

St Francis of Assisi by Giotto

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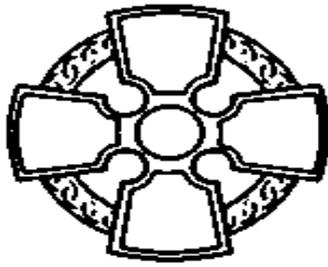
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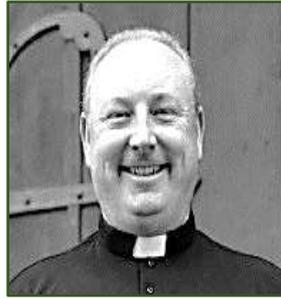
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FATHER MARK WRITES ...



Our Responsibility to Care for this Planet

You may well be reading this article at just about the same time as we mark Climate Sunday (26th September) or Harvest (3rd October) in our parish. This year, the idea of environmental stewardship, of caring for our world, takes on added significance as Britain hosts the COP26 Climate Summit in Glasgow in November.

Christians are required by God to be answerable for the care of the world that we hold in trust. It is not ours: we are merely custodians - passing through. Yet what we do, or do not do, when we are the generation 'on duty', matters a great deal.

As a species, our actions now affect this planet more dramatically than any other species there has ever been, and our power to shape the path of life on this planet, for good or ill, continues to grow.

About 6 million years ago, an ape gave birth to two daughters. One was the ancestor of chimpanzees. One was our ancestor. We currently know of 6 kinds of human species who roamed the Earth about 2 million years ago. By 10,000 years ago, however, the number of human species was down to just one: *Homo sapiens*. *H. sapiens* means 'wise man' and there is no pun intended. There was certainly some degree of mating between human species, but it seems likely that *H. sapiens* 'replaced' all the others. Not long after *H. sapiens* arrived in lands populated by Neanderthals or other human species, mysteriously, the resident populations seem to have disappeared. It *could* have been an accidental extinction of the other species, on each occasion: competition for the same food sources meant that one human species died and the better adapted survived. Of course, this did happen for all 5 of the other human species when they came into contact with our own. 'Replaced' may therefore be a polite term for something more deliberate. 'Wiped out' or 'ethnically cleansed' might equally be used. But surely not? I think most of us would prefer to think of our species as unfortunate orphans of the human family, rather than killers of our nearest relatives. So similar to us. Some of them bigger, stronger, maybe even

cleverer than us. And then I remember back to my adolescence and the usually-silky tones of David Attenborough now very different - narrating one of the most shocking documentaries I have ever seen. I remember watching, with both horror and fascination, the first ever film footage to show that chimpanzees were not the cute and funny creatures of tea commercials. In the adverts, the chimps are usually seen from a certain angle, flashing a smiling mouthful of teeth: hardly ever showing that they also possessed canines – just like we do. In the footage the secret was out: these chimpanzees were revealed to be a bunch of killers who would coordinate their hunting down of monkeys straying too near to their territory, and ripping them apart. Some of the chimps did it for the meat; others wanting, or having, to be involved in what the tribe were doing. Some clearly enjoyed the thrill of it all. In later years, we saw footage of how organised groups of chimps would go to war to maintain boundaries between tribes, and sometimes going to war would be used to distract from events going on in terms of succession rights within the group, and for other reasons. Remember, chimps separated from us 6 million years ago, so it's reasonable to assume that the behaviour of our closer ancestors, the ancestors of now-extinct humans, would have been even more understandable to us. So it is far from impossible for me to believe that our ancestors, with big brains and well-developed communication, could act in a coordinated way to 'remove' those humans who were both very similar to ourselves, yet too different to ignore. After all, we've continued to do so throughout recorded history with members of our own species, who are hardly genetically different from us at all. As of 10,000 years ago no other human species were left. We therefore appear to stand accused of either accidentally, or deliberately, killing off the other 5 human species on the planet.

It may of course have just been a coincidence, but bad luck often seems to befall many species that wander across our paths. 45,000 years ago humans entered Australia. 16,000 years ago we arrived in the Americas. 5,000 years ago on some Caribbean islands. There were sudden widespread extinctions of large percentages of mammals and many other species in all these places within a very short period after our arrival.

Our ability to remove species which are 'other', and those that might compete with us, or threaten our way of life, is well-documented throughout history. But our great power means that we sometimes do it accidentally too. A 2019 summary report in *Nature*, by the UN-backed Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems – carried out an analysis of 15,000 separate independent scientific studies. The conclusions were analysed independently by government advisors

from 132 nations. It appears that our species has accelerated the extinction rate of other species by over a hundred fold, often through such seemingly innocuous matters as agricultural practices. For example, the effect of agriculture on removal of rainforest, etc. About a million plant and animal species are facing extinction within decades now due to *agricultural practices alone* - and these findings don't even bring human-mediated climate change extinctions into the equation!

There are clearly things that we are doing, and not doing which are devastating other species, and the ecosystems in which they live. We are failing to live up to our promises as Christians to be good stewards of that which we hold in trust. In the words of the confessional, we are doing wrong in thought, word and deed, and in what we are leaving undone.

A lawyer might tell you that ignorance of the law is not a defence, and whilst you might feel that is unjust, there is certainly little defence if we continue to do what is wrong once it has been brought to our attention, repeatedly. That is what COP26 is about – a further chance to make amends.

God believes in us, and in our potential. Sometimes that seems hard to believe. In the history of our interaction with others on this planet, we've left a trail of dead bodies behind us, throughout our existence – including those of our nearest relatives. It could be argued, that through destruction of habitats and global warming we are now taking it one step further – and unwittingly sowing the seeds of our own destruction as a species.

Therefore perhaps we need to stop and think. We have become top dog in a very short period of time. But can we now fulfil the potential God, remarkably, sees in us? Can we use our gifts to ensure not only our own survival, but the survival of the other species who, as the Voyager probe revealed, just as it moved out of our Solar System, also inhabit this single, small blue dot, set all alone against the vast curtain of the blackness of space?

God bless,

Fr Mark

EDITORIAL



As this October edition of the *Link* is likely to be in churches in the last week of September, Father Mark's leading article takes Climate Sunday on 26th September as the starting point for a discussion about our responsibilities for the natural world - a vivid exploration that takes us through our (rather bumpy) evolutionary history, the meaning of our stewardship of the earth, the expectations that God has of us, and facets of our own, intrinsic nature. Fortunately, this month's church diary also sees the annual commemoration of the life and work of St Francis of Assisi who pointed us to our responsibility for the animals and flora with which we share this world. St Francis makes a suitable and exemplary saint of the month.

Bible Sunday also falls in October - this year on 24th - so has provided a stimulus for quite a bit of the content of the magazine. A superior at work once asked me, suddenly and in a challenging tone of voice, 'What happened in 1588?' Recovering from the nightmarish thought that it might be something he held me personally responsible for, and dimly recalling school history lessons, I said, hopefully, 'The Spanish Armada?' But no. 'It was the first translation of the Bible into Welsh!' Margaret Knight's excellent article, specially written to acknowledge Bible Sunday, tells the story of the making of the first Welsh Bible and reflects upon the importance of the Welsh language Bible in her own life. A few other pieces in the magazine also respond to Bible Sunday, one of which serves as an introduction to Margaret's article.

From January 2022, as you know, there will be one magazine for the Ministry Area. In next month's *Link*, there will be an article explaining the format and content that has been jointly planned for the new magazine, and information will appear on the website to make the change easier for contributors. I don't actually know how long the *Link* has been going. Does anyone out there know? Would that person, should she or he be willing to discover themselves, like to write a short history for one of the two editions of the magazine that are still to come before the end of the year?

JK

ADMIN CORNER



Happily, the Hall is now open again for children's parties and I've been kept busy doing bookings for September, October and November. Hopefully this will mean that the Hall can at least break even this year after the enforced closures.

We've also had lots of requests for baptisms, which is lovely to hear. We are still restricted by numbers, so some of the baptisms have to be on a Sunday afternoon. The Friends of St Augustine's have organised an autumn programme of talks and the first concert for St Augustine's has also just been booked for next year, so it feels like things are becoming more normal.

Sadly, though, there won't be a Harvest Supper in St Dochdwy's as in recent years, due to Covid. It was usually done with the Llandough Baptists but they have decided not to continue meeting, having lost their minister Rev John Garland a couple of years ago.

Autumn is going to be additionally busy for me, preparing for the merger with All Saints and thinking about moving offices. I will also be learning more of the financial side of things, becoming a signatory for our bank accounts and learning how to do payments for when Roger finishes as Treasurer in December.

Rachel Elder

BIBLE SUNDAY THOUGHT #1

*Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed. **Luke 1.1** New Revised Standard Version [NRSV]*

FEATURES

BIBLE SUNDAY



Mary Jones and the Origins of the Bible Society

The Bible Society began as a result of the actions of an ordinary, powerless 15 year-old Welsh girl nearly 250 years ago. In 1784, Mary Jones became determined to have a Bible in her own language and nothing was going to stop her, certainly not a mere 26 mile walk through rough countryside from her home in Llanfihangel-y-Pennant to the nearest large town, Bala. To get the money to buy that Bible, she had saved up for six years.

The story of Mary's walk spread quickly. One who heard it was the Revd Joseph Hughes who asked himself how it could be that it was difficult for anyone in a populous and developed country like Britain to get a copy of the Bible in their own language.

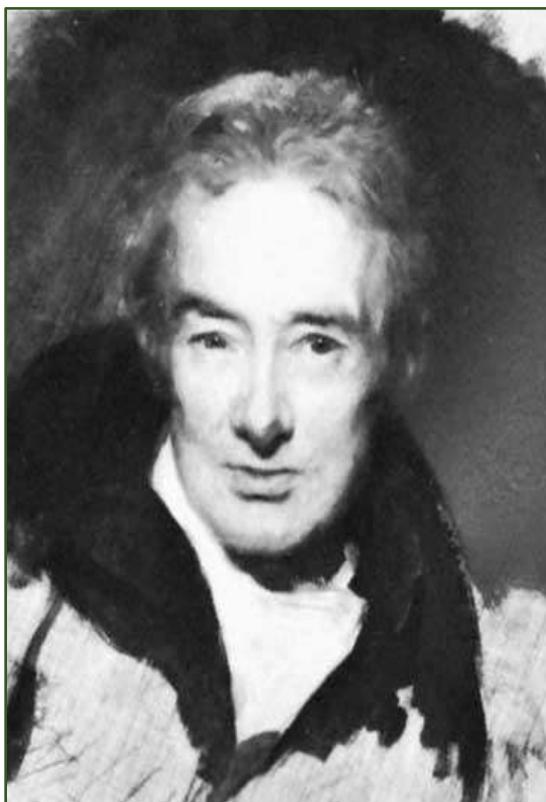
Like many other 'obvious' questions, nobody had asked this before Mary's long walk drew attention to the problem. The Revd Jones asked himself how many other places in Britain - and indeed other places in the whole world - were without an easy supply of Bibles in the language of local readers.

The fact that people could sometimes not get personal access to a copy of the Bible in their own language was a big challenge for Protestant churches. One of the defining features of Protestantism has always been the individual Christian's obligation to develop his or her understanding through personal reading of the Bible, and through reflection on the meaning of what was read so that the reading could have a continual formative influence on the individual Christian's understanding, insight and

conscience. This was obviously never going to happen if Christians could not get hold of a copy of a Bible.

The problem that Mary Jones's walk to Bala had disclosed was discussed at a meeting of the 'Religious Tract Society' in December 1802. The debate initiated a campaign to bring the Bible to societies throughout the world, and created the Bible Society.

The great reformer, William Wilberforce, and other members of the Clapham Sect – an Anglican evangelical group in London dedicated to reform in general and to the abolition of slavery in particular - decided to begin work on the problem.



On 7 March 1804, at a meeting of around three hundred people in Bishopsgate, London, Wilberforce was instrumental in organising the 'British and Foreign Bible Society', now known as the 'Bible Society', a charity devoted to the aim of bringing the Bible to the whole world.

The first full, authoritative translation of the Bible into Welsh which Margaret Knight writes about a few pages later in this magazine was published in 1588 and was used for a very long time here, there being no further translations until the middle of the nineteenth century.

William Wilberforce

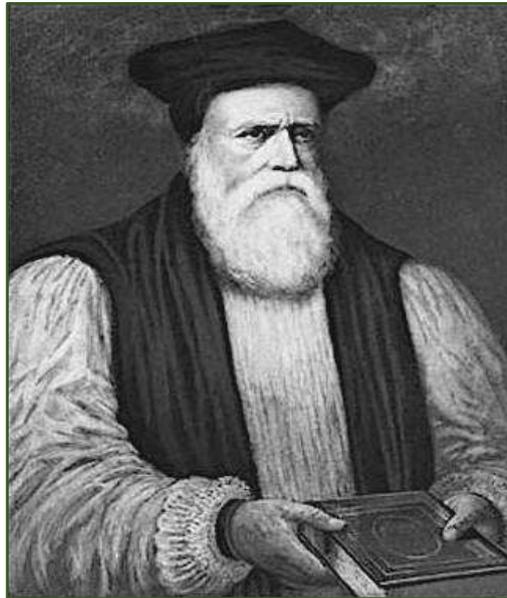
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edition of the Welsh Bible Mary Jones bought that day in 1784 in Bala might have been either the 1588 version by William Morgan or the 1770 version that Margaret also mentions in her article.

Today, the Bible Society is still working hard to make sure that people have access to a Bible wherever they are. As their website says: "We're working hard here at home and in key areas across the world to change this. We take the Bible and find ways to translate and distribute it, create digital formats, advocate for its place in society and help people relate to and make sense of it in their everyday lives."

BIBLE SUNDAY

The Bible in Welsh: Ancient and Modern



William Morgan (1545-1604) is a major figure in the history of Wales. He was the translator, from the original Greek and Hebrew, of the first version of the entire Bible into Welsh. Published in 1588, during the reign of Elizabeth I, Morgan's translation was of great significance to the Welsh population who could now hear the Biblical words spoken in their native language.

My family history researches have revealed that many of my rural ancestors were mono-lingual Welsh speakers until well into the beginning of the 20th Century. As religious institutions were central to the lives of Welsh communities until the mid-20th Century, Morgan's Welsh Bible has been instrumental in keeping the Welsh language alive over the last few centuries.

The William Morgan Bible was the one substantially used until the end of the 20th Century when the Modern Welsh Bible appeared in 1988 to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Morgan's original publication. Interestingly, the King James Bible was published in 1611 and I believe that there is a strong similarity between the reverence the older Welsh speaking population have for the language of the Morgan Bible as the English have for the words of the 1611 publication.

Morgan was born at Ty Mawr, Wybrnant near Betws-y-Coed, North Wales, and was the son of a tenant farmer on the Gwydir Estate of the Wynn family. He was probably educated with the Wynn family children and later graduated from St. John's College, Cambridge. He was a clergyman of the

Church of England and made his translation when working as a vicar at Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant, near Llangollen. He later became Bishop of Llandaff and of St Asaph.

Roughly 1000 editions of the Morgan's Bible were published, of which only 20 survive. One is currently on display at Chirk castle, Wrexham which, along with Morgan's birthplace, is a National Trust property.

I did this research using three Welsh language Bibles and on-line. Thanks to the Welsh National Library website I had access to the digital version of the 1588 Bible.

My oldest Bible is a well-used, leather-bound edition of Peter Williams' version published in 1770. It had belonged to my great-great-great grandfather, Evan Morgan (1816-1870), a blacksmith in Llanwrda near Llandovery, Carmarthenshire. Inside, there is a handwritten list of his children and their dates of birth. My most recent Bible is the modern one printed in 1988 – a present from my mother.

I decided to compare the Welsh in the four Bibles by looking at the Beatitudes in Matthew, chapter 5, verses 3 to 10. The name Beatitudes originates from the Latin 'Beati sunt' which translates as 'Blessed are'. In church, I often look up at the quotations, beautifully displayed as murals along the main aisle.

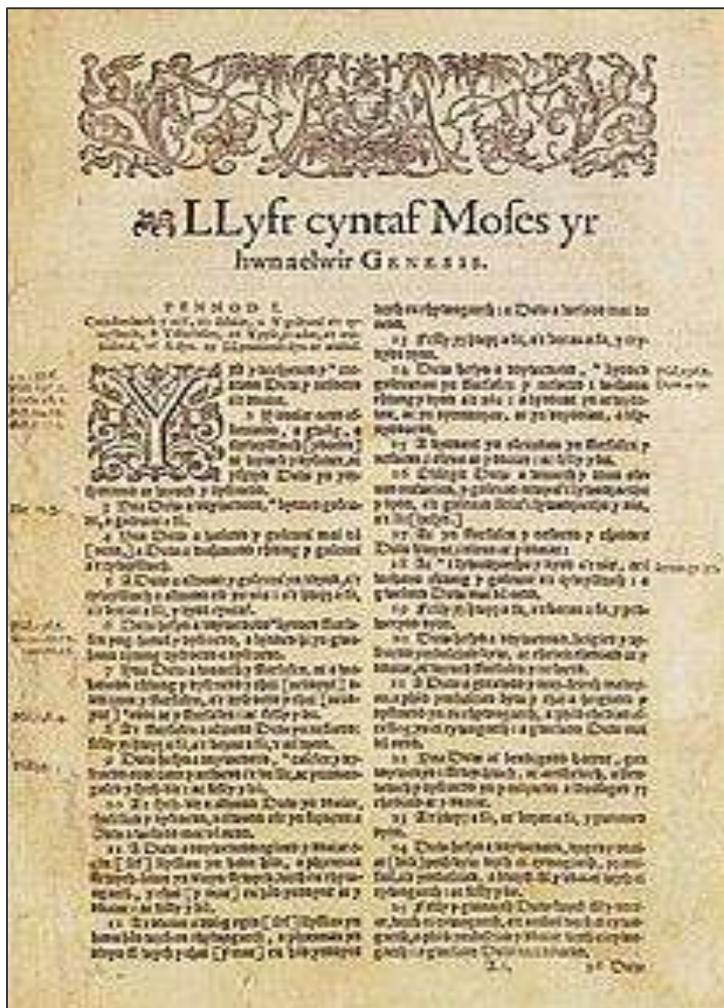
The original Welsh translation of the New Testament was from the Greek and the equivalent to the 'Blessed are' in Welsh is 'gwyn eu byd' which translates to 'white is the world'. Blessed in Welsh is bendigedig or gwynfydedig, the latter being derived from the Welsh word 'Gwynfydau' for the beatitudes.

Matthew: Verse 5

- ❖ 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.' (New King James version.)
- ❖ 'Gwyn eu byd y rhai addfwyn: canys hwy a feddiannant y ddaiar'. (1588 version.)
- ❖ 'Gwyn eu byd y rhai addfwyn: canys hwy a etifeddant y ddaear'. (1770 version.)
- ❖ The latter was identical to the 1968 version.
- ❖ 'Gwyn eu byd y rhai addfwyn, oherwydd cant hwy etifeddu'r ddaear'. (1988 version.)

So, the wording has changed but not significantly. I am so glad that in the modern version, the "Gwynfydau", has kept the term 'gwyn eu byd' at the beginning of each Beatitude.

It was not difficult to read the original 1588 version, with the exception of certain words which have been changed for more recent versions; an example above is feddiannant and etifeddiant. Spellings had sometimes been changed ... ddaiar and ddaear but the language was readable and familiar.



An 's' in words in the more modern forms of the Bible, was apparently 'f' in the 1588 and 1770 versions, for example, eistedd (sic) was eif tedd. It looks like a different letter which is no longer used. The letter 's' was present in the older versions but usually at the end of words or as a capital letter. A discussion with the *Link's* editor resulted in my discovering that this was common in manuscripts up to the 18th century.

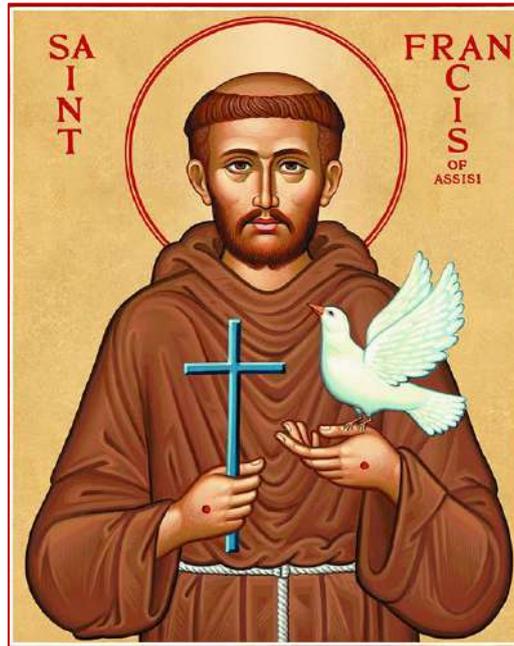
The conclusion I have drawn from this somewhat cursory rummaging into my Bibles is that an analogy

can be made with reading English of the King James Bible to the Welsh language of the 1588 Bible.

The language seems archaic but very familiar, reassuring and understandable, as it evokes sentimental memories of the many Chapel services of my youth.

Margaret Knight

COMMEMORATION OF THE MONTH



Francis of Assisi (about 1181-1226)

Because Francis has always been associated in our minds with care for nature and for the animals with whom we share the planet, he might be considered a particularly important Christian saint at a time when so much thought and effort is aimed at managing our relationship with nature.

Underlying Francis's care for nature is the Christian doctrine that the world was created good by God but now is damaged and in need of redemption as a result of human sin. Francis's care for nature and animals has a theological underpinning, therefore. Indeed, in 1979, Pope John Paul II declared Francis the patron saint of ecology and, three years later he said that Francis's love and care for creation was a reminder to us "not to behave like dissident predators where nature is concerned, but to assume responsibility for it, taking all care so that everything stays healthy and integrated, so as to offer a welcoming and friendly environment even to those who succeed us."

Many of the stories that surround the life of Francis illustrate his love for animals and the environment. The *Fioretti (Little Flowers)* is a collection of stories that sprang up after his death. One account describes how, while Francis was traveling with some companions, they happened upon a place in the road where birds filled the trees on either side. Francis told his companions to "wait for me while I go to preach to my sisters, the birds." The legend tells us that the birds surrounded him, intrigued by the power of his voice, and not one of them flew away. This is a scene often

depicted in art (see our front cover!) and Francis is often accompanied in pictures by a bird, often in his hand.



St. Francis talking to the wolf of Gubbio (Carl Weidemeyer, 1911)

Another legend from the *Fioretti* tells that in the city of Gubbio, where Francis lived for some time, there was a ferocious wolf that devoured men as well as animals. Francis went up into the hills and when he found the wolf, he made the sign of the cross and commanded the wolf to come to him and hurt no one. Then Francis led the wolf into the town, and, surrounded by startled citizens, made a pact between the humans and the wolf. Because the wolf had “done evil out of hunger, the townsfolk were to feed the wolf regularly. In return, the wolf would no longer prey upon them or their flocks. But Francis is also important for his founding of the Franciscan Orders who have been so important in Christian history.

One morning in February 1208, Francis was taking part in a Mass in the chapel of St. Mary of the Angels, in Umbria, close to which he had built himself a hut. The Gospel of the day from the Book of Matthew concerned the commissioning of the disciples. It inspired Francis to devote himself to a life of poverty so, having obtained a coarse woollen cloth of the kind then used for clothing by the very poorest peasants, he tied it around himself with a knotted rope and went about exhorting the people of the countryside to penance, brotherly love, and peace.

His example attracted others. Within a year Francis had eleven followers whom he led to Rome to seek permission from Pope Innocent III to found a new religious order. The Pope took some convincing and, apparently, some of his counsellors thought that the mode of life proposed by Francis might be impractical. However, in 1210, Francis received permission to establish the Franciscan Order.

From then on, the new order grew quickly. Hearing Francis preaching in the church of San Rufino in Assisi in 1211, a young noblewoman, Clare of Assisi, sought to live like Francis. On the night of Palm Sunday, 28 March 1212, Clare secretly left her family's home. Francis established Clare and her followers at San Damiano in a few small huts or cells. This became the first monastery of the Second Franciscan Order who are now known as the

Poor Clares. For those who could not leave their homes, Francis later formed the Third Order of Brothers and Sisters of Penance, a fraternity composed of either laity or clergy whose members neither withdrew from the world nor took religious vows. Instead, they observed the principles of Franciscan life in their daily lives. Before long, this Third Order grew beyond Italy. The Third Order is now titled the Secular Franciscan Order.

Another element in the life of Francis was the missionary efforts he made. He travelled to the Holy Land, to Spain and (during the period of the crusades) to Egypt.

In 1224 while he was praying on the mountain of Verna, during a forty-day fast in preparation for Michaelmas, Francis is said to have had a vision as a result of which, according to tradition, he received the stigmata, the visible marks of the wounds of Christ on the cross.

Francis died on 3rd October 1226, singing Psalm 141 and was pronounced a saint on 16 July 1228 by Pope Gregory IX. He is well known not just to Christians but widely for providing one of the clearest and most definitive and lucid examples in history of the spiritual and moral value of a complete simplicity of life.



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FROM THE ARCHIVES

An Editorial from the *Church Times* October 1971

VOCATIONS



The recent Church in Wales report, *Faithful Stewards in a Changing Church - Understanding Ordained Ministry in Light of the 2020 Vision*, reminds us that “the recognition that God’s gifts are not confined to the ordained, but that the whole people of God are called to witness to the totality of God’s redemptive work.”

The lay contribution matters, so the argument goes, both because it just does and also because there are likely to be fewer Anglican priests in the future. The Church of fifty years ago was also concerned about the balance between the lay and clergy contribution to the Church’s work but the article emphasises the other side of the balance of clergy and lay activity.

The aspect of the problem that exercised the writer of this *Church Times* editorial from 1971 was a decline in the number of what it calls ‘realised vocations’ to the priesthood - that is, the number of people (in those days, men) that actually did transform a sense of vocation into a completed theological training,

For the process to be successful, the risk of stumbles and misunderstandings must be as low as possible so the writer concentrates on things that might impede completion and looks at particularly at the ways that the information in a then newly published series of booklets might reduce misunderstandings that otherwise might hamper progress in priestly training.

One of the most serious of all the symptoms of the malaise which in these difficult days afflicts the Church of God is the decline in the number of realised vocations to the priesthood. Nor is it only a symptom of weakness. It is a contributory cause, since a vigorous and active priesthood is an essential element in the health of the Body of Christ, as Catholic tradition has always understood and interpreted it. The Church of England is no exception to what is sadly, at present, a general rule in Christendom. The most recent' statistics available show a continued fall, proportionately to the population, in the number of new ordinations and in the total strength of the ordained ministry.

For this reason we welcome the announcement that the Additional Curates' Society has decided to embark on a series of booklets designed to give an account of what the priesthood of the Church is and why it matters so much.

The announcement comes in the Bishop of Crediton's foreword to the first booklet in the series, published yesterday, 'Being a Priest' by Jeremy Saville, a former Chaplain of Cuddesdon and now Rector of Holt, Norfolk. Mr. Saville has got the new series off to a good start, if only for the reason that he presents, from an intensely personal standpoint, a convincing argument for holding that the ordained ministry really is a vitally important part of the Church of God in its dealings with the world ...

That note is sounded well in 'Being a Priest'. Mr. Saville expresses eloquently, against the background of a sick society's need, the prophetic, the pastoral and the sacrificial aspects of the work of a priest in the Church of England. His booklet is a summons to men with a true vocation to "give themselves away" by seeking ordination. He does not seek to avoid or play down the cost. One of the best things about his booklet is his emphasis on the Cross and on what the acceptance of the way of the Cross means still to-day. Without acceptance of the Cross there can be no hope of Resurrection ...

BIBLE SUNDAY THOUGHT #2

*For as the rain and the snow come
down from heaven,
and do not return there until they
have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out
from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I
purpose,
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

Isaiah 55.10-11 - New Revised Standard Version [NRSV]

FAITH IN THE NEWS

Coptic choir viewed hymn-singing on Cairo Metro



A video of the Aghapy Coptic Choir singing hymns on the Cairo Metro went viral on social media last week, *The Jerusalem Post* reports. A human-rights lawyer in Egypt, Makarios Lahzy, was quoted as saying: “The incident is unusual, exceptional, and has a measure of courage. It is brave in the face of reality. The reality is that Egyptian society is intolerant of Christians’ public expression of faith. Sometimes they are not allowed to sing in their churches and it is possible to demolish those churches.”

~~~~~

## Church in Wales Governing Body: Welsh agree to same-sex blessings in church



The Church in Wales has passed a Bill that will allow same-sex couples to have their civil partnership or marriage blessed in church. The vote by Orders saw a two-thirds majority in all three to allow experimental use of the rite for a five-year period. Laity voted 49 for and 10 against, with one abstention. Clergy voted 28 for

and 12 against, with two abstentions. The bishops were unanimously in favour.

~~~~~

Pilgrimage-inspired poems sought



Poets are invited to enter a poem inspired by a pilgrim journey to a Christian pilgrimage site in Britain or Ireland, or by a longing to undertake that journey, in a new competition launched by Journeying, a Christian charity.

Entries should be emailed to info@journeying.co.uk to arrive by midnight on 23 October. The winner will receive a first competition certificate signed by the judges and a ten-per-cent discount on any one of the pilgrim-holidays organised by the charity next year.

BIBLE SUNDAY THOUGHT #3

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3.14-17 [NRSV]

POEM OF THE MONTH

When I consider how my light is spent by John Milton 1673



When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent 4
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide,
'Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?'
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent 8
That murmur, soon replies: 'God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who
Best bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed, 12
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.'

In his book 'Paul's First Letter to Corinth' (Pelican, 1971), commenting on Paul's advice to the Corinthians who 'wait for the revealing of the Lord' (1, 7) John Ruef says: 'This is the proper posture for Christians. They wait.'

By 1652, at the age of 43, Milton had gone blind. The first eight lines of this sonnet are about the threat that blindness posed to his work and usefulness; the last six lines are a response to this threat, ending in a resolution.

Through a conversation, firstly, with himself (1-8) and then, with the personified figure of 'Patience', Milton discovers that God's purposes for him, and God's view of his worthiness, may actually take more into account than just his work in the world.

The process of thought starts in something close to despair. Milton uses two parables - the parable of the talents, and the parable of the vineyard labourers - to present his thinking in the poem. He could assume that the parables were familiar to his readers and that they would respond to the images of light and dark which pull them, and us, into the poet's 'dark world and wide' (2). Milton then states the other part of the problem: his darkening

vision does not stop his desire to 'serve' (5) and to present the outcome of his work, his 'account' (6), to his 'Maker'.

The question 'Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?' (7) sets off what we might nowadays expect to be a prolonged outbreak of complaining about God's high expectations of blind Milton's continued industriousness . However, the word 'But' (8) and the introduction of the new speaker, 'Patience', sharply changes the direction of thought. The discontented murmuring (the word also used about the complaints of the vineyard labourers in the King James version of the parable) ends. In the final six lines of the poem, 'Patience' addresses Milton (with us overhearing), telling him that faith matters to God, not just a man's works and achievements - even achievements as great as Milton's - and that God's grace will be freely given to those who suffer in quiet humility.

For a 17th century sonnet, the poem has very few verse lines that stop at the end of the line. Often, too, the sentence running over the line-end has a very abrupt pause during or even near the start of the following line (3-4, 8-9, 11-12). All this seems to cause a fitful rhythm, maybe just how this kind of anxious thinking does really feel? In contrast to what has gone before, the clear, confident resolution in the famous, final line is given power by its regular, alternating pattern of strong and weak pulses.

Milton is told that, really, all he need do is 'stand and wait' (14), that waiting is an important activity. So the poem ends with a graceful, consoling and illuminating insight, replacing, for a moment, Milton's lost bodily sight and the darkness it entailed.

FROM THE REGISTERS

Baptism

5/9/21 Clementine Joy DAVIES at St Augustine's
12/9/21 William James HARRIES at St Augustine's

Interment of Ashes

22/8/21 Teresa Rowanne OWEN at St Dochdwy's
27/8/21 David Geraint DAVIES at St Augustine's
27/8/21 Philip Hywel DAVIES at St Augustine's



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FRIENDS OF ST AUGUSTINE'S

EVENTS

- ***The Scandalous History of Penarth's Parsons*** with local historian Chris Riley on Thursday 30th September;
- ***Penarth and Local Myths*** with Alan Thorne on Thursday 14th October;
- ***Maps of Penarth and further afield*** with map collector Chris Higley on Thursday 28th October;
- ***The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*** with Richard Parry and musicians on Thursday 11th November.

The first three of these sessions will start at 7.00 pm and will be held in the Parish Hall, Albert Road, Penarth; the event on 11th November will be in the church itself.
