, and to maintain the true "fear of God" in our hearts: the fear, that is, that we can deprive of so much good, by our negligence or fault, the souls entrusted to our care, or that—God forbid—we can do them harm. The Church needs holy priests; ministers capable of helping the faithful to experience the Lord's merciful love, and convinced witnesses of that love... Let us ask the Lord to set the heart of every priest afire with that "pastoral charity" which can make him one in heart and mind with Jesus the High Priest, and thus to imitate Jesus in complete self-giving.*

The ceremony ended with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, followed by Benediction.



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The Life of St Jean-Marie Vianney

As Pope Benedict inaugurated the Year of the Priest, he proclaimed the Cure of Ars, St Jean-Marie Vianney, patron of parish priests, the Patron of All the Priests of the World. In this article Peter Saunders looks at the life of this remarkable man whose life and ministry is proposed as a model for all our priests.

Ars is one of those remarkable places in the world that seem to remain hidden to many, but once discovered can never be forgotten. Externally it is a typical French village, a rural retreat where the ebb and flow of the seasons still dictate the pace of life – which is slow most of time. The tranquility is unbroken, and while it seems to have little to offer, Ars has much to offer. In the centre of the tiny village – for that is what it is, a most unusual church seems perched on a raised platform. The church seems to be a strange concoction of different periods that do not fit together very comfortably. Yet in this unusual building one finds the greatest of harmonies, not because of architecture – although the more one looks at the trifle of styles it does reveal a wonderful harmony; the harmony of Ars is the fruit of a spiritual force: of the life of a simple priest whose faith, holiness, personality, suffering and utter dedication to his ministry, has left its mark. While at first sight the village may appear to be a backwater, thanks to this remarkable priest, it is a centre of priestly spirituality.

The priest of Ars was St Jean-Marie Baptiste Vianney, a man who just about fulfilled the requirements to be ordained a priest – a man whom many thought would not amount to much, a man who, as we see from contemporary accounts, was considered unfit by many of his brother priests to be a priest: it is heavenly justice (and beautifully ironic) that he is now patron saint of all the priests of the world.

Jean-Marie Vianney was born in Dardilly, near Lyon in France in 1786, just three years before the French Revolution broke out: that Revolution and its aftermath would dictate the course of his life. He grew up in a firmly Catholic home, one which proved to be a refuge for priests fleeing the secularists of the Revolution. It was this contact with priests and the secret Masses celebrated in their home which impressed the idea of priesthood on the heart of young Jean-Marie, who was already proving to be a spiritually precocious child. His mother, a devout woman, instilled a like devotion in him and there are countless stories which reveal his childhood faith and in particular his love for the Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady.

When he eighteen years old Jean-Marie asked his father to allow him to enter the seminary: his father was not



keen on the idea since he needed a strong pair of hands to help him on the farm, and so a disappointed Jean-Marie remained at home. For two years the young man fostered this call, praying hard that his father would relent: when he was twenty his prayers were answered and he was allowed to enter the seminary. But more obstacles lay in his way. Due to an administrative error, in 1809 Jean-Marie was called up for service in Napoleon's army which was preparing for war with Spain – seminarians were normally exempt from military service. As it turned out he never served – first ill health confined him to hospital, and as soon as he was discharged his late arrival to his barracks saw him miss his unit. Going in search of it, he fell across a group of men who said they would help him – they turned out to be deserters and their help was a refuge from the military police; and so for two years the innocent Jean-Marie was

classed as a deserter, living hidden away in a mountain village. When the misunderstanding was finally cleared up he was allowed to return to the seminary. However his troubles were not over yet.

Jean-Marie was not a good student – he had learning difficulties, and Latin, the language in which the courses were conducted, seemed like hieroglyphics to him. When he could study in French he was passable, but in Latin, he was a failure, and so, deemed unfit for priesthood, he dismissed from the seminary. His father was furious – it seemed the only place for his “stupid” son was on the farm; but Jean-Marie was not giving up yet. Thanks to Fr Bellay, the parish priest of nearby Ecully, a priest the family had befriended during the Revolution, Jean-Marie was allowed continue his studies privately, and after many mishaps, disappointments, perseverance and hard work, prayer and sacrifice, and Fr Bellay’s patience and faith, Jean-Marie was finally ordained priest in Grenoble Cathedral on the 13th August 1815. He had to walk the eighty miles from Ecully to Grenoble: he was the only candidate for ordination that day and while the senior clergy were embarrassed at the low turnout, the Bishop said, *“It’s not any trouble to ordain a good priest”*. To Jean-Marie’s joy he was appointed curate to his beloved Fr Bellay and as he settled into his appointment, he continued his studies in order to be granted the faculties to hear confession which he was a few months later.



Fr Bellay died in December 1817: Jean-Marie was heartbroken: the two had lived a holy communal life, each trying to outdo the other in mortification and well-matched in holiness. The parishioners of Ecully petitioned the Vicar General to allow Jean-Marie to remain on as their new parish priest, but the Vicar General had other ideas: Jean-Marie was appointed to the parish of Ars-en-Dombe. Ars was a small parish of about two hundred people, but there was little faith in the village. Jean-Marie was told by the Monsignor *“There’s not much love of God in this village. Your job will be to instil it.”* Unlike his fellow clergy, the Vicar General had great regard for Jean-Marie – he was not depriving



him of a good appointment in Ecully, but saw the potential in Jean-Marie.

On the morning of the 9th February 1818, Jean-Marie left Ecully and began the twenty-mile walk to Ars. The journey was long and tiresome and it was still winter. As he was walking he thought he had got lost, but providence sent him a small boy, Antoine Givre, who was walking along the road. Calling the boy over he asked him how to get to Ars, the little boy pointed out the way; Jean-Marie then said to him: *“You have shown me the way to Ars and I will show you the way to heaven”*. A little while later he arrived at the village. The church and presbytery were beside each other, but in a dilapidated state. The church was a dismal sight and would hardly have lifted the poor priest’s heart: it seemed a fitting symbol for the religious neglect of the parish. He went into the church to pray: the tabernacle was empty, the altar shabby, no side chapels, indeed the steeple had been vandalised by the revolutionaries. As he surveyed it all he said, quiet prophetically, *“How small it all is. Yet it will not be able to contain the multitude of those who will journey here.”* The following morning, as Fr Jean-Marie rang the bell for Mass, the people of Ars discovered that they had a new parish priest: their new Curé would prove to be a very providential catch.

For the next forty-one years, the Curé of Ars devoted himself completely to restoring the faith of his parishioners, and then, building on that, to make saints of them: this he did. In fact, his ministry was

not confined to that little village, but as his fame spread, people came from all over France and beyond to see him, hear him preach, and to go to confession to him. Jean-Marie had a plan to restore his parish which had suffered physical and spiritual neglect since the Revolution. First he offered himself to God in prayer and sacrifice to convert them; he began to restore the ramshackle church, replacing the sacred vessels and introducing images and statues to rekindle the devotion of his people. He impressed them with his devout offering of the Mass which became a real mystical experience for them as they saw their pastor in ecstasy. His preaching was aimed at educating his people and tackling abuses within the parish – of which there were many. For years he struggled with the innkeepers whose premises proved to be dens of vice and the place where, he said, wives and children were impoverished. He took catechism classes in the church to educate the children, and later the adults. He established a school and orphanage, and various religious sodalities in the parish.

St Jean-Marie's fame, however, rests in his role as a confessor.

For many years he would spend up to sixteen and eighteen hours a day in the confessional as it seems all France and many from abroad came to him for confession: he was the Padre Pio of the nineteenth century. In a Europe torn apart by secular revolutions initiated by atheistic Enlightenment thinking and rabid anti-Catholicism, the humble Curé of Ars showed the people of his time that God existed, that He loved them, and that the way to heaven was the practice of virtue; the sacraments were given to assist us in this, and confession is the sacrament in which we wrestle with our sinfulness, renounce it and receive God's forgiveness. To a presumptive people this message came as a shock, yet the holiness of his life brought them to realize that what he was saying was true.

Throughout the years of his ministry, St Jean-Marie had a variety of friends and enemies. Among his allies were the lady of manor, the Mademoiselle Ars who financed

much of the restoration of the church; a young local woman Catherine Lassagne who collaborated with him in the founding of the school and orphanage, and many others. Among his more famous friends were St Peter Julian Eymard, founder of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers, and the Venerable Pauline Jaricot. In heaven he had many friends: his great devotion to Our Lady was unsurpassed, as was his love for St John the Baptist. Among the other saints, he was known for his particular devotion to St Philomena for whom he established a shrine in Ars and through whose intercession many miracles were granted. Among his enemies was the devil himself, literally. For over thirty years his nights were disturbed by demonic visitations that ranged from petty annoyances to full physical attacks. St Jean-Marie took it all in a spirit of faith and learned to laugh at his aggressor: eventually Satan would give up.

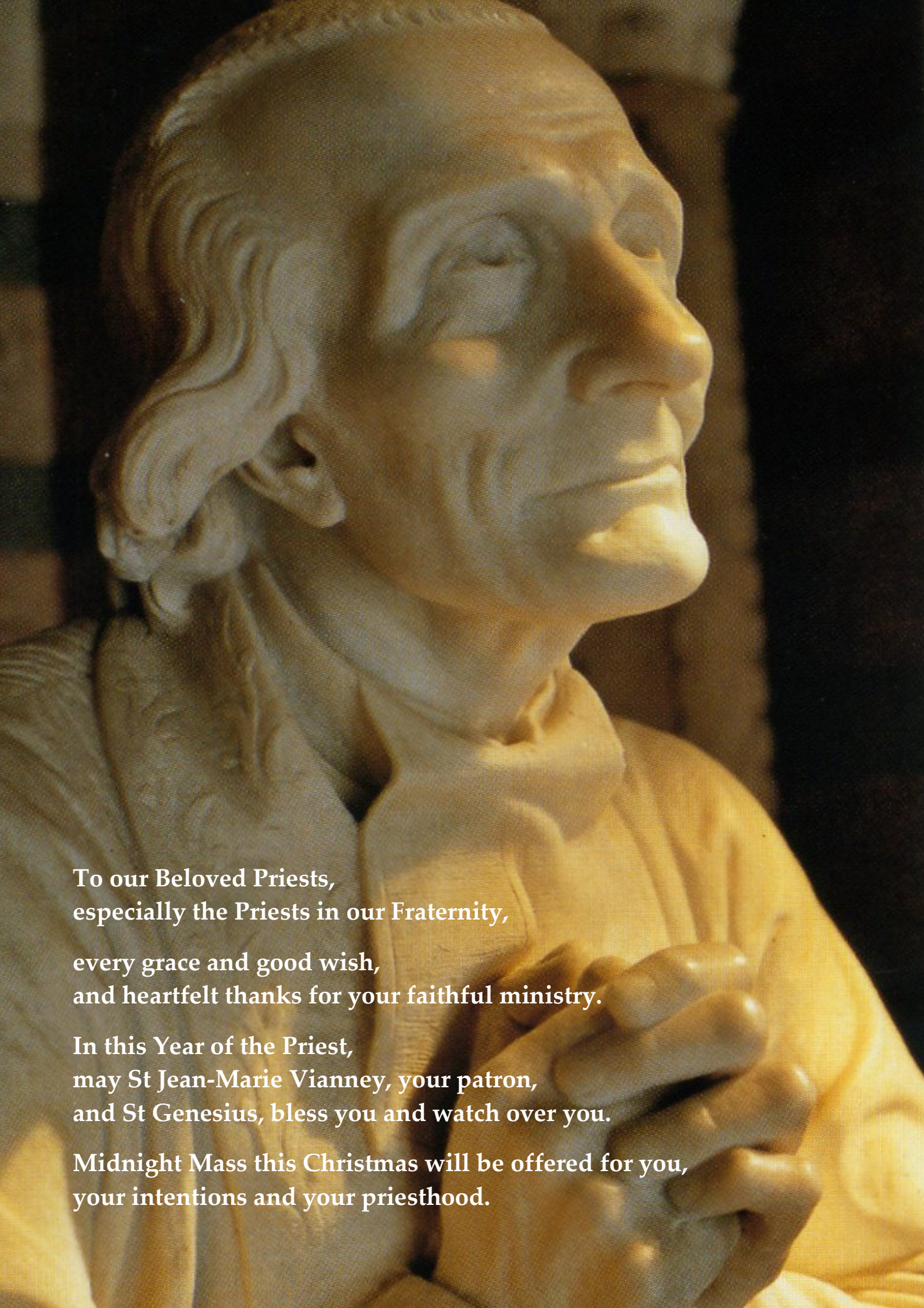


St Jean-Marie died on the 4th August 1859, worn out by his intense ministry.

Devotion to him flourished and his Cause was opened soon after his death. He was beatified on the 8th January 1905 by Pope St Pius X and canonized on the 31st May

1925 by Pope Pius XI who declared him patron saint of parish priests in 1929. Last year, as he inaugurated the Year of Priest under St Jean-Marie's patronage, Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed him Patron of All the Priests of the World.

Originally buried in the nave of his church, his body was exhumed before beatification and found to be completely incorrupt: it now lies in crystal casket in the basilica of Ars. His incorrupt heart is preserved in a special chapel on the shrine grounds and for the last few years has been traveling to various places around the world as a means of promoting the life and message of St Jean-Marie Vianney. In these difficult times for the Church, the saintly Curé of Ars is a dynamic figure to assist, through his intercession and example, in the renewal of the faith and in the spiritual regeneration of the priesthood.



To our Beloved Priests,
especially the Priests in our Fraternity,
every grace and good wish,
and heartfelt thanks for your faithful ministry.

In this Year of the Priest,
may St Jean-Marie Vianney, your patron,
and St Genesius, bless you and watch over you.

Midnight Mass this Christmas will be offered for you,
your intentions and your priesthood.



To the “Custodians of Beauty”: Pope Benedict XVI Meets with Artists of the World

“You are the custodians of beauty” Pope Benedict XVI said to a gathering of artists from all fields of the arts in a recent audience at the Vatican. The special meeting, held in the Sistine Chapel, beneath such breathtaking works of art including Michelangelo’s Last Judgement fresco, took place on the 21st November. Over 500 artists, regardless of religious belief or political adherence, had been invited and over 250 took up the invitation. Marking a decade since Pope John Paul II issued his *Letter to Artists*, and forty-five years since Pope Paul VI met with artists himself, Pope Benedict saw this as an opportunity of renewing what has been for centuries a mutually fruitful relationship between the Church and creative artists, a relationship which had also been fraught with difficulties.

In his speech to the assembled crowd the Pope spoke about beauty, the vocation of the artist and the Church’s esteem for those in the arts. Encouraging them in their work, and recognising the need for a dialogue between the creative arts in the Church he assured them of the Church’s commitment to this relationship. He then invited them to *“make a similar, shared commitment, analyzing seriously and objectively the factors that disturbed this relationship, and assuming individual responsibility, courageously and passionately, for a newer and deeper journey in mutual acquaintance and dialogue in order to arrive at an authentic ‘renaissance’ of art in the context of a new humanism.”*

He told them their work is truly beautiful when it is filled with hope and light. Thanks to their talent, they *“have the opportunity to speak to the heart of humanity, to touch individual and collective sensibilities, to call forth dreams and hopes, to broaden the horizons of knowledge and of human engagement”*. In a world marked by despair beauty can return excitement to the people, but only if that beauty is not superficial. *“Through your art”* he continued, *“you yourselves are to be heralds and witnesses of hope for humanity”*.

Under the President of the Pontifical Council for culture, Archbishop Gianfranco Ravasi, the Vatican is keen to renew and enhance its relationship with the artistic world and as a sign of the Church’s willingness to reach out to the artistic community, it has been announced that representatives from the Holy See will participate in the 2011 Venice Biennale, one of the world’s major art festivals.

Among those the distinguished artists present were the composers Arvo Pärt and Ennio Morricone, director Krzysztof Zanussi, actor F. Murray Abraham, tenor Andrea Bocelli, and Indian father and daughter directors, Mahesh and Pooja Bhatt. Most of the artists present greatly appreciated the Pope’s gesture. Mexican actor and producer, Eduardo Verástegui, star of the movie *Bella*, said the meeting with the Pope was *“a dream come true”*.

Address to the Artists of the World

The text of the speech delivered by Pope Benedict XVI to the artists during his meeting with them in the Sistine Chapel on the 21st November last.

“Dear Cardinals, Brother Bishops and Priests, Distinguished Artists, Ladies and Gentlemen,

With great joy I welcome you to this solemn place, so rich in art and in history. I cordially greet each and every one of you and I thank you for accepting my invitation. At this gathering I wish to express and renew the Church’s friendship with the world of art, a friendship that has been strengthened over time; indeed Christianity from its earliest days has recognized the value of the arts and has made wise use of their varied language to express her unvarying message of salvation. This friendship must be continually promoted and supported so that it may be authentic and fruitful, adapted to different historical periods and attentive to social and cultural variations. Indeed, this is the reason for our meeting here today. I am deeply grateful to Archbishop Gianfranco Ravasi, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture and of the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Patrimony of the Church, and likewise to his officials, for promoting and organizing this meeting, and I thank him for the words he has just addressed to me. I greet the Cardinals, the Bishops, the priests and the various distinguished personalities present. I also thank the Sistine Chapel Choir for their contribution to this gathering. Today’s event is focused on you, dear and illustrious artists, from different countries, cultures and religions, some of you perhaps remote from the practice of religion, but interested nevertheless in maintaining communication with the Catholic Church, in not reducing the horizons of existence to mere material realities, to a reductive and trivializing vision. You represent the varied world of the arts and so, through you, I would like to convey to all artists my invitation to friendship, dialogue and cooperation.

Some significant anniversaries occur around this time. It is ten years since the *Letter to Artists* by my venerable Predecessor, the Servant of God Pope John Paul II. For the first time, on the eve of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, the Pope, who was an artist himself, wrote a *Letter* to artists, combining the solemnity of a pontifical document with the friendly tone of a conversation among all who, as we read in the initial salutation, *“are passionately dedicated to the search for new ‘epiphanies’ of beauty”*. Twenty-five years ago the same Pope proclaimed Blessed Fra Angelico the patron of artists, presenting him as a model of perfect harmony between faith and art. I also recall how on 7 May 1964, forty-five years ago, in this very place, an historic event took place, at the express wish of Pope Paul VI, to confirm the friendship between the Church and the arts. The words that he spoke on that occasion resound once more today under the vault of the Sistine Chapel and touch our hearts and our minds. *“We need you,”* he said. *“We need your collaboration in order to carry out our ministry, which consists, as you know, in preaching and rendering accessible and comprehensible to the minds and hearts of our people the things of the spirit, the invisible, the ineffable, the things of God himself. And in this activity ... you are masters. It is your task, your mission, and your art consists in grasping treasures from the heavenly realm of the spirit and clothing them in words, colours, forms – making them accessible.”* So great was Paul VI’s



esteem for artists that he was moved to use daring expressions. *“And if we were deprived of your assistance,”* he added, *“our ministry would become faltering and uncertain, and a special effort would be needed, one might say, to make it artistic, even prophetic. In order to scale the heights of lyrical expression of intuitive beauty, priesthood would have to coincide with art.”* On that occasion Paul VI made a commitment to *“re-establish the friendship between the Church and artists”*, and he invited artists to make a similar, shared commitment, analyzing seriously and objectively the factors that disturbed this relationship, and assuming individual responsibility, courageously and passionately, for a newer and deeper journey in mutual acquaintance and dialogue in order to arrive at an authentic *“renaissance”* of art in the context of a new humanism.

That historic encounter, as I mentioned, took place here in this sanctuary of faith and human creativity. So it is not by chance that we come together in this place, esteemed for its architecture and its symbolism, and above all for the frescoes that make it unique, from the masterpieces of Perugino and Botticelli, Ghirlandaio and Cosimo Rosselli, Luca Signorelli and others, to the Genesis scenes and the Last Judgement of Michelangelo Buonarroti, who has given us here one of the most extraordinary creations in the entire history of art. The universal language of music has often been heard here, thanks to the genius of great musicians

who have placed their art at the service of the liturgy, assisting the spirit in its ascent towards God. At the same time, the Sistine Chapel is remarkably vibrant with history, since it is the solemn and austere setting of events that mark the history of the Church and of mankind. Here as you know, the College of Cardinals elects the Pope; here it was that I myself, with trepidation but also with absolute trust in the Lord, experienced the privileged moment of my election as Successor of the Apostle Peter.



Dear friends, let us allow these frescoes to speak to us today, drawing us towards the ultimate goal of human history. The Last Judgement, which you see behind me, reminds us that human history is movement and ascent, a continuing tension towards fullness, towards human happiness, towards a horizon that always transcends the present moment even as the two coincide. Yet the dramatic scene portrayed in this fresco also places before our eyes the risk of man's definitive fall, a risk that threatens to engulf him whenever he allows himself to be led astray by the forces of evil. So the fresco issues a strong prophetic cry against evil, against every form of injustice. For believers, though, the Risen Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life. For his faithful followers, he is the Door through which we are brought to that "face-to-face" vision of God from which limitless, full and definitive happiness flows. Thus Michelangelo presents to our gaze the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End of history, and he invites us to walk the path of life with joy, courage and hope. The dramatic beauty of Michelangelo's painting, its colours and forms, becomes a proclamation of hope, an invitation to raise our gaze to the ultimate horizon. The profound bond between beauty and hope was the essential content of the evocative Message that Paul VI addressed to artists at the conclusion of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council on 8 December 1965: "To all of you," he proclaimed solemnly, "the Church of the Council declares through our lips: if

you are friends of true art, you are our friends!" And he added: "This world in which we live needs beauty in order not to sink into despair. Beauty, like truth, brings joy to the human heart, and is that precious fruit which resists the erosion of time, which unites generations and enables them to be one in admiration. And all this through the work of your hands . . . Remember that you are the custodians of beauty in the world."

Unfortunately, the present time is marked, not only by negative elements in the social and economic sphere, but also by a weakening of hope, by a certain lack of confidence in human relationships, which gives rise to increasing signs of resignation, aggression and despair. The world in which we live runs the risk of being altered beyond recognition because of unwise human actions which, instead of cultivating its beauty, unscrupulously exploit its resources for the advantage of a few and not infrequently disfigure the marvels of nature. What is capable of restoring enthusiasm and confidence, what can encourage the human spirit to rediscover its path, to raise its eyes to the horizon, to dream of a life worthy of its vocation – if not beauty? Dear friends, as artists you know well that the experience of beauty, beauty that is authentic, not merely transient or artificial, is by no means a supplementary or secondary factor in our search for meaning and happiness; the experience of beauty does not remove us from reality, on the contrary, it leads to a direct encounter with the daily reality of our lives, liberating it from darkness, transfiguring it, making it radiant and beautiful.

Indeed, an essential function of genuine beauty, as emphasized by Plato, is that it gives man a healthy "shock", it draws him out of himself, wrenches him away from resignation and from being content with the humdrum – it even makes him suffer, piercing him like a dart, but in so doing it "reawakens" him, opening afresh the eyes of his heart and mind, giving him wings, carrying him aloft. Dostoevsky's words that I am about to quote are bold and paradoxical, but they invite reflection. He says this: "Man can live without science, he can live without bread, but without beauty he could no longer live, because there would no longer be anything to do to the world. The whole secret is here, the whole of history is here." The painter Georges Braque echoes this sentiment: "Art is meant to disturb, science reassures." Beauty pulls us up short, but in so doing it reminds us of our final destiny, it sets us back on our path, fills us with new hope, gives us the courage to live to the full the unique gift of life. The quest for beauty that I am describing here is clearly not about escaping into the irrational or into mere aestheticism.

Too often, though, the beauty that is thrust upon us is illusory and deceitful, superficial and blinding, leaving the onlooker dazed; instead of bringing him out of himself and opening him up to horizons of true freedom as it draws him aloft, it imprisons him within himself and further enslaves him, depriving him of hope and joy. It is a seductive but hypocritical beauty that rekindles desire, the will to power, to possess, and to dominate others, it is a beauty which soon turns into its opposite, taking on the guise of indecency, transgression or gratuitous provocation. Authentic beauty, however, unlocks the yearning of the human heart, the profound desire to know, to love, to go towards the Other, to reach for the Beyond. If we

acknowledge that beauty touches us intimately, that it wounds us, that it opens our eyes, then we rediscover the joy of seeing, of being able to grasp the profound meaning of our existence, the Mystery of which we are part; from this Mystery we can draw fullness, happiness, the passion to engage with it every day. In this regard, Pope John Paul II, in his *Letter to Artists*, quotes the following verse from a Polish poet, Cyprian Norwid: “Beauty is to enthuse us for work, and work is to raise us up” (no. 3). And later he adds: “In so far as it seeks the beautiful, fruit of an imagination which rises above the everyday, art is by its nature a kind of appeal to the mystery. Even when they explore the darkest depths of the soul or the most unsettling aspects of evil, the artist gives voice in a way to the universal desire for redemption” (no. 10). And in conclusion he states: “Beauty is a key to the mystery and a call to transcendence” (no. 16).

These ideas impel us to take a further step in our reflection. Beauty, whether that of the natural universe or that expressed in art, precisely because it opens up and broadens the horizons of human awareness, pointing us beyond ourselves, bringing us face to face with the abyss of Infinity, can become a path towards the transcendent, towards the ultimate Mystery, towards God. Art, in all its forms, at the point where it encounters the great questions of our existence, the fundamental themes that give life its meaning, can take on a religious quality, thereby turning into a path of profound inner reflection and spirituality. This close proximity, this harmony between the journey of faith and the artist’s path is attested by countless artworks that are based upon the personalities, the stories, the symbols of that immense deposit of “figures” – in the broad sense – namely the Bible, the Sacred Scriptures. The great biblical narratives, themes, images and parables have inspired innumerable masterpieces in every sector of the arts, just as they have spoken to the hearts of believers in every generation through the works of craftsmanship and folk art, that are no less eloquent and evocative.

In this regard, one may speak of a *via pulchritudinis*, a path of beauty which is at the same time an artistic and aesthetic journey, a journey of faith, of theological enquiry. The theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar begins his great work entitled *The Glory of the Lord – a Theological Aesthetics* with these telling observations: “Beauty is the word with which we shall begin. Beauty is the last word that the thinking intellect dares to speak, because it simply forms a halo, an untouchable crown around the double constellation of the true and the good and their inseparable relation to one another.” He then adds: “Beauty is the disinterested one, without which the ancient world refused to understand itself, a word which both imperceptibly and yet unmistakably has bid farewell to our new world, a world of interests, leaving it to its own avarice and sadness. It is no longer loved or fostered even by religion.” And he concludes: “We can be sure that whoever sneers at her name as if she were the ornament of a bourgeois past – whether he admits it or not – can no longer pray and soon will no longer be able to love.” The way of beauty leads us, then, to grasp the Whole in the fragment, the Infinite in the finite, God in the history of humanity. Simone Weil wrote in this regard: “In all that awakens within us the pure and authentic sentiment of beauty, there, truly, is the presence of God. There is a kind of incarnation of God in the world, of which beauty is the sign. Beauty is the experimental proof that incarnation is

possible. For this reason all art of the first order is, by its nature, religious.” Hermann Hesse makes the point even more graphically: “Art means: revealing God in everything that exists.” Echoing the words of Pope Paul VI, the Servant of God Pope John Paul II restated the Church’s desire to renew dialogue and cooperation with artists: “In order to communicate the message entrusted to her by Christ, the Church needs art” (no. 12); but he immediately went on to ask: “Does art need the Church?” – thereby inviting artists to rediscover a source of fresh and well-founded inspiration in religious experience, in Christian revelation and in the “great codex” that is the Bible.



Dear artists, as I draw to a conclusion, I too would like to make a cordial, friendly and impassioned appeal to you, as did my Predecessor. You are the custodians of beauty: thanks to your talent, you have the opportunity to speak to the heart of humanity, to touch individual and collective sensibilities, to call forth dreams and hopes, to broaden the horizons of knowledge and of human engagement. Be grateful, then, for the gifts you have received and be fully conscious of your great responsibility to communicate beauty, to communicate in and through beauty! Through your art, you yourselves are to be heralds and witnesses of hope for humanity! And do not be afraid to approach the first and last source of beauty, to enter into dialogue with believers, with those who, like yourselves, consider that they are pilgrims in this world and in history towards infinite Beauty! Faith takes nothing away from your genius or your art: on the contrary, it exalts them and nourishes them, it encourages them to cross the threshold and to contemplate with fascination and emotion the ultimate and definitive goal, the sun that does not set, the sun that illumines this present moment and makes it beautiful.

Saint Augustine, who fell in love with beauty and sang its praises, wrote these words as he reflected on man’s ultimate destiny, commenting almost *ante litteram* on the Judgement scene before your eyes today: “Therefore we are to see a certain vision, my brethren, that no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived: a vision surpassing all earthly beauty, whether it be that of gold and silver, woods and fields, sea and sky, sun and moon, or stars and angels. The reason is this: it is the source of all other beauty” (In 1 Ioannis, 4:5). My wish for all of you, dear artists, is that you may carry this vision in your eyes, in your hands, and in your heart, that it may bring you joy and continue to inspire your fine works. From my heart I bless you and, like Paul VI, I greet you with a single word: *arrivederci!*

Dear friends, thank you for your presence here today. Let the beauty that you express by your God-given talents always direct the hearts of others to glorify the Creator, the source of all that is good. God’s blessings upon you all!

The Incarnation

In 2010, Pope Benedict XVI will beatify the Venerable John Henry Cardinal Newman, the most influential theologian of modern times, one of the architects of the Second Vatican Council, and the 19th century's most famous convert. As a means of preparing for this momentous event, and to introduce our members to some of the Cardinal's writings, we print here extracts from his 'Sermon on the Incarnation' delivered in St Mary's Church, Oxford on Christmas Day 1834 while still an Anglican Curate grappling with his faith: he would enter the Catholic Church on the 9th October 1845.

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us

(John 1:14)

Thus does the favoured Apostle and Evangelist announce to us that Sacred Mystery, which we this day especially commemorate, the incarnation of the Eternal Word. Thus briefly and simply does he speak as if fearing he should fail in fitting reverence. If any there was who might seem to have permission to indulge in words on this subject, it was the beloved disciple, who had heard and seen, and looked upon, and handled the Word of Life; yet, in proportion to the height of his privilege, was his discernment of the infinite distance between him and his Creator. Such too was the temper of the Holy Angels, when the Father "brought in the First-begotten into the world:" (Heb1:6.) they straightway worshipped Him. And such was the feeling of awe and love mingled together, which remained for a while in the Church after Angels had announced His coming, and Evangelists had recorded His sojourn here, and His departure; "there was silence as it were for half an hour." (Rev. 8:1) Around the Church, indeed, the voices of blasphemy were heard, even as when He hung on the cross; but in the Church there was light and peace, fear, joy, and holy meditation. Lawless doubtings, importunate inquirings, confident reasonings were not. An heartfelt adoration, a practical devotion to the Ever-blessed Son, precluded difficulties in faith, and sheltered the Church from the necessity of speaking.

He who had seen the Lord Jesus with a pure mind, attending Him from the Lake of Gennesareth to Calvary, and from the Sepulchre to Mount Olivet, where He left this scene of His humiliation; he who had been put in charge with His Virgin Mother, and heard from her what she alone could tell of the Mystery to which she had ministered; and they who had heard it from his mouth, and those again whom these had taught, the first generations of the Church, needed no explicit declarations concerning His Sacred Person. Sight and hearing superseded the multitude of words; faith dispensed with the aid of lengthened Creeds and Confessions. There was silence. "The Word was made flesh;" "I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord;" sentences such as these conveyed everything, yet were officious in nothing. But when the light of His advent faded, and love waxed cold, then there was an opening for objection and discussion, and a difficulty in answering. Then misconceptions had to be explained, doubts allayed, questions set at rest, innovators silenced. Christians were forced to speak against their will, lest heretics should speak instead of them.

Such is the difference between our own state and that of the early Church, which the present Festival especially brings to mind. In the New Testament we find the doctrine



of the Incarnation announced clearly indeed, but with a reverent brevity. "The Word was made flesh," "God was manifest in the flesh." "God was in Christ." "Unto us a Child is born,—the mighty God." "Christ, over all, God, blessed for ever." "My Lord and my God." "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending,—the Almighty." "The Son of God, the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person." (1 Tim 3:16; 2 Cor. 5: 19; Is. 9: 6. Rom. 9: 5; John 20: 28; Rev. 1: 8; Heb. 1: 2, 3.) But we are obliged to speak more at length in the Creeds and in our teaching, to meet the perverse ingenuity of those who, when the Apostles were removed, could with impunity insult and misinterpret the letter of their writings...

The Word was from the beginning, the Only-begotten Son of God. Before all worlds were created, while as yet time was not, He was in existence, in the bosom of the Eternal Father, God from God, and Light from Light, supremely blessed in knowing and being known of Him, and receiving all divine perfections from Him, yet ever One with Him who begat Him. As it is said in the opening of the Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." If we may dare conjecture, He is called the Word of God, as mediating between the Father and all creatures; bringing them into being, fashioning them, giving the world its laws, imparting reason and conscience to creatures of a higher order, and revealing to them in due season the knowledge of God's will. And to us Christians He is especially the

Word in that great mystery commemorated today, whereby He became flesh, and redeemed us from a state of sin.

He, indeed, when man fell, might have remained in the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. But that unsearchable Love, which showed itself in our original creation, rested not content with a frustrated work, but brought Him down again from His Father's bosom to do His will, and repair the evil which sin had caused. And with a wonderful condescension He came, not as before in power, but in weakness, in the form of a servant, in the likeness of that fallen creature whom He purposed to restore. So He humbled Himself; suffering all the infirmities of our nature in the likeness of sinful flesh, all but a sinner,—pure from all sin, yet subjected to all temptation,—and at length becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

I have said that when the Only-begotten Son stooped to take upon Him our nature, He had no fellowship with sin. It was impossible that He should. Therefore, since our nature was corrupt since Adam's fall, He did not come in the way of nature, He did not clothe Himself in that corrupt flesh which Adam's race inherits. He came by miracle, so as to take on Him our imperfection without having any share in our sinfulness. He was not born as other men are; for *"that which is born of the flesh is flesh."* (John 3:6.)

All Adam's children are children of wrath; so our Lord came as the Son of Man, but not the son of sinful Adam. He had no earthly father; He abhorred to have one. The thought may not be suffered that He should have been the son of shame and guilt. He came by a new and living way; not, indeed, formed out of the ground, as Adam was at the first, lest He should miss the participation of our nature, but selecting and purifying unto Himself a tabernacle out of that which existed. As in the beginning, woman was formed out of man by Almighty power, so now, by a like mystery, but a reverse order, the new Adam was fashioned from the woman. He was, as had been foretold, the immaculate *"seed of the woman,"* deriving His manhood from the substance of the Virgin Mary; as it is expressed in the articles of the Creed, *"conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary."*

Thus the Son of God became the Son of Man; mortal, but not a sinner; heir of our infirmities, not of our guiltiness; the offspring of the old race, yet *"the beginning of the" new "creation of God."* Mary, His mother...was set apart, *"as a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed,"* to yield a created nature to Him who was her Creator. Thus He came into this world, not in the clouds of heaven, but born into it, born of a woman; He, the Son of Mary, and she (if it may be said), the mother of God. Thus He came, selecting and setting apart for Himself the elements of body and soul; then, uniting them, to Himself from their first origin of existence, pervading them, hallowing them by His own Divinity, spiritualising them, and filling them with light and purity, the while they continued to be human, and for a time mortal and exposed to infirmity. And, as they grew from day to day in their holy union, His Eternal Essence still was one with them, exalting them, acting in them,

manifesting Himself through them, so that He was truly God and Man, One Person,—as we are soul and body, yet one man, so truly God and man are not two, but One Christ. Thus did the Son of God enter this mortal world; and when He had reached man's estate, He began His ministry, preached the Gospel, chose His Apostles, suffered on the cross, died, and was buried, rose again and ascended on high, there to reign till the day when He comes again to judge the world. This is the All-gracious Mystery of the Incarnation, good to look into, good to adore; according to the saying in the text, *"The Word was made flesh,—and dwelt among us"...*

Let us then, according to the light given us, praise and bless Him in the Church below, whom Angels in heaven see and adore. Let us bless Him for His surpassing loving-kindness in taking upon Him our infirmities to redeem us, when He dwelt in the inner-most love of the Everlasting Father, in the glory which He had with Him before the world was. He came in lowliness and want; born amid the tumults of a mixed and busy multitude, cast aside into the outhouse of a crowded inn, laid to His first rest among the brute cattle. He grew up, as if the native of a despised city, and was bred to a humble craft. He bore to live in a world that slighted Him, for He lived in it, in order in due time to die for it. He came as the appointed Priest, to offer sacrifice for those who took no part in the act of worship; He came to offer up for sinners that precious blood which was meritorious by virtue of His Divine Anointing. He died, to rise again the third day, the Sun of Righteousness, fully displaying that splendour which had hitherto been concealed by the morning clouds. He rose again, to ascend to the right hand of God, there to plead His sacred wounds in token of our forgiveness, to rule and guide His ransomed people, and from His pierced side to pour forth his choicest blessings upon them. He ascended, thence to descend again in due season to judge the world which He has redeemed.—Great is our Lord, and great is His power, Jesus the Son of God and Son of man. Ten thousand times more dazzling bright than the highest Archangel, is our Lord and Christ. By birth the Only-begotten and Express image of God; and in taking our flesh, not sullied thereby, but raising human nature with Him, as He rose from the lowly manger to the right hand of power,—raising human nature, for Man has redeemed us, Man is set above all creatures, as one with the Creator, Man shall judge man at the last day. So honoured is this earth, that no stranger shall judge us, but He who is our fellow, who will sustain our interests, and has full sympathy in all our imperfections. He who loved us, even to die for us, is graciously appointed to assign the final measurement and price upon His own work. He who best knows by infirmity to take the part of the infirm, He who would fain reap the full fruit of His passion, He will separate the wheat from the chaff, so that not a grain shall fall to the ground. He who has given us to share His own spiritual nature, He from whom we have drawn the life's blood of our souls, He our brother will decide about His brethren. In that His second coming, may He in His grace and loving pity remember us, who is our only hope, our only salvation!

Reviving Scrooge

In this seasonal piece, Mary-Lise Reddin reflects on Charles Dickens's story A Christmas Carol and asks if there are a few new lessons to be gleaned from the perennial tale of conversion.

It's that time of the year again! You know when editors of magazines and periodicals are looking for "seasonal pieces" that the horror of Christmas is upon you. That may sound negative – it's not meant to be – I love Christmas – the real thing though, as opposed to the manufactured schmalz that passes for it in the western world. Living in Ireland at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century I've overdosed on the schmalz that has been assailing us for the last number of years and now I am fit for the cultural version of the Betty Ford Clinic – no problem washing floors here.

When Father Director made his request I panicked. I thought of the millions of things I haven't done! No Christmas cards ordered! Suddenly itchy on the phone, I was willing the poor Reverend Father off the line so I could go on the internet to order cards. Did I have enough time to get those annual greetings to my elderly aunts serving in convents in the far reaches of the earth? Various charities were flashing through my mind – who's getting the dosh this year? Christmas parties flashed in front of me: drunk colleagues, mistletoe and holly, another slice of pudding to guarantee another month at Weight Watchers, the tinsel scarves, it was just all too awful to contemplate! And then the shopping – the torment of crowds and the pushing and shoving makes Frodo's trip up Mount Doom to lose the Ring of power look like a skip through the park. I don't mind shopping, but the Yuletide tango just doesn't do it for me.

But then I stopped, just as I was about to consider running away to a Carmelite convent for the duration of the season. What was missing from my thoughts? The real Christmas. I had forgotten about that – about the Infant Jesus, the Virgin Mother, St Joseph, the Magi and Shepherds, Midnight Mass, Carols, family gatherings, the many beautiful liturgies of Advent and Christmastide which touch the soul and renew its innocence. I had got carried

away on the horrors and forgot about the reason for the celebrations, what is at the heart of the season, the reality.

With thoughts such as these, I thanked God for the recession! No offence to all those suffering the dreadful financial collapse, but maybe this year things won't be as crazy, somehow people might just tone down the materialism. Maybe this year I won't seem like the kill-joy in the corner, but rather become, in some eyes, the sensible one who embraces moderation and might just have a few ideas in these "recessionary times" to help enliven a frugal celebration and refocus attention on the Bambino of Bethlehem. Perhaps, I said to myself, a few thoughts on the joys of a Trappist Christmas might just form an interesting article and keep the powers that be at *Fraternitas* happy.



However, before I could dash up the Seven Storey Mountain after Merton, my thoughts suddenly turned to that anti-hero of Victorian literature who has become as much a Christmas figure as Jesus or Santa: the old miser, Ebenezer Scrooge. I stopped typing

with a shock; read over the rant so far and found myself forced to ask that painful question: "Am I a Scrooge?" The withering figure of Charles Dickens's Christmas classic haunts the imaginations of those who are tempted to humbug the revelry of Christmas festivities. Is my reaction to the commercial bliss of secular Christmas just bad faith on my part? Should I not let people be and keep my disgruntled opinions to myself? What would Dickens say?

As a child I loved the story of Scrooge. As members of my family looked forward to television land's rehashing of *It's a Wonderful Life*, *The Sound of Music* and, for the closet monarchists in the family, *The Queen's Speech*, I waited with baited breath for the many and varied productions of *A Christmas Carol* which would grace our screens. I had read the book many times and it was the perfect mix of Christmas tale, ghost story and conversion parable which

satisfied my tastes. I loved Scrooge most of all – yes he was a miser, and yes he was nasty to those around him, but he was no push-over – hearty sentimentality was not going to get one over on him. However, the loneliness of his life, the disappointments, the struggle to achieve, (and we cannot ignore it – the sordid love of moolah) had hardened his heart and he became oblivious to human affection and even to divine grace.

The visits of the ghosts bring him through a journey of memory, discovery and dire warning and this reawakens him to the goodness and kindness which was buried deep within his sad soul. His affection for Tiny Tim always brought a tear to my eye as a child, that is until I was old enough to wish I too had a rich Sugar Daddy like the repentent Scrooge to cover my expenses!

With the cynicism the teenage years bring, the closet socialist in me plagued my indignation and I began to think that Scrooge had sold out to the lure of medieval excess and at the end of the story he was as bad as the revelers who never looked beyond food, drink and a good time. I suppose that was the development of my social conscience, albeit mixed with a fairly hefty scoop of immature self-righteousness. I think otherwise now that years are rubbing the edges off me, but I still find the figure of Scrooge very interesting and, in these days of Yuletide excess (as opposed to genuine Christian celebration), I think he gives us a few things to reflect on.

A Christmas Carol was first appeared at Christmas 1843, published by Dickens himself. Stung by recent book deals, he was determined to cut out the middle man and make more money on this venture – ironic given the theme of the book. The work was an immediate success, satisfying in particular those Victorians committed to social reform within English society. The book, or more correctly, the novella, was even praised by Dickens's critics: one erstwhile critic described it as a new gospel. The reformist message of the story seemed to touch the better part of individuals and it seemed the story might even persuade people to change as Scrooge had and become more charitable in their behaviour. This, many said to themselves, is what Christmas is all about – love for our fellow man and woman. Indeed. I almost believed it myself.....But not completely.

For all its philanthropy, *A Christmas Carol* has one major flaw – it misunderstands what Christmas is actually about. For all my teenage angst and cynicism, I was right about Scrooge – he did sell out: he sold out to the vision of a purely secular Christmas, not merely the materialistic one, but the

justified materialist one – the one which reduces the message of salvation to being nice to Tiny Tim, and to a celebration which is all plum pudding, turkey, eggnog and warm, fuzzy feelings.

Have we been sold a pup? Scrooge is not really converted, not to Christ anyway. His miserliness is focused in another direction. Now he is generous with his fellow man, but what about God? Has he fallen into the trap to loving his neighbour but not thinking of God? For example, as he looks out his window on Christmas morning the Christmas Service is far from his mind – he's thinking of turkey. In fact as you read *A Christmas Carol* you see that God has no significant part to play in the drama of conversion – the agents are ghosts: an candle-like spirit (Christmas Past), a jolly, fat one (Christmas Present – who is a bit worse for the wear most of the time, and he finally dies as Christmas passes – he is based on the pagan god Bacchus) and then the fearful spectre, Christmas-Yet-to-Come, who is more like the mythical portrayal of death, minus the scythe. But where is the angelic messenger? Where is mercy? Where is the Gospel? Where is the Christ Child? God has no place in the story apart from the sentimental greeting uttered by Tiny Tim at the end "*May God bless us, everyone!*" (best seen in the Muppet version of the story – no child actor can beat that pathetic little frog!).



The unfortunate conclusion is that *A Christmas Carol* is as much a part of Yuletide (as opposed to Christmas) as the other materialist traditions that have developed over the years since it offers secularised Christian virtues as the epitome of the Christmas spirit. Scrooge's story is a lesson to us: yes, we must imitate his charity and not just at Christmas; and yes we must forget about ourselves; but when it comes to conversion, go to the whole way. When it comes to Christmas, go the whole way: celebrate, but celebrate the reality: Christ in our midst – born for us to redeem us. It is in that context that we that show charity to our brothers and sisters.

Reflections on a New Evangelisation

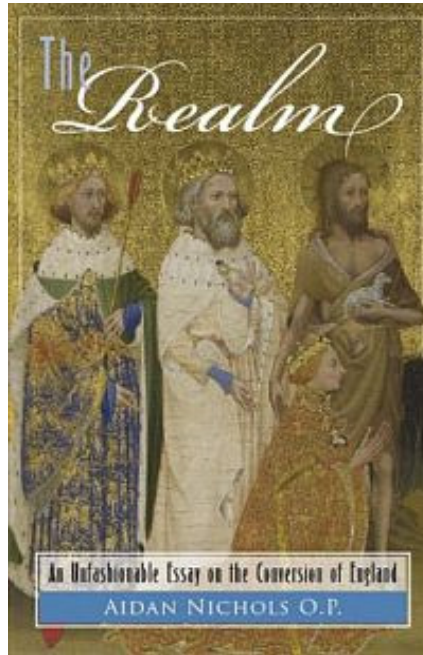
As secular culture is finally being revealed to be a barren landscape, Caroline McCamley looks at the work of Dominican theologian Fr Aidan Nichols, in particular his book *The Realm: An Unfashionable Essay on the Conversion of England*, and his thoughts on how the Church may begin to re-evangelise.

Aidan Nichols is a convert, an academic and Catholic priest, and the first lecturer in Catholic theology at Cambridge since the Reformation. He is a Dominican and was the Prior of St. Michael and All Angels Priory in Cambridge. He is a prolific writer, and the volume of work that he has produced is remarkable.

The Realm, subtitled “An Unfashionable Essay on the Conversion of England”, is definitely a very English book. While it specifically addresses the English situation in which Nichols operates, the problems that he finds within the English Catholic Church, are unfortunately not unique. The problems in the England are the problems of the universal Church. The Catholic Church in England is in something of a battered state. It suffers from division, declining practice rates, apathy, and too few vocations, which does not hold good for the future. Secularism and relativism are the generally acceptable approach to life. Decency, morality and virtue seem to belong to a bygone age. Nichols writes:

We only have to think of such peculiarly modern phenomena as, for example, the dominance of commercial image in advertising and the media exploitation of personality cult, encouraging people as these do to value themselves and others for reasons disconnected from the virtues. Or again, there is anomaly whereby the young arrive in the state of adulthood having neither internalised obligations, nor acquired a sense of living under authority -- so great has been the reduction in moral force of the family, extended or nuclear, and the weakening of deference to civic tradition and the State. (p.129)

The wounds sustained in the culture-wars of Western modernity could be summed up, then as: the draining away of human substance, the severance of human roots, and the fracturing of human bonds. (p.130)



England, like most of the western world, is in serious need of help. So what is the answer? Nichols boldly suggests Catholicism, and he believes that the Church, despite all its problems could be able for this task.

Perhaps the most unfashionable thing that Nichols suggests is the conversion of non-Catholics to the faith. Somewhat politically incorrect when he suggested it two years ago, it no longer seems as outrageous, since Pope Benedict XVI's outreach to Anglicans. On 29th October 2009 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith announced Pope Benedict XVI's intention to create a new type of ecclesiastical structure called a

Personal Ordinariate, for groups of Anglicans wishing to enter into full communion with the See of Rome. This move has ruffled many a liberal feather, with talk of tanks on the lawns of Lambeth Palace, for fear that orthodox Catholicism is attempting a come back. The reaction has shown how much conversion had been abandoned in recent years, in favour of ecumenism: the politically correct refusal to mention conversion for fear of offending ecumenical, inter-faith sensibilities or indeed humanist-secularist sensibilities is based on a misreading of the documents of the Second Vatican Council. The Second Vatican Council, he argues, did not replace mission with dialogue. We still need to preach the Gospel to all. Nichols offers no apologies for his desire to convert England to Catholicism. It is refreshing to see that someone believes enough in Catholicism, to suggest such a thing.

Cultural Renewal

Nichols argues that any hope of converting our increasingly secular society has to be led and underpinned by a profound change in our culture. The book covers the great English Anglo-Catholic and Catholic minds: G.K. Chesterton, Hilare Belloc, TS Eliot, Dorothy L. Sayers, and of course J.R.R. Tolkien (particularly in relation to re-enchantment of liturgy).

He argues this is about far more than art and literature; it encompasses every aspect of our lives, from virtue of the individual to public law. Nichols



calls for the recovery of a distinct Catholic identity and a confident faith which seeks to provide a common purpose for the realm, rather than being spectators or unknowing participants in the wider secular culture. He describes how Catholic Christianity provides the best foundation for the culture of an England re-shaped.

He quotes from the Catholic philosopher of history, Christopher Dawson:

It would be a strange fatality if the great revolution by which Western man has subdued nature to his purposes should end in the loss of his own spiritual freedom, but this might well happen if an increasing technical control of the State over the life and thought of its members should coincide with a qualitative decline in the standards of our culture. (p 109)

How prescient Dawson was when he wrote those words.

Nichols suggests a threefold strategy for the renewal. Nichols does not want England to become a confessional Catholic or Christian State. But he does want the Church to rise above its apathy, and to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ boldly. He wants all Catholics to strive to be people of real faith, holy people. Catholics living a genuine response to the gospel will have an effect on their world. He presents a threefold strategy for a much needed renewal. This renewal must happen at the level of the intellectual, the mystical, and the institutional.

Intellectual Renewal

Our faith has Truth, which we must be able to understand, and defend. We need to 'recover lost ground' in the intellectual argument for faith. There should be a 'revival of doctrine' in catechesis and preaching, and a recovery of metaphysics to give people a 'coherent and deep philosophy of the created order':

We should be working towards a greater degree of unity in Catholic theological culture,

on the basis of Scripture read in Tradition, and so with appropriate attention to the Fathers and the Liturgies, the Councils and the saints.

This is vital if evangelisation and catechesis are to work.

Mystical Renewal

Through the mystical element in our religion, we must be able to present the Church as a school of prayer. The mystical is provided by the Liturgy. 'In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy...toward which we journey as pilgrims' (Vatican II: *Sacrocsanctum Concilium* 7-8). Therefore re-enchant the liturgy, so that by language, gesture, image, music, it brings before us the transcendent beauty of the Kingdom of God. Liturgy is where we see the apex of culture. When we restore the liturgy we restore the culture and restore the world. Fr. Z, the famous blogging priest, at www.wdtpers.com shares this aim, with his slogan, 'Save the Liturgy, Save the World'.

Institutional Renewal

The Church must have at all levels a 'corporate spiritual atmosphere'. We must evangelise the State power, we must confront it with the objectivity of the moral law. The State must recognise a higher norm, implied in the Coronation ritual of the monarchs. England is a decayed Christian State, awaiting evangelisation. He suggests that religious apathy is partly a product of Christianity's removal from the political sphere, which has in part happen because of a lack of strong Christian identity. We need to renew Christian political thought. We must revitalise the institution of the family, through the reunion of domestic and work life.

Fr Nichols' book is a gauntlet thrown down in the face of an apathetic Church. The question is, can we be bothered to respond?





Film Club Musings

Sharing the Insights

Shenandoah: Whose war is it anyway?

From time to time we will be publishing some of the talks given by contributors at our monthly film club, initiating this new series Christopher McCamley shares some thoughts with us on his favourite movie *Shenandoah*, starring his all-time favourite actor, James Stewart.

Why I picked this movie

Initially I picked this one out to remove the sour moral taste of the first two films, *The Dark Knight* and *The Good Shepherd*. But really, it's one of my favourite films. Long before I had the honour of being Secretary of the Fraternity of St Genesius I was founding President of the James Stewart Appreciation Society of Ireland, complete with fake ID which I used to get into Queen's Students Union when I was 17, not to go drinking but to partner my sister in ballroom dancing classes.

It's a classic James Stewart movie, his biggest hit in the 1960s and a film which relies, probably excessively on his screen presence. He has six sons in the film but only one that we remember, who incidentally starred in only one other film (Philip Alford in *To Kill a Mocking Bird*).

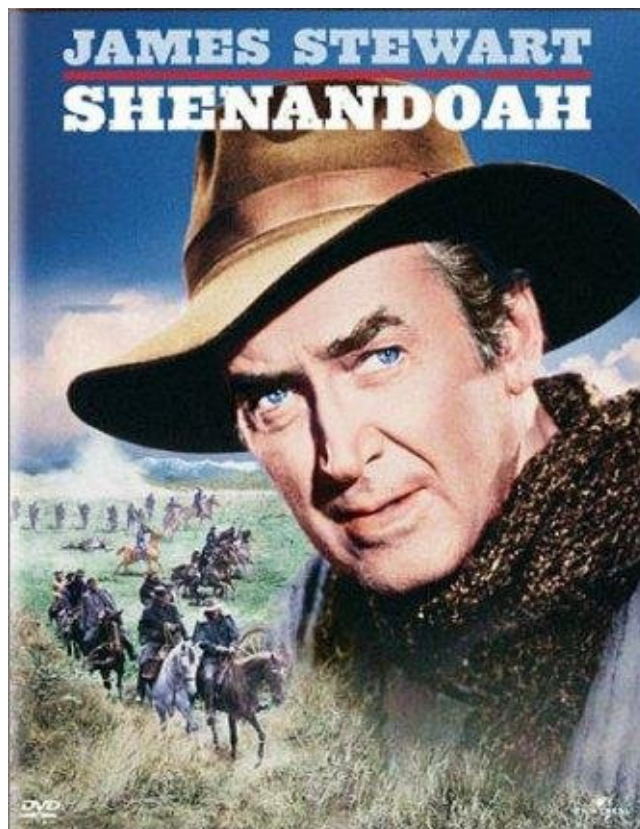
Movie Connections

I might just for a moment dwell on some of the movie connections in the film for the buffs among you. It's directed by Andrew McLaglin, son of Victor McLaglin – the brother in *The Quiet Man*. John Wayne's son Patrick has a small part in that film and appears as one of James Stewart's sons in *Shenandoah*. Hovering behind *Shenandoah* is the ghostly presence of the great director John Ford – the fight sequence in *Shenandoah* is reminiscent of *The Quiet Man*. We also have a scene in which James Stewart talks to his dead wife Martha. Anyone familiar with John Ford's movie, *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* from 1949 will remember John Wayne as Captain Nathan Brittles also talking to his dead wife in the graveyard, also called Martha.

The political angle

Almost every modern review of *Shenandoah* will tell you that it was made in 1965 and that it is an anti-war film made in the context of the Vietnam War. And those reviews are all dead wrong.

James Stewart fought in World War II and was highly decorated. He was a Brigadier General in the



Airforce Reserve, retired in 1968. He toured bases and acted as observer on B52 missions over Vietnam.

Like most soldiers, Stewart hated war, but he knew that often the opposite of war isn't peace – it is surrender, collaboration and compromise. The political message of this film is that war is awful, but sometimes necessary and in this fallen world we cannot close our eyes to that reality.

In the film his character, Charlie Anderson says, "This war is not mine and I take no note of it". And of course that was the approach of many Americans to Vietnam. What *Shenandoah* says is ***This war will take note of you.***

James Stewart's son Ronald was a Marine Lieutenant, killed in Vietnam in 1969. Afterwards James Stewart said:

People say what a terrible tragedy that he had to die. We never look on it as a tragedy. He had a useful life. He graduated from college, and his country was at war. He became a

Marine and when he got on the battlefield he conducted himself with gallantry. What's tragic about that? What's tragic is boys giving their lives without having a unified country behind them. That's what's tragic.

That reminds me of something Mother Mary Francis, the well known Poor Clare, wrote: *"The very highest use of a thing is the sacrifice of it"*. Which leads on nicely to a more important way to view the film.

The theological angle

Much more interesting than the political angle is the theological.

There is a chiasmic structure to the film. For those not familiar with scripture or literary study, concepts or ideas are placed in a special symmetric order or pattern to emphasize them, particularly the central point. In this film we begin and end with a family visit to the local church. We have a meal which features a grace before meals, early in the film and also towards the end, and we have a quest, a journey outwards, a turning point, and journey home.

It's a film about relationships and what happens to them without God. James Stewart has a place left at table for his wife Martha, but really no place for God. There's a great scene where he tries to tell his future son-in-law (Doug McClure) about women. Women are a mystery to him. He can talk to his dead wife but not to his children, and certainly not to God. And of course even then he doesn't understand love – he liked his wife, but love is a different thing.

Iconography in the film

The two youngsters in the film. "The Boy" – born when his mother died, imprisoned by the Yankees – always called "The Boy" and you can see biblical tones to that – *"Woman behold your son"* and *"Ecce Homo"* – behold the Man. James Stewart's quest is for The Boy, his youngest son, but you can see that the quest is for something deeper – he's searching for meaning in a time of war, for an understanding of what it is to be human, and ultimately he's searching for God.

The young black slave is another icon – he's called Gabriel – and he is a character who carries a message. He brings the news that the The Boy has been taken and that he has been freed. It's a rather clumsy juxtaposition – you can't help feeling John Ford would have found a better way to express it. There is a rather sentimental conversation between Gabriel and the woman of the house before he runs off into the sunlight. It's a little too sickly sweet, a

little fake, a conversation which jars. But of course we miss the point, or rather we don't get the point until later when we discover where his freedom has brought him. The freedom offered by the Yankees isn't real freedom which brings him only into the army. Real freedom comes in a moment of choice, a choice to do good. And then we realise the director has misdirected us and the clumsy, sentimental image of freedom is just that, an image. Freedom lies in right choices and in accepting the grace of God.

Another icon in the film, perhaps the most significant, is the grace before meals. Stewart thanks the Lord for the harvest but then reminds God that really he did it all himself. The most begrudging graceless disgrace of a grace you're ever likely to hear – but it acts as an interpretive key for this film.

It's a film about the grace of God – about allowing God to act in our lives and accepting the will of God for good or bad. Charles Anderson relies solely on himself – his work is relentless and when his son is kidnapped his search is relentless. His activity reaches a sort of peak with the burning of a prison train – something he can do to make a difference. But also the point in which he realises that nothing he can do is enough to get his son back. He begins to explain his philosophy:

...somehow I just had to try. If we don't try we don't do. And if we don't do, why are we here on this Earth?

His hands are clasped together in an image of prayer. He has had a moment of insight, a moment that takes him home and the beginning of the return to God. When he comes to say grace a second time he is reduced to silence, as am I.



The Martyr-Poet

Poems and Carol form an important part of Christmas literature, and one of the more famous poems "The Burning Babe" occupies a curious place. In this article, James Harvey looks at the life of its author who is in fact one of our Catholic martyrs, St Robert Southwell, whose works were known and loved even by those responsible for his death.

St Robert Southwell was born in Horsham-St Faith, Norfolk, England, around the year 1561. His family were Catholic gentry, and so, while many of their peers had conformed to Queen Elizabeth II's Protestant Settlement and embraced the Anglican religion, the Southwells remained steadfast, paying fines to the Crown for their refusal to attend Anglican services, while hiding priests and hosting secret Masses in their home. Robert grew up with this example of heroism and sacrifice for the Catholic faith, and this awakened him to a vocation to priesthood.

It was impossible for him to answer the call in England, and so in 1576 he was sent abroad to Douai to study for the priesthood. There he stayed with the Jesuits and was impressed by their way of life. His studies, however, were interrupted by political events, and he was moved to Paris to study at the College de Clermont. On 15th June 1577 he returned to Douai. A year later he was on his travels again – this time to Rome where he sought admission to the Jesuits. However, he was rejected. Determined to become a Jesuit he persisted and his efforts were rewarded. He entered a probation programme in 1578, and two years later, he was admitted into the Society, and began his studies for the priesthood. In 1584 he was ordained a priest and appointed to the English College in Rome first as a tutor and then as prefect of studies.

Like many of his priestly countrymen, Robert kindled the desire to return to England to work on the mission – dangerous work for Catholic priests, but even worse for Jesuits whose Society was a proscribed organisation. If found in England, a Jesuit was automatically condemned to death, and many had been under the reign of the self-proclaimed "Virgin Queen". In 1586, Robert and a companion, Fr Henry Garnet, were sent to England at their own request. Arriving in disguise the two Jesuits set about making contacts with Catholic families, and once established set about their clandestine ministry: celebrating the sacraments, comforting their persecuted people. In 1589, Robert became the domestic chaplain the Catholic Countess of Arundel, Ann Howard, wife of the imprisoned, St Philip Howard. Robert wrote to the imprisoned earl, writing his now famous *Epistel of Comfort* not only comforting the earl, but in essence preparing him for martyrdom – St Philip would die from his hardships



on 19th October 1595 – he would be canonised with St Robert in 1970.

Robert established himself very quickly as a writer of note and his works, theological, devotional and poetic circulated among the Catholics of his time. His work eventually received recognition outside Catholic circles, and his tale, *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears* was published in 1591. Robert's fame, however, made him a target for the priest-hunters, and after six years of successful ministry and evading capture, he was arrested: his whereabouts had been revealed by Anne Bellamy, a young woman arrested under suspicion of being involved in a plot. Tortured and raped by the Queen's chief priest-hunter, Richard Topcliffe, the poor woman was forced to reveal his whereabouts. Robert was taken to Topcliffe's house where he was savagely tortured. Moved to Westminster Gatehouse, he was interned in inhuman conditions. After a month he was moved to the Tower of London, where he endured three years of imprisonment and torture.

In February 1595, he arraigned for trial and moved to Newgate Prison. His trial was the usual mix of unfounded allegation, lies and anti-Catholic rant

which had become common in England at the time. It was no surprise when the jury returned a verdict of guilty, and Robert was condemned to be hanged, drawn and quartered. The sentence was carried out the next day, 20th February 1595, at Tyburn. He died professing his Catholic faith, praying for the Queen and forgiving those responsible for his death.

Two months later his poems, *St Peter's Complaint* were published, to be reprinted thirteen times in forty years. His Christmas poem *The Burning Babe* was one of the poems in that collection and it has become a Christmas favourite. In the poem, he describes a vision of fiery child in the snow. As he draws closer he sees it is a sorrowful child, but one on fire with love. Using the image of the new-born Infant Christ in winter, St Robert reminds his readers of the love of Christ for them – a love which brought him down to earth to the cross and to death: this is the mystery of Christmas.

St Robert Southwell was canonised on the 25th October 1970. His literary legacy remains, and his poems are still in print. It is, however, the legacy of his life and martyrdom which are his real claim to fame and glory.

The Burning Babe

St Robert Southwell

As I in hoary winter's night stood shivering in the snow,
Surprised I was with sudden heat which made my heart to glow ;
And lifting up a fearful eye to view what fire was near,
A pretty babe all burning bright did in the air appear ;
Who, scorched with excessive heat, such floods of tears
did shed
As though his floods should quench his flames which with
his tears were fed.
Alas, quoth he, but newly born in fiery heats I fry,
Yet none approach to warm their hearts or feel my fire but I !
My faultless breast the furnace is, the fuel wounding
thorns,
Love is the fire, and sighs the smoke, the ashes shame and
scorns ;
The fuel justice layeth on, and mercy blows the coals,
The metal in this furnace wrought are men's defiled souls,
For which, as now on fire I am to work them to their good,
So will I melt into a bath to wash them in my blood.
With this he vanished out of sight and swiftly shrunk
away,
And straight I called unto mind that it was Christmas day.

(From *St Peter's Complaint*, 1595)

SAINTS OF THE ARTS AND MEDIA

Saint Francis de Sales

PATRON OF WRITERS AND JOURNALISTS



St Francis de Sales was born at Thorens in the Duchy of Savoy on the 21st August 1567. The eldest of six boys he lived a life of privilege, his family being one of the more prominent aristocratic families in the area. His father wanted him to become a magistrate, and an

obedient Francis included law in his studies. He graduated with a doctorate in 1592 and took up a position as a lawyer. By this time his father had already chosen a young noblewoman as a wife for him but by then Francis realized that he wanted to give his life to God. A struggle ensued with his father, and it was only when Francis sought and obtained the help of the Bishop of Geneva, Claude de Granier, that his father relented. He was ordained priest on 1593.

At the time, due to the Reformation and dominance of Calvinism in Switzerland, the See of Geneva had its seat in the city of Annecy. There, as a priest of the diocese, Francis threw himself into his work with great zeal and ability, so much so that when the bishop sought a coadjutor bishop in 1599, Fr Francis was chosen. At first he refused, seeing himself as unworthy, but then accepted. In 1602 Francis succeeded as Bishop of Geneva.

As bishop, Francis was known for his holiness, simplicity and gentleness, even when dealing with the Calvinists who hated him. He immediately set about on reforming his diocese, instituting catechetical programmes for adults and children alike, visiting the parish especially the neglected ones and assisting the poor. Through his ministry and brilliant preaching he converted thousands back to the Catholic faith. He was also renowned as a writer, the most famous of his works being the *Introduction to the Devout Life*. He was in great demand outside his diocese as a preacher. Having met and become the spiritual director of St Jeanne-Frances de Chantal, a young widow, he co-founded with her the Visitation Order. His way of life was simple and austere; his spirituality was one of gentleness, practical common sense and Christ-like humility. He is regarded as one of the Church's most influential guides for the spiritual life.

St Francis died in Lyon on the 28th December 1622. He was canonized in 1665 and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1877. His feast day is celebrated on the 24th January.

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- Milan, including Mass at the tomb of St Ambrose.
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