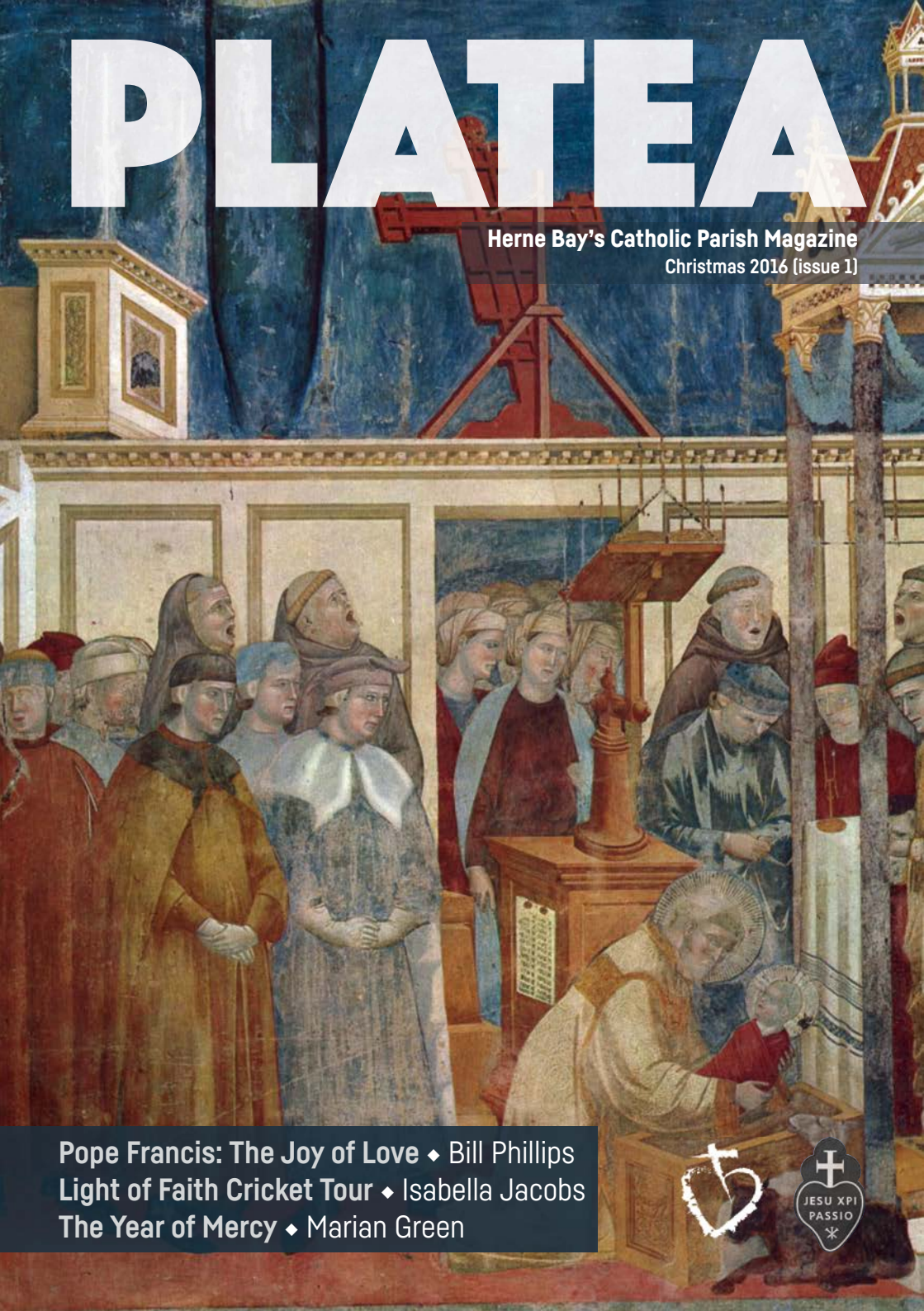


# PLATEA

Herne Bay's Catholic Parish Magazine  
Christmas 2016 (Issue 1)



Pope Francis: The Joy of Love ♦ Bill Phillips  
Light of Faith Cricket Tour ♦ Isabella Jacobs  
The Year of Mercy ♦ Marian Green





**Burden** by **Essa Neima** (2014)

Syria has been embroiled in a war for several years. Towns and cities have been destroyed, and millions have been displaced.

Essa Neima, a Syrian expat and the son of a Catholic mother and Eastern Orthodox father, is trying to come to terms with this destruction and pain through art.

With a palette dominated by sienna, ochre, umber and crimson, each painting references Christian iconography to varying degrees and expresses some element of loss. Reflecting on how the news captures only the stories of violence, he says, “You don’t think there are people who want to live in peace, but there are.” The destruction, of course, affects everyone.

As a minority Christian, combined with the displacement of populations and the desecration of holy sites and relics, he holds the fear that once the fighting has settled, “there [will be] nothing to prove that I belong there... I hope something will change and that I can be there again.” The artist currently teaches painting in Washington DC.

# In this Issue of **PLATEA**

## Highlights



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# PLATEA

## Herne Bay's Catholic Parish Magazine

[www.ourladyhernebay.co.uk/magazine](http://www.ourladyhernebay.co.uk/magazine)

**PLATEA** features original stories and other articles, ideas and creative content intended to inspire the Catholic parish in Herne Bay to ever deeper discipleship of Jesus Christ.

**PLATEA** includes contributions that we believe are worthy of our readers' consideration, whether or not we fully agree with them. Views expressed by our contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of **PLATEA** or of the parish community. Adverts are not necessarily endorsements of the businesses featured.

Editorial team: Annette Ballard, Connie Caira, Richard Carr, Gabrielle Davis, Marian Green, Mark Nash, Rachel Nash, Trisha Scott, Deacon Barry Walker and Fr Mark White (if you would like join in, get in touch) Contributions to be sent to: [plateamag@gmail.com](mailto:plateamag@gmail.com) or by post: The Retreat, 3 Sea St, Herne Bay, CT6 8SP

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Cover image: Institution of the Crib by St. Francis at Greccio by Giotto

# Welcome to the new **PLATEA**

Dear Reader,

Some decades ago the parish's Guild of St Francis de Sales published a parish magazine with the same title. In recent months a decision was taken, by the Parish Pastoral Council, to revive the publication and a team of enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers stepped forward. Here is the fruit of their labour.

In this first edition of the new **PLATEA** we feature content written and created, primarily, by members of the parish community. In time we will feature a wide variety of articles and other content which, it is hoped, will stir your interest, raise questions you want answered and create a living network of readers and contributors.

We read in the letter to the Hebrews that we must 'spur one another on toward life and good deeds.' The articles, reports and imagery contained herein, is hopefully such a spur and an encouragement. Naturally, as a living community of believers, a static, printed magazine is not the only expression of who we are but a tool - a good one we pray - to help us all connect with each other and with our loving Father in Heaven.

There are many issues which affect all in our town, regardless of belief, regardless of background. The Catholic parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Herne Bay has, as one of its primary functions, service to the town's community. Please do consider visiting us in Clarence Road, get to know us and see how we might serve you. All the very best wishes for the Christmas season.

With an assurance of my prayers and best wishes,

Fr Mark White CP  
*Parish Priest*

**PLATEA** from  
1965 (L) and  
2016 (R)



# PLATEA LETTERS

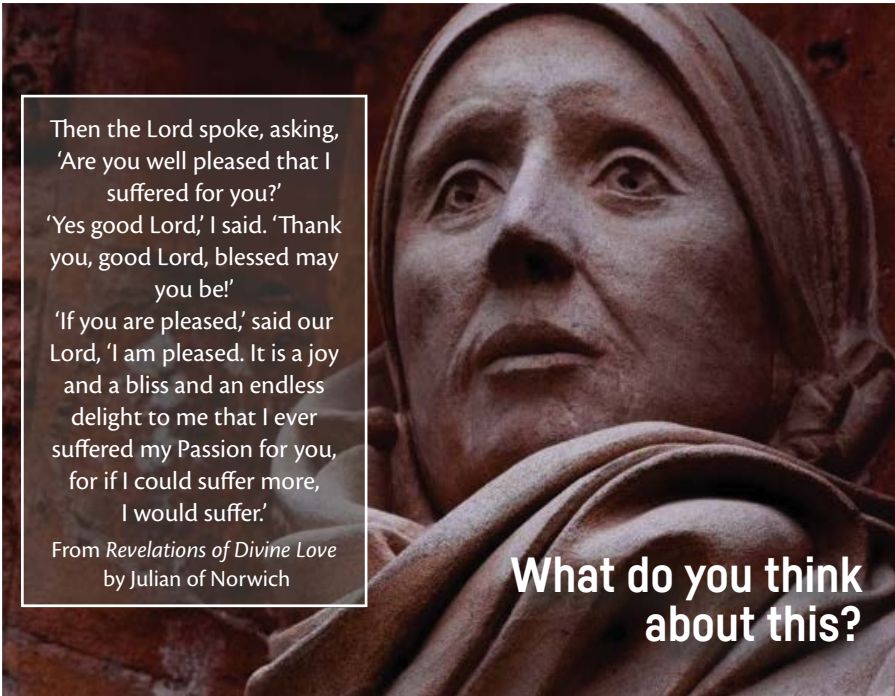
## Why has my letter to **PLATEA** not yet been published?

The simple answer is that you have yet to write it! This space is yours for questions to the editorial team about each edition but also other items that you think may of interest to members of the parish and the wider community.

The team will endeavour to print as many of the letters we receive as we can - where possible we will try to answer them too.

This magazine is yours, the more that people engage with it - through letters, poems, art, reviews - the better it will be.

To get in touch please email us at: [plateamag@gmail.com](mailto:plateamag@gmail.com) or post your submission to **PLATEA**, The Retreat, 3 Sea Street, Herne Bay, CT6 8SP



Then the Lord spoke, asking,  
'Are you well pleased that I  
suffered for you?'

'Yes good Lord,' I said. 'Thank  
you, good Lord, blessed may  
you be!'

'If you are pleased,' said our  
Lord, 'I am pleased. It is a joy  
and a bliss and an endless  
delight to me that I ever  
suffered my Passion for you,  
for if I could suffer more,  
I would suffer.'

From *Revelations of Divine Love*  
by Julian of Norwich

What do you think  
about this?

# Parish in Review

## Wednesday Lunch Club

9 November 2016

“The Wednesday Lunch club, launched in October, has been hugely successful. The first meal saw almost 30 people come together to meet and eat. New friendships are being made as well as old ones rekindled, all while being served a fantastic home cooked meal.”

Samantha Bushnell

*If you wish to attend please contact Sam on 07711 270646. The next two dates are 7 December 2016 & 11 January 2017.*

## Animals Worldwide Quiz

22 October 2016

“A neatly run and enjoyable quiz with nearly £800 raised for charity. Peter Warr was a great quiz-master; wit in plentiful supply as was the wine, with a bit of wisdom thrown in. Looking forward to the next one!”

Mark Nash

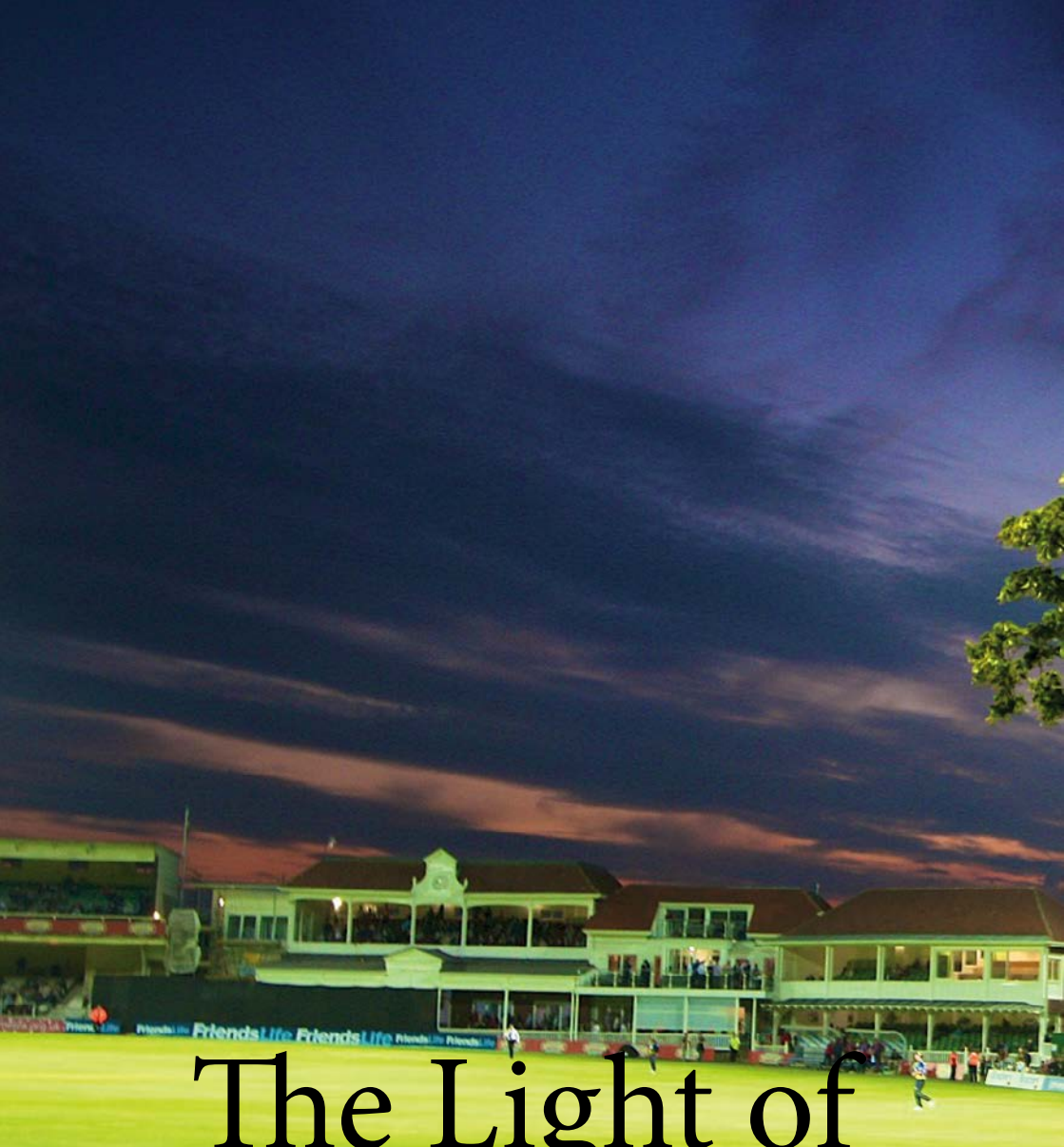
*Quizzes regularly take place in the Retreat Hall for charities such as the Thai Children's Trust, Sr Astrid's projects in the DRC & Demelza Hospice. Keep an eye on [www.ourladyhernebay.co.uk](http://www.ourladyhernebay.co.uk) for dates*

If you wish to share a short reflection on something that has happened in the parish or have a photo of a recent event please either email: [plateamag@gmail.com](mailto:plateamag@gmail.com) or write to Platea, 3 Sea Street, Herne Bay.

## Parish Pilgrimages in 2016



Images [L to R]: Pro-life Pilgrimage to Walsingham; Fr Patrick at Aylesford; The parish pilgrimage to Lourdes, an article on this trip will follow in a future edition. Images courtesy of Althea Walker



The Light of

**FAITH**

Vatican Cricket Tour 2016





In September 2016, St Peter's Cricket Club (otherwise and often known as the Vatican XI) undertook their second British tour with both ecumenical and interfaith objectives high on the agenda. The 2016 tour included not just the now traditional matches against an Archbishop of Canterbury XI but a series of games against Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh opponents. Isabella Jacobs, one of our young parishioners, posed some questions to the Vatican team.



Top to Bottom:  
 Vatican XI  
 in St Peter's  
 Square;  
 Speaking  
 to St John  
 Fisher  
 Academy;  
 Capanelle  
 Cricket  
 Ground;  
 Cardinal  
 Vincent  
 Nichols and  
 the team;  
 Singing  
 Selfie with  
 Mount CC

Two years ago, in September 2014, the newly founded team of Rome-based Catholic priests and seminarians from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and England travelled to the UK to play against a Church of England side, the Archbishop of Canterbury's XI. The game, played at the Kent County Cricket ground in Canterbury, ended with a narrow victory for the Anglicans. A return match, played in Rome in the autumn of 2015, saw the Vatican team taking back the St Augustine cup.

This year, the two teams met again at the Kent ground to further their sporting friendships and to pray together again in Canterbury Cathedral. The tour also involved a three-team tournament featuring the Catholic and Anglican teams and Mount Cricket Club, made up of Muslim players from West Yorkshire at Edgbaston.

St Peter's Cricket Club travelled north to Yorkshire, where the players visited a mosque and concluded the second 'Light of Faith' tour with a T20 match against Mount Cricket Club at the famous Headingley ground.

Set up in 2013 under the auspices of the Pontifical Council for Culture, St Peter's Cricket Club was the brainchild of the former Australian ambassador to the Holy See, John McCarthy. The goals of its team members are to share their faith with others, to build bridges across religious and cultural divides and to further what Pope Francis calls 'the culture of encounter'.



The Vatican XI with Pope Francis



I. When did you first start playing cricket?

SP. Dear Isabella, wishes and greetings from St. Peter's Cricket Club, Vatican. The club was formed in the year 2014.

I. Who has been your favourite team to play against and who would you like to play in the next tour?

SP. All of the opposition teams were our friends and we would like to meet them all again.

I. What was the highest score in this tour?

SP. The Highest score of this tour was 68 by Aamir Bhatta.

I. Where do you play cricket in the Vatican?

SP. While we are in Rome we play cricket at Capanelle Cricket Ground.

I. Which grounds have you played at on your tour?

SP. We were blessed to play at the St Lawrence ground in Canterbury again, we also played in Headingley, Edgbaston and Woodford Wells Cricket Club near London against a multi-faith team.

I. What is your most memorable moment of the 2016 tour?

SP. We really enjoyed meeting and praying with players from different faiths. I thank you for your interest in following our club. I hope you would be able to publish a good article on our team.

These answers came via <https://www.facebook.com/vaticancricketclub/> the Facebook page of St Peter's CC - feel free to 'like' them!



Vatican XI and AOC XI in Canterbury (2014)

## Christmas

by John Betjeman

In 'Christmas', published in a collection entitled 'A Few Late Chrysanthemums' in 1954, John Betjeman openly celebrates the religious as well as the secular significance of the birth of Christ. Painting memorable, colourful and challenging pictures, Betjeman recalls the austerity of Christmas in post-war Britain and the breathtaking but often-missed reality of the Christ-event.

It is worth recalling Betjeman's own words about poetry, 'Too many people in the modern world view poetry as a luxury, not a necessity like petrol. But to me it's the oil of life'. Future editions of **PLATEA** will feature your poetry - do you fancy a go?

**THE BELLS** of waiting Advent ring,  
The Tortoise stove is lit again  
And lamp-oil light across the night  
Has caught the streaks of winter rain  
In many a stained-glass window sheen  
From Crimson Lake to Hookers Green.

**THE HOLLY** in the windy hedge  
And round the Manor House the yew  
Will soon be stripped to deck the ledge,  
The altar, font and arch and pew,  
So that the villagers can say  
'The church looks nice' on Christmas Day.

**PROVINCIAL** Public Houses blaze,  
Corporation tramcars clang,  
On lighted tenements I gaze,  
Where paper decorations hang,  
And bunting in the red Town Hall  
Says 'Merry Christmas to you all'.

**AND LONDON** shops on Christmas Eve  
Are strung with silver bells and flowers  
As hurrying clerks the City leave  
To pigeon-haunted classic towers,  
And marbled clouds go scudding by  
The many-steepled London sky.

**AND GIRLS** in slacks remember Dad,  
And oafish louts remember Mum,  
And sleepless children's hearts are glad.  
And Christmas-morning bells say 'Come!'  
Even to shining ones who dwell  
Safe in the Dorchester Hotel.

**AND IS** it true,  
This most tremendous tale of all,  
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,  
A Baby in an ox's stall?  
The Maker of the stars and sea  
Become a Child on earth for me?

**AND IS** it true? For if it is,  
No loving fingers tying strings  
Around those tissueed fripperies,  
The sweet and silly Christmas things,  
Bath salts and inexpensive scent  
And hideous tie so kindly meant,

**NO LOVE** that in a family dwells,  
No carolling in frosty air,  
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells  
Can with this single Truth compare -  
That God was man in Palestine  
And lives today in Bread and Wine.



**JOHN BETJEMAN** was one of the best known poets, writers and broadcasters of the last century. Born to a middle class family near Highgate in 1906, he was knighted in 1969 and held the post of Poet Laureate from 1972 until his death at Trebetherick, Cornwall in 1984. He is buried in St Enedoc Church (*bottom right*).

After school at Marlborough, he went to Magdalen College, Oxford where he left without a degree (he did, however, receive an honorary doctorate of letters from the university in 1974). His various poetical works have sold over two million copies though he was also a prolific writer on architecture, with a fondness for Victorian buildings, especially churches and railway stations. He successfully campaigned to save St Pancras railway station from demolition and a giant statue of him stands near the entrance of the reopened station (*bottom left*).

Betjeman was often seen on the TV during the 1960s and 1970s, often reading his own work dressed in a corduroy suit, badly-knotted tie, crumpled collar and battered trilby. Although many critics suggested that he wouldn't face up to the realities of modern life, he was always respected for being a deeply religious man.

For a reading of his poem 'Christmas' visit - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6ZoQPmzZSO>





# The Joy of Love

Bill Phillips shares his thoughts on Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation on the Family, *Amoris Laetitia* or, in English, the Joy of Love

Mary McAlees, in her comments on Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, uses strong language to express her anger at its failure to move the Church forward on the subject of marriage and the family and it is true that from the perspective of families struggling to come to terms with failure and less than perfect situations it is an easy stance to take. I would like to suggest that there may be a more positive side to the document.

I think that Francis had a higher purpose in writing the document than answering specific questions, indeed §2 makes that very point. 'The complexity of the issues... revealed the need for continual open discussion of a number of doctrinal, moral, spiritual, and pastoral questions.' There is no hint here of 'Rome has spoken, the case is closed.'

Rather, he uses the rest of the exhortation to outline the path he feels the church should follow to reach a conclusion.

He starts with a criticism of what might be called the hierarchical church's approach in its 'attitude of applying general rules or deriving undue conclusions from particular theological considerations.' This is followed by; 'Not all discussions of doctrinal, moral or pastoral issues need to be settled by the Magisterium.' Indeed he makes it specific with, 'Cultures are quite diverse and every general principle needs to be inculturated, if it is to be respected and applied.' §3

This movement away from the centre, from Rome to the local bishops is carried further in that the inspiration for decision making come from the realities of life rather than from dogma. We do well to focus on the concrete realities,

since ‘the call and demands of the Spirit resound in history,’ and through them ‘the Church can also be guided to a more profound understanding of the inexhaustible mystery of marriage and the family.’ Not only that but the pastors and the magisterium bear some responsibility for the current situation by using ‘abstract and almost artificial theological ideal of marriage’ §36.

Francis does not stop there, he criticises the lack of involvement of the individual and points out that God works through everyone, ‘We also find it hard to make room for the conscience of the faithful, who very often respond as best they can to the Gospel amid their limitations, and are capable of carrying out their own discernment in complex situations...’ To reinforce this point he looks at *Gaudium et Spes* §16, ‘Decisions involving responsible parenthood, presuppose the formation of conscience, which is the most secure core and sanctuary of a person. There one is alone with God, whose voice echoes in the depths of the heart.’

Where he could have quoted all sorts of prescriptive parts of *Humanae Vitae*, Francis chooses a statement that might seem surprising concerning the size of families; ‘Let them thoughtfully take into account both their own welfare and that of their children, those already born and those which the future may bring. The parents themselves and *no one else should ultimately make this judgement in the sight of God*’. (My italics) §221.

At this point, some may be wondering what the role of the teaching and pastoral Church is. Francis’ intention can be seen in § 261 & 264. ‘Do we seek to understand

where our children really are on their journey....so that children can learn for themselves the importance of certain values, principles and norms, rather than by imposing them as absolute and unquestionable truths?’ And it applies to adults, not just children.

The whole slant appears to be that the pastoral role is to accompany people on their journey, to support the progress made so far, to offer the vision of the next stage without condemnation of the gap between the present position and the ideal. At no stage is anyone to be excluded because they have not achieved the ideal.

Francis uses an expression that is found elsewhere in his writings; ‘Time is greater than space... in other words it is more important to start processes... What is most important is the ability lovingly to help them grow in freedom, maturity, overall discipline and real autonomy’ §261.

What, to my mind, Francis is saying is to the church as a whole, ‘Grow up!’ It is too easy to have someone act as a dictator in telling you what to do, or, as pastors to have a black and white set of rules that enables the pastor to pick a ready-made solution from the pack. Indeed it was interesting that many in the former communist countries yearned for the security of having someone else make decisions and tell them what to do. Francis is not playing that game, he is trying to get the church to face reality – and that to my mind is hopeful.

If you have thoughts you'd like to share on *Amoris Laetitia* email: [plateamag@gmail.com](mailto:plateamag@gmail.com) or write to Platea, 3 Sea Street, Herne Bay. A summary of the document can be found on p.16

## Amoris Laetitia: A Summary MARK NASH

Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), has already elicited a deep variety of responses. Voices from both the 'too little' and 'too much' perspectives remind us that he has not changed Church teaching. For the past three years, Pope Francis has not let us stop talking about doctrine. In The Joy of Love, the Holy Father continues to ask all members of the Church to speak boldly, without fear. We are called to admit that the Church is a place where real people work and fail, find mercy and work again.

### PASTORAL CONCERNS

The concept of informed conscience has a significant place in The Joy of Love, while the legalistic application of rules appears downplayed. As Pope Francis puts it, the Church cannot apply moral laws as if 'they were stones to throw at people's lives' (305). Among these concerns are poverty and unemployment (25), tendencies toward selfishness and individualism (33 & 41). His Holiness articulates clearly the difficulties of married life, but sees them not as problems but as opportunities.

### THE JOY OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

The Joy of Love is a clear appeal to all Christians to promote marriage as a vocation. Despite the inevitable challenges (87) every effort should be made to safeguard marriage in society and its promotion should be at the forefront of Church life (40). The family, as a natural society founded on marriage, is the rock on which society is built (50) and the factors that undermine this should be confronted. The gift of children, with particular emphasis placed on the need for family prayer (318), education in the faith (287), the welcoming of new life (167) forms a large section of the document.

Pope Francis refers to the couple that loves and begets life as a 'true, living Icon' capable of revealing God the Creator, mirroring God who is love (121). He asks us to explore questions on how we, as a Church, support not just engaged and newly married couples (218) but couples in crisis (232-246), those in mixed marriages (247); the childless (178), the elderly (191) and those who remain single (158).

### LOVE IS...

Chapter Four would be a useful read for all couples undertaking marriage prep. Clearly such an account of Christian love: building up and serving of others (97 & 101); not reacting angrily and harbouring resentment (91 & 103); and enduring offense (92 & 105) refers not just to the marital relationship but to a Christian way of life.

### A BROADER VISION?

The first 4 paragraphs exhort the Church, not just to a 'broader vision of marriage,' but to the need for 'continued open discussion of a number of doctrinal, moral, spiritual and pastoral questions...' (2-3). The local variety and plurality of experience and context around the world, the 'legitimate concerns and honest questions' of Christian families requires 'a commitment to others' (100), reflection and dialogue.





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# GOD IS GREAT!

After managing to fund-raise for Oliver's transformative surgery in America, **Krista Nelson**, shares the story with the parish, giving thanks for the support and prayer the family has received.

**N**early two years ago during an appointment for Oliver at the Evelina Children's Hospital I mentioned that my hope was that someday Oli would be able to walk with crutches. We were told that was an unrealistic expectation and that as he got older he would be more and more reliant on his wheelchair. Well we didn't believe it was unrealistic and kept on searching for another perspective. We found out about the Selective Dorsal Rhizotomy operation that can result in children with Oliver's type of Cerebral Palsy walking independently; however unfortunately the NHS does not fund it. When we learned there was an operation to help him yet the cost made it so out of reach it was devastating. We thought it

was beyond the amount we could fund-raise for; we thought at best we could raise half the money after a long period of fundraising.

Now here we are only one year from launching our fundraising appeal. We raised over £40,000, Oliver has had the surgery in St. Louis, Missouri, he has exercised nearly every day, spent two weeks in Scotland for intensive physiotherapy and he is now walking around the house with crutches!! But this isn't the end of his progress yet.

For nearly all the children who have this surgery one of the biggest obstacles to walking independently afterwards is conquering the fear of falling. When you learn to walk at the age of one children just aren't afraid. However

taking steps with nothing to hang on to at 10 years old is scary! I try to imagine for myself that it would probably be like how I would feel walking on stilts or ice skating. While in Scotland he walked across a room completely on his own and he's been practising that twice a day. In about three months or so he hopefully will be able to walk around the house on his own. (He's really looking forward to being able to go into the kitchen and get a drink or snack all on his own!) Walking outside will take much longer but with lots of hard work he'll achieve it.

Now that the operation has removed the abnormal tightness in his legs he is learning to use muscles that he never engaged before. We are trying to get his brain to learn how to wiggle his toes for example (very important for being able to walk outside). He has quite a rigorous rehabilitation schedule. His week consists of a session with a physio, three with a personal trainer, hydro-therapy, daily stretches and exercises with us,



daily walking practice (on treadmill and on his own), cycling and horse riding. It's no wonder he sometimes gets quite fed up with it all. We are very lucky that his personal trainer and NHS physio have put in a lot of time to learn about this surgery and the best way to go about the rehabilitation as they have never seen a child post-SDR before; but they are very excited to see such amazing progress. We will continue to travel to centres that specialize in post-SDR therapy for weeks of intensive therapy every few months.



**F**ather Mark gave a recent homily about perseverance in prayer and how we might not always be answered in the way we expect. I've prayed and prayed over the years for Oliver to walk and always believed my prayers would be answered someday in some way; and they have. Rather than a miraculous overnight cure he provided us with an amazing community/friends to help us raise the funds needed, give us support and pray, amazing doctors and therapists and other means for Oliver to be able to walk. Thank you all for being part of this miracle. God is great!



# Jesus is The Light of the World



How many kinds of light can you see in the picture?

In the Bible (John 8:12) we read about Jesus talking to the people and referring to himself as 'light,' he said: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Later on (John 9:5) we read about Jesus claiming again to be the 'Light of the World', during this miraculous healing of the man born blind. Have a read of these Bible stories this Christmas.

## A Christmas Wish

Children all over the world celebrate Christmas, just like you do. Why not send them a wish on a Christmas star?

Draw a star on a piece of white card and colour it. Write your wish on the back, and put it on a branch of a Christmas tree.

What will you wish for?

What might others be hoping for?





# The First Crib

Nativity scenes are a familiar sight in our churches and homes at Christmas time, though few realise this tradition's connection with one of our most popular saints. Annette Ballard explains.

**S**t Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals and founder of the Franciscan Order began the tradition of nativity scenes. Christmas was celebrated with a Mass where the priests would tell the Christmas story. Often this was not accessible by ordinary people who could not speak Latin and any artistic renditions that were available were often very fancy and not very realistic.

In the year 1223 St Francis wanted to engage everyone in this joyous occasion. He wanted everyone to be touched by the love of God sending his Son into the world for each one of us. It is said that Francis was inspired with this idea after making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Francis was living in Greccio, Italy at the time and he asked the Pope for permission to present a live nativity to the people. The Pope agreed and Francis asked his close friend John Velita to loan him some animals and straw to set up the scene in a cave just outside Greccio (*see Giotto's painting of this on the cover*). The scene consisted of a wax figure of the infant Jesus, a live donkey, an ox and two people dressed as Mary and Joseph and an empty manger. Local shepherds watched their sheep nearby, just as they did on that first Christmas night. He wanted all to understand how Christ came into the world in such humility, simplicity and poverty.

During the Mass, Francis told the Christmas story from the Bible and delivered his sermon. He told how placing their faith in Jesus Christ, the baby born in a simple manger in Bethlehem, could change their lives. Francis was so moved by the occasion and full of tenderness and love for Our Lord he called Him the Babe of Bethlehem. The first nativity scene is also associated with an apparition of the Baby Jesus to those gathered with St. Francis. This must have been Jesus' way of giving his blessing to this remarkable experience for all gathered and the tradition it has created.

When you arrange your nativity scene this Christmas, remember the first scene set by St Francis. The nativity is a tool for all ages; helping us to retell this marvellous story to young and old alike and meditate on the humility, simplicity and poverty that Christ took on out of love for each of us. Having a nativity scene in our home is our witness to those who come to visit and tell of the true meaning of Christmas.



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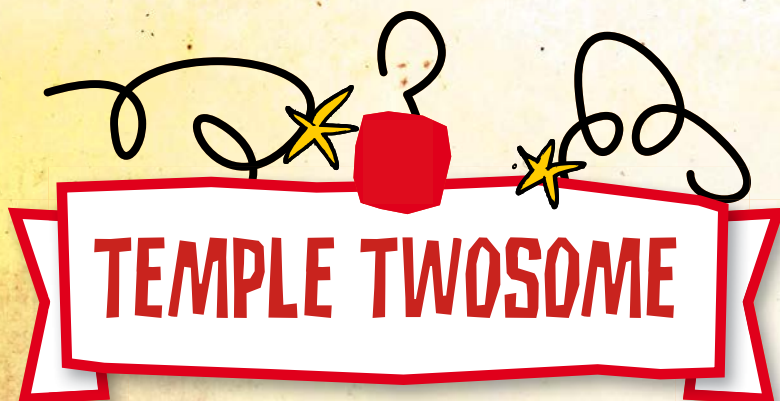
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# TEMPLE TWOSOME

**T**his Bible story is based around Jerusalem's Temple shortly after Jesus had been born. Because Jesus was Jewish, His mum and dad (Mary and Joseph) had to perform certain religious rituals for their new-born baby. One of these involved paying a visit to the Temple to present the child to God. Fortunately for them they only lived a few miles away in Bethlehem so it wasn't a long trip.

In keeping with Jewish law, Mary and Joseph also had to sacrifice a pair of doves or pigeons to God. During the course of this Temple trip something rather odd happened. A godly guy called Simeon had been waiting years for the day when Israel's Messiah (someone sent by God to save them) would show up, and now the day had finally arrived. God's Holy Spirit led Simeon to the Temple courts ready for his meet-up with the Messiah. When Simeon clapped eyes on Jesus he knew that He was the One he'd been waiting for. He strode up to Jesus' mum and dad, took hold of Jesus and then began to spout a load of stuff that God had given him to say. It was all to do with who Jesus was, what He would become and how He would change the world.

I'll bet Mary and Joseph were a little bit gobsmacked. Well, if they were, they didn't have long to think about it. Before





the pair of them had time to catch breath, a second visitor arrived. Her name was Anna and the Bible tells us that she was eighty-four years old. Anna was a prophetess (which is just a female prophet) and had lived for most of her life in and around the Temple spending her time fasting, praying and worshipping. Anna immediately knew that Jesus was the Saviour Israel had been waiting for and blabbed about it to anyone who would listen. Did Mary and Joseph stay in Jerusalem to bask in the glory of having such a special Son?



*Look in Bible book  
Luke, chapter 2  
and verses 39 to  
40 to see.*



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# The Year of Mercy

## The Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy

11 OCTOBER 2015- 20 NOVEMBER 2016

**THE CONCEPT OF THE JUBILEE YEAR** comes from the Biblical reference to a special time, once every forty-nine years, when all slaves were to be set free and all debts absolved (cf. Leviticus 25:8-13). The ram's horn blown to announce this time of restoration, justice and mercy was the Yobel from which we get the word Jubilee. The Law of Jubilee in the book of Leviticus mandates the setting free of all Creation. We recognise that it is in Jesus Christ that we are redeemed, set free, from sinfulness (1 John 2:1-2).

The Catholic tradition of the Holy Year began with Pope Boniface VIII in 1300. Boniface VIII had envisioned a Jubilee every century. From 1475 onwards – in order to allow each generation to experience at least one Holy Year – the ordinary Jubilee was to be celebrated every 25 years. In practice, pilgrims seeking forgiveness had to visit all four of the papal basilicas in Rome and Vatican City during the Holy Year and walk through the opened holy doors. Eventually, many among the wealthy paid for forgiveness by buying indulgences rather than making a pilgrimage, which is part of what brought about the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century.

This Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy saw holy doors opened around the world (4 in the Archdiocese of Southwark) and an encouragement to all to explore and live out what mercy truly means.

# The Year of Mercy

A reflection by Marian Green

As I write there is another six weeks before the end of The Year of Mercy. And up to now Rome alone estimates that 15 million pilgrims have already participated in this Jubilee of Mercy. Maybe as you read this the doors have closed and it's over.

So, how was this year for you? Did it pass you by without a second thought? Did it have any impact on your life? For myself, I was reminded of it now and again throughout the year when I occasionally happened on a Holy Door, such as those at Westminster Cathedral in London and at the parish where I grew up in North London. And then, last week, I actually made the pilgrimage, with my parish of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, to Aylesford.

Visiting these three different churches, what occurred to me first was where the doors of Mercy were situated. Never the main door into the Church, they were invariably a door off to the side. Most people enter through the main door, but if you wanted to go through the door of Mercy, you had to actively go out of your way to make that choice. And isn't that how we have to act with God's mercy? We have to realise we need it and go forward, out of our way sometimes to ask for it. *Continued on page 29*



The Year's motto, 'Merciful Like the Father' (Luke, 6:36), invites us all to follow the Father's merciful example.

The logo, *above*, by Father Marko Rupnik, expresses the profound way in which the Good Shepherd touches humanity and does so with a love which has the power to change one's life. Here, his eyes are merged with those of man. Christ sees with the eyes of Adam, and Adam with the eyes of Christ. Every person discovers in Christ, the new Adam, one's own humanity and the future that lies ahead, contemplating, in his gaze, the love of the Father.

The scene is within a mandorla (the shape of an almond), important in early and medieval iconography, for it calls to mind the two natures of Christ, divine and human. The three concentric ovals, with colours progressively lighter as we move outward, suggest the movement of Christ who carries humanity out of the night of sin and death. Conversely, the depth of the darker colour suggests the impenetrability of the love of the Father who forgives all.

Taken from: [www.im.va/content/gdm/en/giubileo/logo.html](http://www.im.va/content/gdm/en/giubileo/logo.html)



Going through the beautifully decorated Holy Door at Westminster Cathedral, we were presented with leaflets to use along “A Way of Mercy”, 10 stations each reflecting different aspects of God’s Mercy. The ninth was the Lady Chapel where we were asked to consider Mary, Mother of Mercy and the tenth was an invitation to have a change of heart and put into practice the things which we had reflected on, being merciful as our Heavenly Father is merciful.

The Holy Door of my home church, decorated with fresh flowers was a lot smaller and I was struck by what met me on the other side when I walked through. A large board had been erected for parishioners to pin up small pieces of paper telling how they have shown mercy in the previous week or were going to show mercy in the week to come. A good visual reminder, I thought. The board, full of the stories of people’s lives, also contained notes from small children, which brought a tear to my eyes - “I’m going to play with Lisa cos no one likes her. We can be friends.”

In Aylesford it was different again but no less meaningful. Left of the main door this time, *picture above*, we entered a small area with five confessionals, where we could experience the sacrament of God’s mercy. What a joyful and uplifting experience to see priests as well as many lay people making use of them, an answer in some way to Pope Francis’ call to each one of us for a personal conversion and where our Holy Mother Church in her great goodness freely dispenses the Father’s Forgiveness. The words of Pope Francis’ when he announced the Year of Mercy came to mind: The reason for the pilgrimage is, “to rediscover and make fruitful the mercy of God. This Jubilee is the opportunity to free ourselves of our burdens and to be carriers of the Mercy of our Lord both spiritually and materially.”

So, although this Jubilee Year of Mercy might come to an end, we should really see it as a new beginning. Being aware of our sins we will always have a need of the Father’s Mercy. As Pope Saint John Paul II said as he was preparing for the second millennium : “Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s Mercy”. And in that sense isn’t it Jesus who is the Door of Mercy Himself? - the Door that will never close. Always open and welcoming us. He is waiting for you and for me.

# The Year of Mercy

## What next?

**TAKING UP NEW INITIATIVES** as a parish or deanery has been an integral part of the Jubilee year, as ways in which we demonstrate to each other and to the wider community, the mercy that we have been shown ourselves. That said, there has clearly been a deeper strand to this year, as an encouragement to examine our conscience, as individuals and collectively.

The extraordinary Jubilee was a chance to develop a discipline of forgiveness, a regimen of love and mercy. Obviously, the need to reflect on the needs and pain of others and to act with mercy and love does not end with the close of the Year of Mercy.

**SEE** - How might we respond to the call to reflect on the poverty of our own lives in terms of the mercy we show - the grudges we hold, the bitterness and resentment we have towards the gifts of others, the pain of rejection we create?

**JUDGE** - Where do we, as a parish or as individuals, isolate others and fail to reach out to those, as Pope Francis puts it, on the margins?

**ACT** - What are the needs of the town in terms of the works of mercy which we are invited to perform (see foot of the page for a list)?

**CORPORAL WORKS** - Feed the Hungry (Matthew 25:35); Give Drink to the Thirsty (Matthew 25:35); Clothe the Naked (Matthew 25:36); Shelter the Homeless (Matthew 25:35); Visit the Sick (Matthew 25:36); Visit the Imprisoned (Matthew 25:36); Bury the Dead (Tobit 4:3-8)

**SPIRITUAL WORKS** - Instruct the Ignorant (1 Ezra 7:25); Counsel the Doubtful (Daniel 4:1-24); Admonish the Sinner (Proverbs 28:23); Bear Wrongs Patiently (Hebrews 12:1-4); Forgive all Injuries (Matthew 6:12; 28:21-22); Comfort the Sorrowful (John 21:19-38); Pray for the Living (James 5:16) and the Dead (2 Maccabees 12:38-46)



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# Lost AND Found



Reflection initially published in  
**Lift Up Your Hearts** (WRCDT/  
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ALMOST HALF OF LUKE'S GOSPEL account (Luke 9:51–19:27) is taken up with the journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. All the while, Jesus takes the opportunity to teach his disciples. The Parable of the Prodigal Son (also known as the Lost Son) is part of a trio alongside the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the lost coin emphasising the Lord's joy at our repentance. It appears in only one of the Canonical gospels of the New Testament, the Gospel of Luke (15:11-32).

*Then Jesus said, 'There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them.*

*A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.*

*But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" So he set off and went to his father.*

*But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him,*

*"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.' (Luke 15:11-24)*

**I**n an insignificant town, in a back street amid the animals, at the bleakest and coldest time of the year, Christ our light came into the world. The coming of the Messiah was expected to come with a blaze of glory, in prominence but instead came quietly, in isolation, in the darkest and meekest place. This unlikely entrance goes some way to helping us understand that God works in each and every place, in each and every heart, no matter the distance from what we believe to be the lightest and most grace-filled places.

There will have been times in each of our lives, no doubt, where darkness seems to pervade. There may even be times we have cause to ask ourselves whether or not we have been abandoned

by God. We may have felt under tremendous pressure; in a time and place where all seems to be going wrong and each new thing seems a burden rather than a blessing. We know 'that the Lord our God is God, the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments' (Deuteronomy 7:9). What is certain, however, are those times where we have been the ones to abandon God.

The sense of isolation and dislocation experienced by the lost son is not hard to imagine. His was a separation entirely of his own making. He made his choice

## The Sacrament of Reconciliation: a 'festival of God's tenderness'

to leave the home he knew, the love he'd been shown, and follow his own whims and desires. This story has been likened to the cycle of sin and its cleansing through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Lucien Deiss, a French liturgical musician, described this sacrament as 'the point where human misery meets divine mercy. It is the festival of God's tenderness. It is the discovery of the Lord who delights in showing mercy. Confession or Penance is rightly called the sacrament of mercy.'

There are many ways we can close ourselves off to the Holy Spirit; by selfishness, by neglect of what Jesus taught, living the Christian life in pursuit of



personal interests. Denying Our Father's will, living in selfishness, is the equivalent of the son's self-imposed exile in the distant land. Like him we have a loving Father awaiting our return. Like him we very often find it difficult to recognise or even acknowledge our sins; yet the re-



alisation of what we have lost - our life in God's loving embrace - should lead to a desire to go back, hoping in his mercy (CCC, 1432). Whatever our reasons for not returning – pride, a feeling that fault lies anywhere but ourselves – fear should never be an excuse.

**W**hat is clear from this passage of Scripture is the arrangement anticipated by the son on his return. He was convinced that, owing to his actions, the most he could attain was the rank of servant (albeit a well-treated one). How true is this of ourselves? Seeking forgiveness, do we honestly consider the relationship which was damaged to be completely

## **When did you last feel truly reconciled with God and with others?**

repaired? Indeed, when we offer forgiveness to others, can we honestly say that nothing is left of the brokenness? In this joyous passage, mercy is shown as a force that overcomes everything, filling a contrite heart with love and bringing consolation through pardon. Remember 'there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents...' (Luke 15:7).

### **Questions for Reflection**

Christ has willed that 'his whole Church should be the sign and instrument of the forgiveness and reconciliation that he acquired for us at the price of his blood' [CCC, 1442]. When have we experienced the Church as such a sign?

When did you last feel truly reconciled with God and with others?

The heart is converted by gazing on Jesus [CCC,1432]. What prepares our heart for repentance?

Image: Return of the Prodigal Son After Liz Lemon Swindle by Peter Green (2016) on display in the Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Herne Bay.

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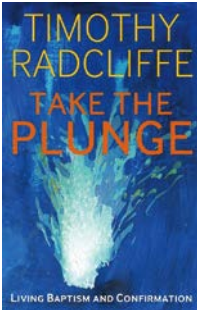
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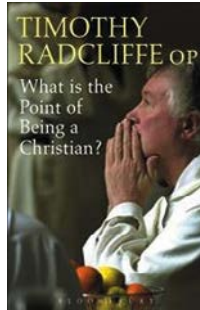
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**Take the Plunge**  
 Timothy Radcliffe  
 Bloomsbury (£12.99)

Relatively long but light of touch, *Take the Plunge* is a wide-ranging and engaging exploration of the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. This book follows in a similar vein and style to the author's bestselling books *Why Go to Church?* and *What Is the Point of Being a Christian?* (pictured above). Fr Radcliffe here deals with many elements of the liturgy in neatly signposted chapters but goes much deeper into the profound reality of the Christian vocation received through the living waters of baptism. He makes the point that while baptism is a simple, frequent rite through which millions have been, the future of Christianity relies on its rediscovery as a lived reality – that is to say, we *are* baptised not merely we *were* baptised. The book makes



**What are you reading?**  
 Which author?  
 Who published it?

wide use of scripture as well as the richness of Church teaching and a variety of literary and scholarly texts in touching the range of human experience.

As an exploration of the sacrament of baptism, *Take the Plunge* would be a useful read for those involved in baptism preparation. Catechists, parents and godparents will find much to engage them as they explore the meaning and importance of the signs and ritual.

I would heartily recommend this book to all who wish to explore their own baptism and confirmation as a means to discern their own Christian vocation.

**MN**

I don't know about you but if I am reading a really good book, playing an excellent game or have recently watched a great film or TV programme I often can't wait to share the joy with my friends and family.

This section of PLATEA provides a space for you to share something of what you have been reading or watching, something that you think might be of interest to others in the parish. It needn't be a spiritual or religious work – though that would be most welcome – but it can't be inappropriate!

Please send your submissions (of 100-200 words) to Platea, 3 Sea Street, Herne Bay CT6 8SP or by email: [plateamag@gmail.com](mailto:plateamag@gmail.com)

**ED**

# PLATEA RECALLS AUG-OCT 2016

## BAPTISMS

**B**y one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slave or free; and have all been made to drink of the one Spirit [1 Corinthians 12:13].

Teddy & Molly Waugh-Spinks Twins	21 August
Amelia Norton-Berry	28 August
Stanley Rumball	18 September
Lilah Rose McCann	18 September
Betsy Garlick	18 September
Gracie Garlick	18 September
Ciam Mulheron	25 September

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## WEDDINGS

**A**nd I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy [Hosea 2:19].

Simon Hillier & Rose Mulvaney	6 August
Charles Banningan & Lucy Read	10 September
Carl Goldfinch & Joanna Wroblewska	9 October
Roger Jenner & Jane Fifield	22 October
Robert Barnett & Rosanna Falzone	29 October

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## DEATHS

**W**e are the Lord's. Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living [Romans 14:7-9].

Thomas Mulvihill	12 August
Thomas Doody	22 August
Nellie Hawkins	22 August
Jonathan Pease	1 September
June Faulkner	17 September
Derek Connolly	1 October
Irene O'Donovan	8 October
Joan Coburn-Moon	12 October
Peter Jackson	14 October
Suzy Millea	14 October

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- Christmas Masses** 24 Dec (6pm Mass); Mass at Midnight with Carols (11.40pm); 25 Dec (10am Mass)
- Boxing Day** 26 Dec (11am Mass)
- New Year's Day** 1 Jan (9.30am and 11.15am Masses)
- Epiphany** 8 Jan (9.30am and 11.15am Masses)



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**PLATEA**

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