



The crossword

All the clues have a religious answer except for 16 down.

Down

1. There are plenty of them in Rome (7)
2. Architectural feature found at the back of a Church (4)
3. NJB Mat C5:v4 Blessed are the ..(6)
4. Disciple of John the Baptist who followed Jesus (6)
5. NJB Mat C22:v17 Is it permissible to pay taxes to ... or not? (6)
6. The Church of a Monastery (5)
- 12 NJB Mar C2:v6 Why do you have these ... in your hearts? (8)
13. A set of religious doctrines (7)
15. NJB Jam C4:v4 . Adulterers! Do you not realise that love for the world is ... for God? (6)
16. Not very often (6)
17. See 9 across
19. See 9 across

NJB = New Jerusalem Bible

Across

7. Liturgical Colour for Advent (6)
8. NJB Jn C19:v42. And the tomb was ... they laid Jesus there (6)
9. across 17 and 19 down The three things which last (5,4,4)
10. NJB Matt C21:v35. But the tenants seized his servants ... one, killed another and stoned a third (8)
11. NJB 2 Cor C4:v7. But we hold this treasure in pots of... (11)
14. Deigenetrix (6,2,3)
18. How Jesus addressed the woman with a haemorrhage (8)
19. NJB Mat C6:v22. The ...of the body is the eye (4)
20. A .. of the Sacred Heart is often located in Church (6)
21. NJB Luk C10:v32. In the same way a ..who came to the place (6)

Answer
 Across 7 purple 8 nearby 9 hope 10 thrashed 11 earthenware 14
 Mother of God 18 daughter 19 lamp 20 statue 21 Levite
 Down 1 Cupolas 2 Apse 3 gentle 4 Andrew 5 Caesar 6 Abbey
 Down 12 thoughts 13 dogmata 15 hatred 16 rarely 17 faith 19 love.

A Bit of Fun

Here are the anagrams of 10 well know parables– see if you can decipher them: They all begin with the word The ..

1. Powers that be of healer
2. Hot deploring as
3. Handsome agitator
4. Shh! Steel poet
5. Technical heart to heart explodes
6. Now hated sweet thudding ju-ju
7. Shaken decent twit
8. This indebted smear
9. Large of prettier cheap
10. Enviably hoariest thunderer

Answers
 1 The parable of the sower 2 The prodigal son 3 The wicked tenants 4 The ten bridesmaids 5 The Pharisee and the tax collector 6 The widow and the unjust judge 7 The vineyard 8 The parable of the fig tree 9 The pearl of great price 10 The labourers in the vineyard

Christmas Shortbread

Here's "Granny Jean's" recipe for Shortbread; always a favourite for Christmas and its very good

12 ozs Self raising flour
4 ozs of Caster Sugar
8 ozs of Butter.

Sieve the flour into a bowl with the sugar and knead the butter into the dry ingredients. Press into a buttered tin and prick the top.

Cook in the middle of a moderate oven gas mark 3-4 for 45–60 mins or until golden biscuit colour.

Slice down into fingers with a knife Leave to cool a little before removing from the tin. Lay a grid over the tin and then turn grid and tin over.

Don't put the shortbread into a tine until com-

Joyful Hope

A Seasonal Magazine for the Parishioners of
The Assumption and St Thomas More
Edition No 1. The Seasons of Advent and Christmas 2011/12
A child is born for us, a son given to us; dominion is laid on his shoulder,
and he shall be called Wonderful-Counsellor



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Welcome to this the first edition of our joint-parish magazine "Joyful Hope". Already I can hear the groans going up "Oh no not another piece of paper to dispose of!". Well hopefully you'll set aside a few minutes to look through it and give it a chance. This magazine has two main aims. The first is to give our two parishes a forum to tell us of what is going on and what is happening in our communities; to keep us informed and connected with each other. A means to broadcast all the great work that goes on "behind the scenes" and to animate us to get more involved in the life of our two parishes. This means that we need articles and news items from your good selves to enable that to be done. So if you've got an item you think would be of interest, then lets get it published so that others can share it and experience it. Secondly it is intended to be an outreach medium, a way of reconnecting with parishioners who have stopped coming to Church and an encouragement to them, offering them a welcome back.

You'll see that the title of the magazine is "Joyful hope" and this title expresses our sentiment as regards our mission, which is to bring the joy and hope that comes from knowing and experiencing the love of God, into people's lives. We can do this in many and various ways but more than anything we do it by the way we live and the way we treat each other.

The magazine will be a seasonal one i.e. it will follow the liturgical seasons of the Church's Year and as the Church's year begins with Advent we're launching it now on the First Sunday of Advent, combining Advent with Christmastide. So may we wish you a prayerful season of Advent preparing for the "joyful hope" that we will all experience with the coming of Jesus at Christmas. The Season of Christmas is one of welcome as the Christ child calls us all to him in his vulnerability and fragility. He is one like us needing love and tenderness, gentleness and care and in return he offers us his life. Let us all come to him with hearts open to receive him anew into our lives.

May you have a prayerful Advent, a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year. May God Bless our parishes.

As we wait in
Joyful Hope
for the coming of
our Saviour
Jesus Christ

A Word from your Parish Priest

Beloved Parishioners of Beeston-Wollaton and all friends, I am delighted to present to you the "Joyful Hope" magazine. This is the instrument by which we have planned an evangelical outreach to win back to Christ and his Church our younger generation, lapsed Catholics and other lapsed Christians, those in search of meaning and purpose in life, and those who have never known the joy of a dynamic faith in a living God in the context of a faith community. The signs of the time perfectly fulfil the biblical revelation that the "harvest is rich". For example there was a recent convert to the Catholic faith, named Jeff, who was confronted by his non believing friends about the history of Jesus, his country of origin and what he did and didn't do. To all of their questions, the man replied that he was ignorant saying "I am ashamed of how little I know, but this much I know: three years ago I was a drunkard, I was in debt, my family was falling to pieces. My wife and children would dread my return home each evening. I was desperate. I gave my heart and life to God and now I have given up booze, we are out of debt and my wife and I are in love again. All this, Christ has done for me. This much I know".

It was St. Irenaeus who wrote "that the kingdom of God is man fully alive". To live a full and happy life

is to celebrate the dignity of life. Pope Benedict tells us where the starting point is: "Happiness is something we all want, but one of the greatest tragedies in this world is that so many people never find it, because they look for it in the wrong places. The key to it is very simple – true happiness is to be found in God. We need to have the courage to place our deepest hopes in God alone, not money, in a career, in worldly success or in our relationship with others, but in God. Only he can satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts". (The big Assembly-Address to young people, Twickenham, 17th Sept. 2010)

Brethren, in the last three years we have been positively inward looking and self involved so as to deepen our individual spiritual relationship with God, create prayer and evangelical groups thereby bringing about a celebrating faith community. The time is now ripe for us to reach out, to be outside looking, to be other person involved. It is now time to seek out and talk to other Jeffs who are seeking for happiness and fulfilment in the wrong places. Let's make a decision to bring along two new people to our faith gathering before Advent 2012. Yes we can with the help of God.

Thanks – Fr. Ephraim

The Incarnation : what does it mean today?

The coming of the Son of God into the reality of the human condition is a moment that has left its mark on us. Yet for many people that mark is becoming less and less visible. For so many people today, Christmas isn't about the birth of the Son of God, but rather it's about the arrival of Santa and all the glitz and glamour that is associated with the holiday. We are so concerned with ensuring that all the commercial trimmings are just so, that we forget the event that abides at the heart of the celebration, and we are all guilty of falling into the trap. We have to try and reclaim the religious element of the feast, lest it wither away and be totally abandoned. But this event on which we exert so much energy and spend so much money, speaks not just to the converted, but as the angel in the gospel says: "to all people of goodwill". Our country has been having a pretty rough time of it economically just lately, and for many, the build up to Christmas with the pressure it can put on families to provide what really can't be afforded, can become unbearable. So perhaps another look at what the coming of the Son of God really looks like and what its impact could be for us all at this time, may not be a bad thing.

The coming of Jesus into our midst is the greatest gift we have been given. It is the gift of our humanity, our dignity, our uniqueness, and God has placed that dignity and uniqueness at the heart of the Trinity. Therefore our humanity is imbued with God's love, and God invites us to take up that love by cradling in our arms the child born to the virgin. Humanity comes to present him with its gifts in return, and whatever they may be, he will not turn us away. The incarnation means that God has taken up our humanity and lived it like one of us, lived it in the good times and the bad, and has blessed it.

Who's Who

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Please feel free to contact the clergy if you wish to discuss any matter you would like to speak to them about. They will be only too willing to lend a helping and caring hand.

Liturgical Year B The Year of St Mark

The Season of Advent 2011

27 November	First Sunday of Advent
28 November	Monday Feria
29 November	Tuesday Feria
30 November	Wednesday St Andrew
1 December	Thursday Feria or Derbys Martyrs
2 December	Friday Feria
3 December	Saturday St Francis Xavier
4 December	Second Sunday of Advent
5 December	Monday Feria
6 December	Tuesday Feria or St Nicholas
7 December	Wednesday St Ambrose
8 December	Thursday Solemnity of Immaculate Conception
9 December	Friday Feria
10 December	Saturday Blessed Martyrs of Lincs
11 December	Third Sunday of Advent-Gaudete
12 December	Monday Feria or St Jane Frances de Chantal
13 December	Tuesday St Lucy
14 December	Wednesday St John of the Cross
15 December	Thursday Feria
16 December	Friday Feria

The Pre-Octave of Christmas

17 December	Saturday Feria
18 December	Fourth Sunday of Advent
19 December	Monday Feria
20 December	Tuesday Feria
21 December	Wednesday Feria or St Peter Canisius
22 December	Thursday Feria
23 December	Friday Feria or St John Kety
24 December	Saturday Feria

The Season of Christmastide

25 December	Sunday	The Nativity of Our Lord
26 December	Monday	St Stephen
27 December	Tuesday	St John the Evangelist
28 December	Wednesday	The Holy Innocents
29 December	Thursday	St Thomas of Canterbury
30 December	Friday	The Holy Family
31 December	Saturday	7th day in the Octave
1 January 2012	Sunday	Mary Mother of God
2 January	Monday	SS Gregory & Basil
3 January	Tuesday	
4 January	Wednesday	
5 January	Thursday	
6 January	Friday	
7 January	Saturday	
8 January	Sunday	The Epiphany
9 January	Monday	The Baptism of the Lord

The Season of Ordinary Time begins

WHAT'S ON AND WHERE?

St Thomas More Glenwood Avenue Wollaton
Masses throughout Advent and Christmastide are as follows:

Weekend Masses are on Saturday evening at 6.30 pm and Sunday morning at 10.45. am
Weekday masses are celebrated at 9.00 am on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday and at 7.30 pm on Monday Wednesday and Friday.

In preparation for Christmas:

Advent Liturgy on 18 December at 4.00 pm which will be followed by a glass of wine and a mince pie.

The arrangements for Mass at Christmas are:

Vigil Mass	6.30 pm	Saturday 24 December
Carols	11.30 pm	before Midnight Mass
Midnight Mass	12.00 midnight	
Christmas Mass	10.00 am	Sunday 25 December

The Church of the Assumption Foster Avenue Beeston
Masses throughout Advent and Christmastide are as follows:

Weekend Masses are on Saturday evening at 5.30 pm and Sunday morning at 9.00 am and Sunday evening at 5.00 pm.
Weekday masses are celebrated at 9.00 am on Wednesday and at 1.00 pm on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

In preparation for Christmas

Carol Service on 18 December at 7.00 pm

The arrangements for Mass at Christmas are:

Vigil Mass	5.30 pm	Saturday 24 December
Carols	11.30 pm	before Midnight Mass
Midnight Mass	12.00 midnight	
Christmas Mass	11.00 am	Sunday 25 December
	6.00 pm	

Forthcoming Social Events

St Thomas More:

Retired Parishioners Christmas Dinner 10 December
Barbara's Cakes and Mini Market 28 January 2012

The Assumption

Children's Christmas Party	16 December 7.00 pm
Parish Christmas Party	17 December 7.00 pm

Dining-out Club

The Dining Out Club began earlier this year as a way for singles (widows, widowers and singles) to meet together once a month to enjoy a meal together and talk and support each other. Here are the thoughts of one member

Memories of Sundays Past

Remember to keep holy the Sabbath Day.

What a treat and a blessing it is to have one precious day a week off work when we have time to rest, spend time in prayer and worship and relax with our families. Although when the children were young getting them up for 9.00 am Mass at St Thomas More on Sunday mornings wasn't exactly relaxing. Amid cries of 'Hurry up, we're going to be late', last mouthfuls of cereal are hurriedly gulped down, and the children clamber into the car with buttons unfastened, shoelaces untied and hair quickly brushed on the journey.

Then with ears full of warnings of the dire consequences of bad behaviour at Mass, they dutifully troop into church looking spick and span and deceptively angelic. Apart from occasional fits of the giggles, they bravely endure (for them) an endless series of prayers, sermons and hymns before finally being freed into the car-park, whooping with joy, running about, letting off steam, anxious to be off home and out to play.

Now it's their turn to shout 'Come on Mum, we want to go home' while Mum and Dad chat with friends outside church for the few minutes which seemed like hours to the impatient children. Back home and out they go to play on their bikes, (no daytime TV, computers, or computer games to keep them in) while Mum prepares the Sunday lunch. Dad announces he thinks he'll stroll down to buy a Sunday paper and maybe, just maybe, drop into the pub for a pre-lunch pint.. Hey I thought Sunday was supposed to be a day of rest!

After lunch, the children quarrel over the washing-up. No dishwashers in those days.

'It's your turn!'

'No it isn't I did it last week...Muuuum..it's not fair!'

Mum shoos them out into the garden finding it less stressful to wash the dishes herself, while Dad offers to help then promptly falls asleep in the chair.

The kitchen is tidy once again and Mum puts her feet up with a sigh, picks up the Sunday paper when Dad, suddenly awake, is suggesting a trip to Derbyshire. The children jump with excitement and delight and Mum's heart sinks..

'I haven't time' she objects, 'I have to iron their uniforms for school tomorrow.'

'Oh do come love' says Dad putting an arm round her shoulder.

'It won't be the same without you.'

'Yes, come on Mum' shout the children.

She dithers; 'Ok then' she says weakly.

Back home and the kids are starving again so more food to get and then bedtime.

'Come on, off to bed and don't forget to clean your teeth and say your prayers'

'Oh Mum ..can I just finish'

No! Up you go.. NOW'

Strange how Dad suddenly comes over all religious and wants to watch 'Songs of Praise' while Mum shepherds the reluctant children upstairs.

The children are asleep, school uniforms ironed, packed lunches in the fridge, and PE kit, recorders, homework books ready for school. Mum rummages through her wardrobe to find something to wear for work tomorrow.

Eventually she climbs exhausted into bed..

'What a lovely relaxing, day of rest this Sunday has been' says Dad, but Mum is already snoring.

Years have passed by and now alone on silent Sundays, the empty house echoes with the shouts and laughter of the children and Mum, now with plenty of time to rest, thinks of Dad and longs for his comforting arm round her shoulders saying 'Come on love, it won't be the same without you'.

Quiet Sundays filled with memories can feel long and empty, and it's pleasant on one Sunday a month to meet together with friends and enjoy a meal and good company with the St Thomas More Dining-out Club.

The Dining-out Club is a club for widows and widowers and anyone who lives alone, parishioner or not. We meet on the second Sunday of the month, and members have already enjoyed meals at The Wollaton, The Victoria Hotel, Beeston, Trent Lock Golf Club, The Country Cottage Hotel, Ruddington, The Cottage Hotel, Kegworth, and Walton's Hotel, Nottingham. Several new venues are planned for next year. There are now sixteen members all slowly getting fatter!

So far all events have gone smoothly except when Fr John's cartyre had a puncture and his passengers were stranded on Clifton Bridge!

New members will be warmly welcomed by our friendly group and lifts to the restaurants can be arranged so why not come along, give it a try and have a pleasant relaxed Sunday? You deserve it!



Advent : the Season of Two Halves

Advent has many facets but more than anything else it is a time of preparation. However it is good to ask what are we preparing for? Well for a start, we would ordinarily say Christmas but that isn't the whole story, because in reality Christmas doesn't really come to the fore until well into the second half of December. It is only with the beginning of the pre-octave on 17 December, that we begin to read the familiar and much loved gospel stories of the annunciation and the birth narratives, so what goes on in the first half of Advent?

Well rather as our magazine's title suggests, we are in a period of waiting, waiting in "joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ". This coming which we await, is the one that Jesus himself promised would take place at the end. We have no idea when this will be, so we are told to "Stay Awake" so as to be ready for that moment. That all sounds a bit scary, but in reality we shouldn't be alarmed. Our anticipation of the coming of Jesus should be one of expectation that all which we now long for, will be fulfilled. That all sounds fine and dandy, but we aren't naïve. We know that the kingdom for which we pray every time we say the Our Father, won't be made present unless we take steps to make our hearts and souls ready.

This is what Advent is about; ensuring that we have our minds attuned to the real priorities of our lives. Of course we should make all the appropriate arrangements to celebrate the feast, but we should remember too what the feast is celebrating.

Two Saints for Advent

Saint Andrew 30 November

First of all Happy Saint Andrew's day to all our Scottish parishioners!. St Andrew was the brother of St Peter and one of the first disciples to be called by Jesus. In fact in St John's gospel we are told that Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist before he received his calling from Jesus. Tradition has it that after the resurrection Andrew preached the gospel in Asia Minor and founded the see of Byzantium later known as Constantinople. Andrew is said to have been martyred by crucifixion at the city of Patras (Patræ) in Achaea, on the northern coast of the Peloponnese. Early texts, such as the Acts of Andrew, known to Gregory of Tours, describe Andrew as bound, not nailed, to a Latin cross of the kind on which Jesus is said to have been crucified; yet a tradition developed that Andrew had been crucified on a cross of the form called Crux decussata (X-shaped cross, or "saltire"), now commonly known as a "Saint Andrew's Cross" — supposedly at his own request, as he deemed himself unworthy to be crucified on the same type of cross as Jesus.

St Ambrose 7 December

Born about 339 at Trier Ambrose was a senior and influential Roman Court official appointed to hold office in Milan. Whilst still under instruction, he was elected by the laity to be the bishop of Milan which he accepted with reluctance. He was baptised and ordained and began his studies of theology and became widely known as a preacher of great eloquence. The young Augustine came under his influence, and eventually Ambrose received Augustine into the Church baptising him in Milan at Easter in the year 387. Ambrose fought against paganism and protected the Church against political power. His writings on ethics and his instructions to those preparing for the faith show him to be bishop of great faith, energy and wisdom.

THE CATENIAN ASSOCIATION Nottingham 20 Circle Meetings: 7.30 pm First Thursday

Venue: The Country Cottage Hotel, Easthorpe Street, Ruddington, Nottingham NG11 6LA.

Twinned with Johannesburg 305 Circle

The Catenian Association is an international brotherhood of practising Catholic laymen who meet socially, at least once a month, in local branches, known as Circles. Members refer to each other as 'brother'. This reflects the strength of the mutual support they give to each other and their families, which is based on the shared values of their Catholic belief and practice. The Association's name is derived from the Latin 'Catena' (a chain) with the Circles being the links in the chain. The emblem consists of a continuous chain of links surrounding a cross. This symbolizes that our Catholic faith is at the centre of all we do.

There are over 10,000 members in Australia, Great Britain, Ireland, Malta, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. They belong to one or more of approximately 300 Circles. As part of the process of extending the Association into new areas there are also a growing number of Groups comprising a smaller number of members than is required for Circle status.

The monthly meeting provides a time for relaxed enjoyment among supporting and faithful friends. If a Brother and his family have to relocate for any reason, the spread of Catenian Circles will often provide a ready-made and supportive Circle of friends.

There are many opportunities in the Catenian year for members and their families to join in the celebration of the Mass: including President's Sunday, Masses for deceased Brothers and the annual Mass for Vocations to the priesthood and religious life arranged by every Circle around the world.

Contacts for more details : Derek Constable.....01158495823

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Thinking of Becoming a Catholic?

RCIA in the Parish of the Assumption

Margaret Walker

Father Ephraim became aware of my interest in the development of the deeper meanings of my beliefs when I mentioned having done some work, with the help of the Holy Spirit on expanding my knowledge of the Mysteries of the Rosary into meditations. Father invited me to take part in one of the special Days for Mary that the Parish of the Assumption holds in honour of Our Blessed Lady, and share some of this work.

The Pilgrimage to Fatima in October 2010 was another important opportunity for Father to learn more about how God works in my life. Father asked me if I would be interested in working with the people who had shown an interest in converting to the Catholic Faith. I readily agreed and first met three of the four people just before Christmas. I spoke to them about some of the differences between the Catholic Faith and their expectations and understandings of Catholicism. We started meeting weekly on Tuesday evenings. The four people were extremely attentive and enthusiastic. We discussed the importance and relevance of the Mass; the significance of Mary the Mother of God, the honour due to her, and the life of Jesus through the Rosary; the history of our faith through the Old Testament and the New Testament; defining the typology and understanding of the Old Testament through the fulfilment that Jesus brought to our attention in the New Testament.

I encouraged questions at all times; informed them of the importance of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the many Devotions available and promoted a wide variety of prayer, from the prayers taught by the Church, personal prayer, personal meditation and communal prayer including the Divine Mercy Prayers, Mother's Prayer groups, Charismatic Prayer groups and Meditation groups. We said the Rosary together and read the Scripture Readings for the following Sunday with a short description of the Church's interpretation of the link between the First Reading and the Gospel. These four people have all been to the Cathedral for the Rite of Election Service, those who needed Baptism have been Baptised, they have all made their First Communion, and been Confirmed when necessary, some will be Confirmed next year. I have thoroughly enjoyed myself in working with these people; it has been a wonderful experience for us all. I would like to thank them for their enthusiasm and friendship. May God bless them through their rich faith and may they serve your Parish for many years.

The RCIA course is now continuing with four new people. Thank God that He persists in guiding people into His Church. May God bless you all. Anyone who would care to learn more about the faith or convert to Catholicism would be very welcome. Please contact me, Margaret Walker on 07899 961 433 or margaret.walker@hotmail.co.uk



HAPPY BIRTHDAY FATHER EPHRAIM!

On 22 October Fr Ephraim was joined by parishioners from The Assumption and St Thomas More for a 50th Birthday Party. The party had a 1960's theme and as you can see a great time was had by all including the brave souls who came dressed for the occasion!



Can you guess who... John, Paul, George or Ringo??

'THAT YOU MAY HAVE LIFE TO THE FULL'

This was the title of a week-end retreat that three of us went on last July. It was held at Hawkstone Hall and was led by Fr Daniel O'Leary.

Hawkstone Hall is a beautiful Georgian manor situated in magnificent Shropshire countryside. It was originally owned by the Hawkstone family, and subsequently by Sir Roland Hill and his descendents. In 1926 the Redemptorist Congregation bought it as a seminary for training priests and in 1972, when the seminary moved to Cambridge, Hawkstone Hall became a pastoral and renewal centre. Still owned and run by the Redemptorist Congregation, is it known world-wide as a centre for retreats and spiritual renewal.

The retreat was led by Fr Daniel O'Leary who has Master's degrees in Theology, Spirituality and Religious Education and is the author of twelve books. For many years he worked in the Leeds Diocese as a curate and parish priest before leaving to teach Theology and Religious Education at St. Mary's University College in London. He now spends his time giving talks and retreats. He is part of a movement within the church which calls us to move away from legalism with its emphasis on rules and regulations, back towards a more mystical approach.

The title of the retreat was based on the words of Jesus in St. John's gospel: **'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full'** (John 10:10)

It is difficult in a short article to convey the breadth and depth of Fr Daniel's ideas and to describe the impact they had on us. Throughout the week-end he led us to a deeper understanding of the true meaning of the words of Jesus: 'that they may have life to the full.'

The main theme of Fr. Daniel's teaching was that there is no distinction between the sacred and the secular because all created things are good. He talked of God's grace and presence being in all humanity, and of humanity being the greatest sacrament of all. He spoke of an infinity within us and of the 'extraordinariness' of the ordinary in our lives. This view of the sacredness of the secular means that everything is permeated by the divine. He gave many examples of this, and the one which stayed with us is a picture of a mother and her baby looking at each other with rapt attention and delight. Fr Daniel said they were calling out the divine in each other.

We prevent ourselves from having divine life to the full by blocking God's love in many ways but especially through fear, non-forgiveness and non-acceptance of suffering. Fear, he said, is a major condition of life and is always weakening and damaging, but trust in God enables us to overcome it. Forgiveness is also impossible on our own but if we choose to forgive, God's grace will allow us to let go. As for suffering, he pointed out that there is no escape from it. We must face it, learn to love through the pain and join it with the wounds of Christ. This change of values will lead to freedom and peace.

In order to grow spiritually Fr Daniel recommended that we spend at least twenty minutes each day in silence and stillness. Although nothing we can do or not do can make God love us more or love us less than he already does, we can place ourselves in His presence so that we may experience Him and allow the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts. He also emphasised the need for self-awareness and awareness of all that is going on around us. One morning he asked for silence at breakfast so that we could be more aware of the lovely taste of the food rather than making small talk together.

He also asked us what our thoughts were when we woke up each morning and suggested we choose to pray that we may be filled with God's life and light that day.

'To-day, Lord, let me be a sacrament of your life and light'

We found the week-end to have been a memorable one in many ways. The staff were welcoming and joyous, and the other retreatants warm and friendly. The beds were comfortable, the food excellent and we enjoyed walks in the beautiful surrounding countryside.

More importantly what we heard had a transformative power over our thinking and attitudes which we hope will result in a more non-judgemental, tolerant and compassionate approach to all people and will lead us to 'have life to the full'.

Norah, Veronica and Maureen