

The Newsletter

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FROM THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

Our Editor reflects on another six months seen in the pages of this edition of the Newsletter...

A publication such as ours that appears only every six months has, it seems to me, a particular job to do. Unlike more frequently published periodicals, which can perhaps happily concentrate on current events, our Newsletter, if it is to fulfil its vocation, has to look in three directions at once. It needs to look *back* selectively, choosing to report on those events that have significantly marked our Chaplaincy community; it also looks *around*, seeking information about what we and the wider Church are doing and experiencing in these days; finally, it should also look *forward*, to give our readers a flavour of what is to come in the days and weeks ahead and thus to help make them ready to receive what, under God, is being carefully and faithfully prepared by our Chaplaincy team.

It's my hope that in this latest edition you will find fascinating evidence of all three perspectives : a look *back* at the lives and faith of some notable people, as well as of those who have made St George's what it is; a look *around* at what our Chaplaincy, including our Malagasy Community, is doing, what our own ordinands are experiencing and how other places are living out their Christian faith; lastly, a look *forward* to the significance of this Advent season, together with the wonderful music of the coming Feast of The Nativity of Our Lord. May all three be a means of encouragement to us!

Finally, may I express my own, belated gratitude to Jill Whitman, who painstakingly formats each edition of the

Newsletter, so that you receive it in attractive and readable form. A big thank-you, Jill !

John C

FROM THE CHAPLAIN'S DESK

Fr Mark reports on another six months of living together, learning and loving...

Once again, I must begin with a heartfelt apology to you, gentle reader, as well as to John Crothers and Jill Whitman, our excellent editorial and design team. The lateness of this edition of the *Newsletter* is entirely down to me and the hugely busy schedule since the *Rentrée*.

Since the last edition, your Chaplain has been busy on a number of fronts. In a rapid chronological summary, these include the ordination to the Diaconate of Stephen Razafindratsima in the Pro-Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Brussels and in Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, of Anastasia Riabchuk.



We sent our congratulations too to Oliver Baldwin, who was here as a student on placement in September 2024, who was ordained to serve in the Diocese of London.



From Brussels, directly to the heart of the West End, the Friends of St George's were welcomed by Fr Peter Anthony to All Saints', Margaret Street. The choir,

assembled by Peter Hicks, stood at twenty strong and sang a remarkable Eucharist, after which Emma Biaggi presented a magnificent feast, which we enjoyed in the courtyard. It was very good to see the many faces who have worshipped at St George's reunited in London for a brief spell to catch up and celebrate together.

Just after Pentecost I attended my first Diocesan Synod in Cologne. Diverse, young and non-English were words that kept cropping up as we discussed our common life and witness; elected as a member of the Bishop's Council, I am looking forward to playing a bigger part in the life of our Diocese. In September, the clergy of St George's came together to look at our areas of work, our strengths and how we can mutually support one another, while the Chaplaincy Council have worked in their meetings with a new cycle of special foci – mission, finance, building, safeguarding, etc. – with members of the Council

coordinating those discussions, as a way of building up our leadership capacity.

November saw me, as Chaplain of the Royal British Legion, and a new choir, *Voces Musicae*, directed by John Crothers, leading the Ceremony of Remembrance in the Cathédrale Saint-Louis des Français at Les Invalides. Of course, peppering this time has been the work of maintaining and extending ecumenical friendships. The feast of Christ the King was celebrated with our new suffragan bishop, Andrew Norman, who confirmed nine candidates and baptized one adult. Without a pause we ran on to the Bazaar, which was once again a financial success, built on the hard work of innumerable volunteers from all the congregations that make up St George's.

The memory of the joy radiating from the face of Fr Stephen Razafindratsima on his ordination, reflected in the faces of his family, Holi and the children, Fr Nicolas and the congregation in the Cathedral, is for me a constant reminder of the power of the Resurrection of Christ in our lives.

This September our brother, Robin Baker, died, fortified by the sacraments of the Church, and the love and support, not just of Mary Ann his wife, but his many friends in Paris. Robin's gift for friendship, his hospitality and willingness to work for the common good are only a part of what he leaves us. What I will cherish, alongside his welcoming support to me as Chaplain, is the memory of his deep faith, his commitment to offering the best we can in worship and the twinkle in his eye as he urged me to celebrate the beauty of Catholic liturgy with the 'smells and bells' he loved.

One of Robin's passions was the unity of Christ's Church. Anglicanism is made up of interdependent and autonomous churches in fellowship, and that can cause tensions with our ecumenical partners. As Anglicans we know you have to take the experience of church life and worship represented here in Paris by both St George's and St Michael's together to paint a proper picture of what is the Church of England. Yet, that can be by turns confusing, exasperating and difficult for our ecumenical partners. At the end of the nineteenth century a small group of Anglicans and Roman Catholics met to try to move beyond the polemics of the sixteenth century. Their conversations revolved around the question of Anglican orders, because both sides believed that apostolic order is fundamental to the existence of the Church. The refusal of the Roman Catholic church in 1895 to allow that Anglicans enjoy valid orders did not stop the group from meeting and talking.

After the First World War, the unity of the churches in Europe in the face of unbelief took on a new urgency, and the group met, unofficially, quietly, creating between them

the form and style of ecumenical discussion to this day. The conversations came to an end in 1926 with the death of one of the prime interlocutors, Cardinal Mercier of Mechelen-Bruxelles. Since 2013, an international group of Anglican and Catholic friends, known as the Malines Conversations Group, has been meeting annually for discussion and fellowship. To honour the anniversary of the ending of the first conversations, it published *Sorores in Spes*¹. In the document the Group challenged the condemnation of Anglican orders by the 'theological method, historical understanding, church-political considerations and ecumenical approaches which were of their time.' They argue that the implied judgment, that the apostolic succession of the Church of England was lost at the Reformation, should be re-examined in the light of contemporary ecclesiological and liturgical understanding of the variety of means by which apostolic succession takes place within authentic traditions of Christian life and worship. The group has several layers, but at its core it is made up of Bishop David Hamid and another seven Anglicans; Catholic members include professors from Louvain, Manila, the Gregorian University in Rome and the Pontifical Athenaeum of Saint Anselm in Rome. Patrons of the group are the former Archbishop of Mechelen-Bruxelles, Cardinal Jozef de Kesel and the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams. Their latest publication², *Malines: Continuing the Conversation*, offers the hope and prayer that 'this celebration and exploration of the heritage of Malines [might] give us again the grace of being surprised by the gift of Catholic communion.'

Why does this matter to our Christian life, to the life of this Chaplaincy? Well, the recent declaration of John Henry Newman as a Doctor of the Roman Catholic Church, the meeting in December 2025 of Pope Leo and Patriarch Bartholomew at the site of the Council of Nicaea, together with the ongoing reflection on the ways, seventy years after the end of the Second Vatican Council, on how we are all challenged and changed by our fidelity to the call to be one body, one church, rejoicing in one baptism³, has led to small, incremental shifts in the way in which the historic churches understand their relationship to the 'faith once delivered to the saints'⁴. While it won't make a difference to the amount of effort we put into the Bazaar, the time the choir puts into rehearsing the music that undergirds our worship, the concentration of our new servers as they learn to disappear into the liturgy that the beauty of worship might shine more brightly, the joyful, controlled, 'sticking and pasting' of our Sunday School as they learn about what being friends with Jesus involves, or our Sunday lunches, it can renew our energy, inspire new joy and deepen our determination that, inspired with the same spirit or 'twinkle in the eye' that infused the discipleship of

¹ You can find this and much more online at <https://malinesconversation.org/>

² <https://spckpublishing.co.uk/malines-continuing-the-conversations-205>

³ 'As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one.' John 17:21-22

⁴ Jude 1.3-4

our brother Robin, we might live out our faith in the true and living God, the risen Christ.

So, with my prayers for a blessed Christmas and a peaceful 2026, this comes to you and those you love, with

Every blessing,

Fr Mark

OBITUARY – Robin Baker

Robin Baker, a frequent and appreciated contributor to this Newsletter, left us in August. We are pleased to be able to publish the sermon given at his Solemn Requiem on Thursday 4th September by Fr Martin Draper...

When Robin Baker arrived at St George's at the end of 1993, it was not by chance. He'd done his research and came with certain expectations. Internet was still in its infancy and there were few, if any websites, though he was soon to be among those here who strongly advised St George's to set one up. But our publicity was well organised. There had originally been regular, but expensive, adverts in *Church Times*, and placements first three times, then twice a year, continued throughout my time as Chaplain. It was a case of keeping the Chaplaincy in the minds of those who were in the know. And Robin was in the know. He had worshipped at All Saints, Margaret Street, in London and knew what he was looking for when he moved to Paris with his first wife Veronica and their daughter Julia in 1994. Karen already had an established life in the United Kingdom.

Not unexpectedly for those of us who know and love St George's, he found what he was looking for and settled into its life. I'm not surprised that the only particular request he made for this service was the hymn, *O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness*. A dignified liturgy with good music and, I hope, intelligent preaching are hallmarks of this church, but worship comes first. And I wasn't remotely surprised that he asked to become a server and, in due time, to preside over all the servers, not just by setting up a rota, but by regular practices and the teaching of new volunteers. One member of the congregation here, and another former member, have each told me how important this was for them. The former member has since done the same for a parish in England and said to me on the phone a couple of days ago that, "If I expected high standards, it was because I wanted them to be the standards Robin had taught me."

Robin came to Paris to work for BP as an expert in the field of petroleum lubricants, the marketing of which had already taken him all over the world. When BP closed their offices in Brussels and Paris, he took early retirement and worked as a consultant for the *Institut français du pétrole* until he was sixty.

Robin, as we all know, because he told us, had Type I diabetes, since his diagnosis in his early twenties. He knew he wanted a more stable life than was practicable in a

career which required long hours and considerable travelling, and firmly decided that he would stop work when he reached the age of sixty. If you know anyone with this type of diabetes, you will know that it almost defines them and affects every area of their life and the lives of their family. It requires meal times that cannot be varied, a particular diet, which the family is quasi-obliged to adopt, and sugar in the pocket of whoever might be travelling with the person who has the condition. So, while retirement would ease Robin's life, that would not necessarily have been the case for those who shared it.

Some of us will remember his sixtieth birthday and retirement party at the Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte in 1998, soon after which, Robin and Veronica returned to the United Kingdom.



The return to their home in Esher was central to their plan, and he surely hoped that it would be a return to something closer to normal family life so, naturally, he became an active member of his parish church. But it was not to be. Veronica left him within two years, and Robin was absolutely distraught, as many of us remember through our phone calls with him. He certainly had not seen it coming. Their divorce was pronounced in 2003, and he immediately returned to Paris.

It would, perhaps, be more accurate to say that he returned to St George's, because that's *why* he came back to Paris, to a church he loved and for the many friends he had made here.

After a short time in a rented apartment, he bought his lovely flat in the Boulevard Suchet in the 16th arrondissement.

He had a rich life outside St George's, enjoying Paris's cultural opportunities, and was a member of some British associations and organisations. As a long-time member of the Conservative Party, he set up the



Paris branch of Conservatives Abroad. Through his membership of PADFAS, he met Mary Ann in 2007, who shared many of his wide interests. Fr Matthew Harrison presided at their wedding in the American Cathedral, where Mary Ann worshipped, and a quartet of St George's singers provided the choir. Robin told Fr Matthew at the time that he felt so blessed that he had been given what he called 'a second chance.' Mary Ann very soon started to worship here, and St George's became the centre of their shared spiritual life. Yes, she knew he had diabetes, but she

cannot have known quite what she was taking on, 'in sickness and in health,' as they had promised one another at their wedding.

Those of you who know Mary Ann much better than I do will know how devotedly she cared for him throughout their life together, though she told me herself that she also received much from Robin, as well as giving him the care without which he could not have lived so long.

In the early years after his return, Robin was able to resume much of his life at St George's. He became a server again and was a member of the PCC. There was a period, I can't quite remember when – some time during Fr Andrew Bigg's time as Assistant, I think – when St George's had a small but significant youth group, and Robin spent an evening explaining what each of the vestments and ceremonial objects such as the thurible meant, taking them into the sacristy to show them. I was rather sceptical when Fr Mathew told me about it, wondering whether such things interested young people, but he replied that the group had been extremely interested and had thoroughly enjoyed it.

Eventually, serving had to stop because he was physically unable to do it, and later it became impossible for him even to get down the stairs. Fr Grant visited him frequently at home, taking the Blessed Sacrament with him, so that Robin could continue to receive Holy Communion.

A significant moment in Robin's life and, I suspect, in the lives of most people here, occurred in 2016, when the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. Founder member of the Paris branch of Conservatives Abroad he may have been, but the experience of his childhood during the Second World War had made him a convinced European. Like many Conservatives of his generation and like many others besides, he saw friendship and close relationships with neighbouring nations as the best hope for lasting peace and shared economic growth. He left the Party and very publicly tore up his membership card.

Robin will have recognised his European views as deeply rooted in the Christian faith as, indeed, did many of the founders of what ultimately became the European Union. Which brings me back to St George's and where I began.

The preacher at a funeral is always aware that he knew the person whose life we are now handing back to his divine Creator in a very particular context. For many of you here, that context will be different. It may have been through work or an association or leisure activity. For me, the context was St George's and being Robin's parish priest. But I hope, at least, that you can recognise something of the Robin you know through some of what I am saying. There are also two people here for whom the context is very particular indeed. Karen and Julia are the only ones for whom there is no *before* Robin, no *pre-Dad*. The rest of us had a life before him; they did not. So, I am very pleased to learn that you were able to visit him both earlier this year and also during the week that he died.

St George's has been at the heart of Robin's life for the best part of more than the last thirty years, and he has known four Chaplains and their assistants. To us he was, as St Luke describes St Barnabas, 'a good man' of deep faith in the loving God to whom we now commend him. As the Preface to this mass reminds us, that same loving God 'has given us the *hope* of a glorious resurrection; so that, although death comes to us all, yet we rejoice in the *promise* of eternal life; for to (his) faithful people life is changed, not taken away; and when our mortal flesh is laid aside, an everlasting dwelling place is made ready for us in heaven.'

May Our Lady and St George pray for him, and may the holy angels accompany him on the journey he now makes into Paradise, where his blessed soul may rest in peace. Amen.

OBITUARY – Harold Emmanuel Clency Payen

Clency (as he was known to all of us at St George's – and, indeed, at St Michael's too) had his funeral service at St Paul's Church, La Caverne, Vacoas, Mauritius, on 15th May. His sister, Christelle Payen, writes about the sort of man she knew him to be...

I knew Clency in the few years before he passed away to be a patient, reserved man who always had the time to visit my elderly parents in Mauritius and spend time with my brother, who is now tetraplegic because of MS, in a care home. Clency constantly reassured me that he was around to keep an eye on things and not to worry.

He was the youngest of the siblings and went to France in the 1980s after his mother's passing, where he had much help and support from his two sisters living in France, namely, Grace Valéry and Muriel Lamoureux. I believe he was much indebted to his sisters and their generosity throughout his life. My father, Georges Payen, was a bit of a father figure to Clency, as my granddad passed away when he was just a baby.

I think Clency was the type of person who knew that he needed mercy from our Lord Jesus. It must not have escaped anyone that he kept to himself, always at the back of the church. When talking to his church friends, I realised he had been involved in various charity works. He was himself very frugal in his way of life and never burdened anyone with his own problems. He might not have been sophisticated in his words, but he was a direct person and, I like to think, an honest person.

He loved travelling and exploring places.



I have no doubt that he considered the Lord Jesus as his only Redeemer and believed that whatever his past mistakes were, he would be saved by Our Lord.

At this time, I pray that he is now with his Lord and that there is peace and joy surrounding him.



OUR CHAPLAINCY RETREAT 2025

From October 17th to 19th, our Chaplaincy Retreat was held at the Abbaye de Jouarre in the village of the same name in Seine et Marne. Here, David Smith relives with us those days of reflection, incarnation and presence, along with our St George's folk, all of whom are indebted to the preparation and guidance of Frs Jeffrey and Grant...

Participants:

Fr Jeffrey John,
Fr Grant Holmes,
Richard Nottage,
Andrew Knowles,
Jill Whitman,
Alisdair Gould,
Janet Schofield,
Adrian Shaw,
Sylvie Shaw,
Anne-Marie
Bucquet, Helen
Orrin, Anne-
Marie Mba,
Margaret Baugier,
Sonia Taylor, Mary Ann Warrick, Carol Amouyel-Kent,
John Crothers, Christine Nyakana, Jane Saint-Sernin, David Smith, Alexandre Huillet-Raffi, Michael Chambers..



Opening Reflection

It has now been twenty-two years since I first came to St George's Church, and I have had the continuing joy of joining brothers and sisters on the annual, multifaceted Retreats that bring fresh insight and remind us of a heavenly reality in the plenitude of awakened spiritual senses.

I had not realised that Jouarre itself holds important historical ties with the royal monastery of Chelles, upon whose grounds our home was built. Alas, little remains of that ancient foundation, established by Queen Bathilde in the seventh century, and unlike Jouarre, no monastic community was re-established there after the Revolution. Yet one still feels that the intensity of Presence longs to return.

Let us briefly describe this link, for it has wider ramifications. In its earliest centuries, the abbey of Jouarre was, like Chelles, guided by an abbess and housed both monks and nuns within the same enclosure. This model of shared life under feminine spiritual leadership reveals something remarkable about early Christian understanding, a harmony of contemplation and service, of strength and tenderness, which perhaps still speaks to our time.

One of the nuns spoke to me with quiet joy about the recent election of a woman as Archbishop of Canterbury. It seemed to her, and to many of us, a sign that what was once lived here — the wisdom of feminine guidance in spiritual life — is finding its voice again in the wider Church.

The First Discourse – The Incarnation as Living Faith

Father Jeffrey opened the Retreat by reflecting on what the Incarnation means personally and theologically. He traced his own journey from the austerity of Nonconformist religion to the discovery of a faith that embraces the whole person — body, senses and spirit.

In his view, Christianity is above all an incarnational faith, God entering the physical world and affirming its goodness, continuing to meet us in the sacraments where divine grace becomes tangible. Through colour, sound and gesture, worship itself becomes an extension of the Incarnation, drawing us beyond time into the eternal presence of Christ.

The Cross, he reminded us, is the ultimate expression of this divine participation in human life and suffering, love choosing to share fully in what it redeems.

The Second Discourse – The Nativity as Sacred Narrative

In his second discourse, Father Jeffrey showed that the Gospel stories of the Nativity are not to be read as historical accounts but as inspired theology — *haggadah*, sacred narrative shaped by imagination to express truth. Far from diminishing faith, this interpretation restores the creative power of myth, where invention becomes revelation.

Listening to him, I recalled an earlier meditation from my own monastic life in Sussex: "The star shines over the place where the young child is." In that moment, the star was not in the heavens but within — a descent of light perceived in the stillness of meditation. Such illumination, unlike logical reasoning, reveals its truth silently, as grace rather than argument.

In that inner radiance, one perceives not merely symbol but reality: the star, the child and the witnessing heart form a single act of being. The light that descends is the Spirit; the child, divine awareness awakening within the heart, is the Son; and the silent consciousness that beholds is the Father. In such moments, myth becomes incarnation — the soul discovers itself as participation in the Trinity. The narrative ceases to be external history and becomes the story of our own becoming.

The Hymns and Carols

Later, Father Jeffrey offered a lighter but revealing presentation of well-loved carols. Among them, he spoke fondly of *Silent Night* and *In the Bleak Midwinter*. The first, for its serene universality — mother, child and peace in light — seemed to him the purest expression of the Incarnation's quiet miracle. The second, Christina Rossetti's poem of snow and simplicity, he valued for its vision of matter transfigured, "a stable place sufficed." Its closing line, "What can I give him... give my heart," expressed what he had called the "bodily response of faith" — love returned through presence.

By contrast, *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear* stands outside explicit faith, offering peace and goodwill without the name of Christ. Yet its melody remains haunting, showing how music can preserve spiritual resonance even when theology fades. This, Father Jeffrey noted, is both the strength and weakness of popular religion, beauty surviving where doctrine has thinned.

Finally, *O Little Town of Bethlehem* restored the theme of interior incarnation, "Where meek souls will receive Him, still the dear Christ enters in." That quiet birth within the heart mirrors what the meditation on the star had already suggested — the divine Child born continually in us.

The *New Year's Carol*, revived by Benjamin Britten, brought the retreat to a folkloric close. Its imagery of the West Door and East Door evoked the turning of time, the old year passing, the new opening toward light. A reminder that incarnation is cyclical, renewed through the rhythm of seasons and worship alike.

The Plainsong Offices

It struck me that few retreatants attended the plainsong offices, though this music, more than any other, seems to address the higher centres of consciousness. Its serene modality bypasses sentiment, refining emotion into silence. Wordsworth once suggested that emotion, once spent, allows us to "see into the life of things." So too with plainsong: feeling is not suppressed but transmuted, until what remains is pure attention — the soul's listening.

I was reminded of this transmutation of emotion when I thought of Father Slade, to whom I once read Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality* as he lay dying in a nursing home. When I finished, he said quietly, "You'll understand it one day." Perhaps I begin to understand it now. For when emotion is spent in faith and beauty, when the melody yields to silence, we glimpse that immortal life which plainsong and poetry alike awaken — not elsewhere, but within.

On Sunday morning, at *Lauds*, the sisters sang a hymn that embodied this same quiet awakening:

*Dans le désert s'avance un cri,
Préparez la route au Seigneur,
Aplanissez pour Dieu la voie,
Que tout ravin soit comblé,
Que toute montagne soit abaissée.*

("In the desert there advances a cry: Prepare the way of the Lord, Make straight the path for God, Let every valley be filled, And every mountain made low.")

The chant rose gently, almost like breath over still water. It spoke of purification not by moral striving but by inner levelling — the soul's uneven landscape made ready for light. The simplicity of its melodic line, unhurried and luminous, seemed to carry the very rhythm of dawn itself. As the hymn ended, silence resumed as naturally as inhalation after exhalation: the music had merely revealed what was already there — presence.

A Moment of Exclusion

One unexpected event cast a shadow over our stay. The local priest declined our Anglican group's participation in the Sunday Mass, contrary to the ecumenical permissions that normally allow Anglicans to receive communion where no Anglican service is available. The sisters themselves were welcoming, yet the decision was firm and, I later learnt, made without consultation. Father Jeffrey has since written to the Bishop of Meaux, expressing his concern. For some of us, this moment of exclusion sharpened the meaning of the Retreat: incarnation, though it unites, also reveals the wounds of separation still awaiting healing.

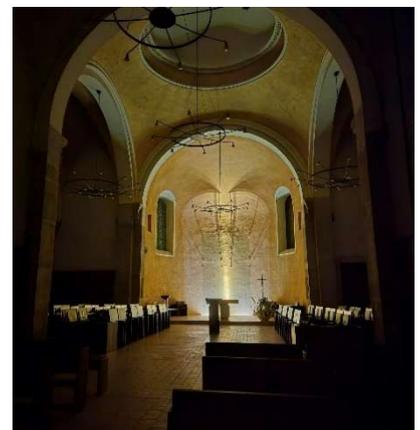
Closing Reflection

As the Retreat drew to its close, I was left with the sense that what we had shared was not simply reflection but participation. Each element — the discourses, the hymns, the silences, even the small trials of misunderstanding — formed part of a single incarnational lesson, that God is known not through abstraction but through presence.

The Incarnation, as Father Jeffrey reminded us, is not a doctrine confined to history but a rhythm still unfolding. It is sung in the tenderness of a mother's lullaby, in the courage of those who pray together despite difference, and in the daily gesture of faith that receives the world as sacred. In that light, even our exclusion from the Mass became strangely meaningful, a reminder that the body of Christ is not yet whole, but that longing itself is part of redemption.

When the sisters sang at *Lauds*, "Dans le désert s'avance un cri, préparez la route au Seigneur," I thought of how each Retreat is a way of clearing a small path within — not to find something new, but to make space for what has always been present.

So the Retreat ended as it began, with silence, with listening, with the quiet discovery that the star still shines



over the place where the young child is, within the heart made ready, in the stillness where faith becomes light.

NOUVELLES DE LA COMMUNAUTÉ MALGACHE

Le principal fait marquant de ces derniers mois, pour la communauté malgache, comme pour tout Saint-Georges, a été l'ordination diaconale de Stephen Razafindratsima, le 29 juin à Bruxelles, suivi de son accueil à Saint-Georges le dimanche 6 juillet. Une interview du révérend Stephen figure ci-dessous : il nous raconte son parcours et son nouveau ministère.

Sur un autre plan, des événements politiques importants ont eu lieu à Madagascar ces dernières semaines. Des manifestations populaires, sous l'égide de la « génération Z » (les jeunes) ont conduit à la chute du président Andry Rajoelina et son régime, et à l'arrivée au pouvoir du colonel Michaël Randrianirina et d'une nouvelle équipe. Madagascar est entré dans une nouvelle ère. A l'instar de tous les Malgaches, ceux de Saint-Georges ont suivi attentivement les événements et porté le pays en prière.

Interview des Révérends Stephen et Nicolas RAZAFINDRATSIMA

John CROTHERS (JC) : Stephen, tu viens d'être ordonné Diacre en la Cathédrale Holy Trinity à Bruxelles. Peux-tu nous raconter ton parcours ?

Revd Stephen RAZAFINDRATSIMA (RSR) : Moi et Holi mon épouse sommes arrivés à Paris en septembre 2002 pour les études. Il était évident de venir à l'Eglise Saint-Georges car il y avait déjà à l'époque une communauté malgache. Nous avons, tous les deux, été servants d'autel et membres de la chorale de la communauté anglophone du matin ainsi que celle de l'après-midi. En d'autres termes, en plus de mon éducation religieuse à Madagascar, Saint-Georges m'a beaucoup apporté pour répondre à cet appel à servir.

JC : Il me semble que tu étais parti à Bordeaux à un certain moment ?

RSR : L'appel au sacerdoce a été un long processus. La première fois que j'ai entendu l'appel, c'était lors de ma confirmation à Madagascar en 1994. Feu Mgr Rémi RABENIRINA m'avait demandé si je serais intéressé pour devenir prêtre anglican. Je lui avais répondu « pourquoi pas ? », mais que je voulais associer cette mission avec un autre travail. Quand j'avais fini ma thèse de doctorat en Géosciences à Paris en 2007, après une période difficile de recherche d'emploi, associée à la naissance prématurée de notre fille Grace, j'avais un travail qui ne me plaisait pas, pourtant il payait bien (rires). C'était une période difficile, pendant laquelle Notre Seigneur me parlait. J'ai beaucoup médité sur mon appel à servir et, comme à l'époque, je voulais travailler en tant qu'enseignant-chercheur à l'Université, j'ai candidaté pour être Attaché temporaire d'Enseignement et de Recherche. Et c'est comme ça que nous avons atterri à Bordeaux pendant un an, puis à Nantes pendant un an et demi, avant de revenir à Bordeaux (rires).

JC : Je ne savais pas que toute ta famille t'a suivi à Nantes pendant un an et demi également !

RSR : Oui, j'ai travaillé à l'Ecole des Mines de Nantes en tant que contractuel. C'était ce qu'il fallait faire pour essayer d'intégrer le monde académique. C'était en quelque sorte ma condition pour répondre à l'appel de Dieu. Le plus difficile à Nantes c'était qu'il n'y avait pas d'église anglicane. Nous avons fréquenté un moment des églises protestantes. Bien qu'on trouve le Seigneur partout, ce qui se rapprochait le mieux de ma soif, c'était en la cathédrale catholique de Nantes. D'ailleurs on a chanté avec la chorale de cette cathédrale, c'était bien. Cette difficulté à trouver un lieu de culte m'a aidé à répondre à l'appel à servir, car je sais ce que c'est d'avoir un besoin spirituel. Je me rappelle avoir eu des conversations téléphoniques à ce sujet avec Nicolas, mon frère, qui était bien avancé dans le processus pour devenir prêtre à cette époque.

JC : Vous êtes donc revenus à Bordeaux ?

RSR : Oui, en l'espace de quatre ans, j'avais changé trois fois de contrat de travail avec autant d'établissements académiques. J'avoue que j'étais bien motivé et ma famille m'a beaucoup aidé dans mon parcours. On avait même pensé à partir à Belfast, mais finalement on est resté en France. C'étaient des périodes difficiles, mais pendant lesquelles le Seigneur m'a parlé. J'avais bien accepté dans mon cœur de répondre à l'appel de Dieu pour servir, mais sous conditions (rires). Je voulais aussi réussir dans le domaine académique.

JC : Et l'appel justement dans tout cela... ?

RSR : A notre retour à Bordeaux, il y avait une église anglicane, quoiqu'un peu différente de l'église Saint-Georges. C'est une église beaucoup plus dans la tradition évangélique. Il y avait des moments où on n'avait qu'une prière du matin ou un service de la parole, c'est à dire qu'il n'y avait pas d'Eucharistie. J'avoue que ce sacrement me manquait. Mais Holi aimait bien les chansons évangéliques. Je pense que pour ma part cette expérience est enrichissante. De la même façon que nous avons été éduqués, c'était à notre tour d'emmener nos enfants à l'église tous les dimanches. Nous avons aussi mis en place une communauté malgache à Bordeaux, associée à celle de Toulouse, avec l'aide du prêtre en charge à Bordeaux à l'époque ainsi que son épouse. A vrai dire, il y a beaucoup d'anglicans malgaches en France, mais comme la langue anglaise est parfois une difficulté, les gens vont chez les protestants ou chez les catholiques. C'est encore un point de plus dans l'appel au sacerdoce, qui était toujours présent. Mais il fallait que j'en parle à Holi mon épouse d'abord (rires).

JC : Peux-tu nous en dire plus ?

RSR : Bien sûr (rires). J'ai dit à Holi que je voulais répondre à l'appel de Dieu pour servir, je lui ai dit que je voulais être prêtre. Sa réponse était catégorique, « Non chéri, ce n'est pas pour toi ni pour nous ». Je ne pouvais pas imposer cela à ma famille, car je pense que c'est une mission commune, et la famille doit accompagner et soutenir. Mais le Seigneur travaillait aussi en Holi. Du fait qu'il n'y a jamais eu de prêtres permanents à Bordeaux et que les prêtres en charge temporaires se succédaient, on

avait souvent des cérémonies d'adieu assez émouvantes (rires). Holi a fini par me dire : « Ecoute chéri, je n'en peux plus de pleurer tout le temps, je pense vraiment que le Seigneur a besoin de serviteurs car son peuple en a besoin ; si c'est ton appel, alors vas-y ». Je n'attendais que cette phrase pour me déplacer au presbytère afin de parler au prêtre de Bordeaux à l'époque ainsi qu'à son épouse. Un gros soulagement, je dois dire ! C'était en 2016 : mon processus de discernement avec l'Eglise d'Angleterre venait de commencer.

JC : Ce processus de discernement a donc commencé il y a bien longtemps ?

RSR : Oui, j'ai d'abord assisté au week-end des « candidats » (« Enquirers' Weekend ») à Londres. J'ai rencontré le Père William GULLIFORD, le directeur des ordinands de notre diocèse. Entre-temps, je me rappelle aussi avoir parlé avec Sonia TAYLOR, qui était conseillère à la vocation dans le diocèse. Mais le processus peut durer longtemps, j'avais besoin de mûrir. Mon processus de discernement se poursuivait alors que nous avons décidé de revenir à Paris fin 2018.

JC : Pour quelle raison êtes-vous revenus à Paris ?

RSR : Holi avait réussi un concours dans la fonction publique et a eu sa première affectation en région parisienne. A l'époque, j'étais contractuel de l'Université de Bordeaux, j'étais en plus sur un projet intéressant d'utilisation de méthodes physiques pour ausculter les structures en béton. Nous ne voulions pas nous séparer à nouveau. Il y avait déjà une année ou Holi travaillait à Paris et faisait le va-et-vient entre Bordeaux et Paris. Elle ne revenait qu'à chaque fin de semaine et je m'occupais de nos trois enfants tout en travaillant à la fac. Du coup, j'ai demandé à mes collègues de Bordeaux si je pouvais continuer à travailler à distance avec eux. Le télétravail commençait à se diffuser à l'époque. C'est comme cela que nous sommes revenus à Paris. Le Père Mark venait d'arriver et c'est avec lui que j'ai repris mon processus de discernement.

JC : Les paroissiens de Saint-Georges étaient-ils contents de vous retrouver pour le service ?

RSR : Oui, on a repris la chorale et les services d'autel à la messe de 10h30. La communauté de 16h30 était aussi ravie. Je me suis à nouveau occupé de la chorale, Holi chante comme d'habitude. J'étais toujours dans mon processus de discernement, je voulais toujours répondre à l'appel au sacerdoce mais je m'entêtais aussi à vouloir devenir enseignant-chercheur, en même temps en pensant que c'était ce que Dieu voulait aussi.

JC : Et le processus de discernement a abouti à ce que tu te formes en théologie ?

RSR : Oui, je continuais à discerner quand le Covid19 nous a tous frappés de plein fouet. Ce n'était pas encore le confinement. Le 18 octobre 2020, à la messe, j'avais senti la présence de Dieu en chantant à la chorale. A ce moment, j'avais accepté sans condition l'appel au sacerdoce, c'est-à-dire que je renonçais au monde académique, si c'est ce que

Dieu voulait. Un peu plus tard, j'ai fini par attraper la forme grave du Covid avec le « variant anglais ». J'étais cloué au lit pendant quinze jours, avec quelques problèmes respiratoires. A la même période, dans la communauté malgache, on commençait à avoir des services en ligne, par Zoom. On mettait en place des chants préenregistrés, en harmonie quatre voix, et cela permettait à la communauté de prier ensemble, même si on ne pouvait pas recevoir la communion. J'avais repris contact avec Père William GULLIFORD à qui j'avais soumis mon dossier de candidature. En même temps, j'avais réussi deux concours de la fonction publique en tant qu'informaticien, c'était une bénédiction car la précarité était finie. Ma vocation a été testée de différentes manières et j'ai été recommandé pour suivre une formation théologique pour devenir un ministre ordonné de l'Eglise d'Angleterre.

JC : Combien d'années a duré la formation théologique ?

RSR : Trois années d'études, avec des allers-retours entre Paris et Londres, des cours en ligne hebdomadaires, une école d'été, beaucoup de devoirs (rires). Je remercie toutes les personnes qui m'ont porté dans leurs prières pendant ces premières périodes de formation. En effet, la formation dans l'Eglise d'Angleterre continue avec surtout un côté pratique. C'est pour cela que vous me voyez sous la supervision du Père Mark afin de bien doser la quantité de vin à mettre dans le calice lors de l'Eucharistie par exemple. Une fois, j'avais mis une quantité telle que le Père Mark m'a dit, à la fin de la messe : « C'est normalement la quantité qu'on met à Noël quand l'Eglise est pleine » (rires). Le clergé a dû terminer le vin consacré !

JC : Ta formation n'est pas donc pas encore tout à fait finie ?

RSR : Non. Après mon ordination diaconale le 29 juin 2025, je suis devenu vicaire assistant à Saint-Georges [ndlr : l'anglais « curate » est traduit « vicaire » en français, tandis que « vicar » est traduit « curé »], position que j'occuperai en principe pendant trois ans. Nous avons une semaine de regroupement en Angleterre au mois de novembre 2025, avec les autres vicaires, et puis une autre semaine en mai 2026, ceci pendant trois ans. Si Dieu le veut, je serai ordonné prêtre l'année prochaine à la fête de Saint Pierre (« Petertide »). Il paraît que ce sera à Saint-Georges, youpi (rires) !

JC : Tu es donc diacre jusqu'en juillet 2026 ?

RSR : Oui, j'ai commencé à servir la communauté, avec des visites pastorales des malades. J'ai prié avec certaines personnes avec différents besoins. Je prêche une fois par mois, je suis à la fois avec la communauté anglophone du matin mais également avec la communauté malgache de l'après-midi.

JC : Merci Stephen. Père Nicolas, comment se présentent les prochains mois ?

Revd Nicolas RAZAFINDRATSIMA (NR) : C'est un privilège d'avoir une équipe de clercs étoffée comme aujourd'hui. Stephen et moi pouvons tous les deux prêcher

en malgache et en français, et nous nous partageons les tâches à tour de rôle aux messes de 16h30 et de 18h, en collaboration avec les pères Mark et Jeffrey. Bien sûr, tout cela nécessite une organisation précise pour qu'on ne se marche pas sur les pieds, mais la présence du Révérend Stephen est avant tout une nouvelle opportunité de mieux servir nos communautés.

JC : Deux frères, ministres ordonnés dans une même église, c'est exceptionnel !

NR : En effet, ce n'est pas courant. Des ministres ordonnés issus d'une même fratrie, c'est assez fréquent. Ce qui est exceptionnel, c'est qu'on serve dans la même paroisse. Pour moi, Stephen sera à la fois un collègue, un frère en Christ et un frère de sang. Et c'est une fierté pour Saint-Georges d'avoir « sorti » ainsi deux ministres ordonnés en moins de dix ans d'écart, puisque j'ai été, pour ma part, ordonné diacre en juin 2016. Et d'autres encore vont suivre, par la grâce de Dieu.

JC : Merci infiniment à tous les deux, et bon courage pour les mois à venir !

A WELL-DESERVED DECORATION!

The decoration of the Ordre national du Mérite recognises distinguished merit rendered to the French Nation. Our Director of Music, Dr Peter Hicks, received his insignia of Chevalier dans l'Ordre national du Mérite at a ceremony in the prestigious



Jockey Club, Paris, last May. Here are a few extracts from the speech outlining Peter's career on the occasion, which was attended, not only by our clergy, but by the French diplomat, Ambassador Jean Mendelson and Victor André Masséna, Prince d'Essling, Duc de Rivoli...

Jean, je tiens tout d'abord à te remercier chaleureusement pour tes paroles émouvantes et pour l'insigne de l'Ordre national du Mérite que tu viens de me remettre. Prince, je vous remercie également de vos paroles et votre amitié.

Permettez-moi également d'adresser mes salutations aux représentants des autorités et à Madame l'ambassadeur, chère Mireille Musso, Messieurs les révérends pères, Mark Osborne, Jeffrey John et Grant Holmes, Monsieur le Directeur général de la Fondation Napoléon, cher Thierry Lentz, Monsieur le Directeur scientifique de la même institution, cher Pierre Branda, chers collègues, chers membres de ma famille, chers amis.

C'est avec une émotion particulière que je prends la parole aujourd'hui, honoré de cette reconnaissance qui revêt un sens tout particulier. Recevoir la médaille de l'Ordre national du Mérite est un privilège inestimable, que je lie étroitement avec ma nationalité française, et je suis

reconnaissant de pouvoir partager cet instant significatif avec vous.

Merci à chacun de vous d'être à mes côtés en cette occasion mémorable.

C'est en France que j'ai commencé une carrière intellectuelle, c'est là où je me suis marié avec la remarquable, et très patiente, Elisabetta Da Prati, c'est là où sont nés mes formidables enfants, Jennifer, Alessandro et Lucy, c'est là que j'ai été « l'agent gestionnaire » (et non pas propriétaire) de quatre chats et un chien : Bod, Napoléon et Joséphine (je ne blague pas), Hugo et Berlioz...

Mais c'est évidemment là où j'ai commencé le long chemin de ma « Napoléonification » et ma « Francification ». Je suis fier et reconnaissant d'avoir reçu la nationalité française le 5 mai 2021. Cela dit, la France était en moi bien avant. Ma très regrettée mère, Jennifer Marguerite née Eames, était descendante de Huguenots, et mon très regretté père, Richard Barry Hicks, dont le père et pasteur, William Barry Hicks, a failli mourir aux côtés des Français en 1917, a étudié le français à la faculté de Durham, avant de devenir lui-aussi pasteur (nous Anglo-catholiques dirions « prêtres », mais je ne veux pas polémiquer...).

Ainsi, si la France se trouvait à mes trousses, où était le « petit caporal » ? Pas si loin que ça. Quoique mon enfance était remplie de rugby et de cricket, de piano et de hautbois (avec Catherine Storrie, ici présente), de chœur et puis d'orgue d'église, du latin et puis du grec, néanmoins, bien avant toute idée napoléonienne chez moi, nous avons baptisé nos poissons rouges « Napoléon et Wellington ». Je regarde ici fixement mon frère David (Parisien comme moi) et ma sœur Sarah (venue de Londres avec sa famille), car je n'étais pas le seul coupable. Et, presque à mon insu, j'ai choisi (j'avais neuf ans) comme un de mes premiers livres d'histoire, « La bataille de Traf... » (Je ne vais pas gâcher la fête en le nommant !) La France était toujours là...

En revanche, avant d'arriver à Napoléon, je passais beaucoup de temps dans l'antiquité romaine et grecque, surtout avec les manuscrits. Ma licence à University College Londres et mon doctorat à St John's Cambridge me portaient insensiblement vers l'Héxagone – une semaine en 1988 à Paris à l'ancienne Bibliothèque Nationale de la rue de Richelieu et résidence à la Cité universitaire, où j'ai découvert mon chez-soi spirituel, l'église Saint-Georges. Enfin, le hasard total me porte à Montmartre en 1991 (après deux ans passés à Milan). Désormais ma « francitude » s'intensifie !

Et pendant le bicentenaire de la Première Campagne d'Italie, le destin frappe. Ma belle-sœur, Jean née King, me communique que le second mari de son employeur a un fils qui gère une start-up, Babel@Stal, qui justement héberge napoleon.org, et qui cherche un web-éditeur anglophone. J'envoie un curriculum. Six mois plus tard ils me convoquent. Dans l'entretemps, pris dans mes publications avec Yale University Press et ma carrière d'artiste lyrique, j'avais oublié qui ils étaient ! Je pointe pour le rdv avec Alessandro dans la poussette (nous n'avions pas de

garderie). Très gentiment, Céline de Babel l'a gardé le temps de l'entretien. Les trois femmes qui m'interviewaient voyaient en moi un 'new man'.

Ainsi, né sous X, je commençais là une carrière sous « N ». Irène Delage, à l'époque bibliothécaire et documentaliste de la Fondation chez le Souvenir Napoléonien, a supervisé mes premiers pas vers une obsession de vie. Nous sommes restés un binôme napoléonien pendant bientôt trente ans.

En effet, je ressens une grande fierté d'être appelé à m'intégrer à une structure qui sert d'exemple, non seulement en France, mais qui rayonne également à l'international. Les vingt ans que j'ai passés à animer napoleon.org, vingt ans de bicentennaires, vingt ans de « public history » m'ont donné une formation hors pair et une passion pérenne pour notre mission de soutenir et encourager la recherche et l'intérêt pour Napoléon I et Napoléon III.

Si Béatrice de Durfort m'invita à joindre directement la Fondation Napoléon en 2000, ce fut Thierry Lentz qui était mon directeur.

Thierry, tu m'as supporté (dans tous les sens du terme), tu m'as encouragé, m'as soutenu dans tout, notamment dans mes publications – les articles sur le Sacre (2004) et Hudson Lowe (2005), mes articles présentés au Consortium et ensuite publiés dans *Napoleonica la Revue* (et récemment aussi *Napoleonica the Journal*), *Clisson et Eugénie* (avec Emilie Barthet) (2007), les actes du colloque de Madrid (2010), *Le mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* (2017 et 2018), le *Cambridge History of the Napoleonic Wars* volume 3, (2022), et bientôt (désolé-issime pour le retard) les témoins anglais à Sainte-Hélène. Tu as été un encouragement et un modèle, tu as facilité mes études et mes exécutions de musique « napoléonienne » (parfois avec « Musicanti », dont je salue la présidente, Bénédicte de Charnace et aussi la soliste Véronique Chevallier) – je pense ici aux moments inoubliables que nous avons partagés de 2004 (à la Madeleine), le Sacre, et de 2010 (le Mariage), 2017 (les Triomphes) et 2021 (les deux cents ans de sa mort), tous aux Invalides.

Le Prince d'Essling, président de notre remarquable et formidable institution, sans doute unique au monde, a été partout un soutien et un supporteur. Infatigable compagnon aux expositions aux quatre coins du monde (Allemagne, Italie, Australie etc.) et aux Etats-Unis pour le Consortium annuel sur l'époque des révolutions. Le monde napoléonien (que ce soit en Russie, Italie, Pologne, Allemagne/Autriche, en Espagne/au Mexique, au Portugal/Brésil, au Canada/en Chine) a besoin de nous, de notre savoir-faire, de notre équilibre napoléonien. Il m'a soutenu et encouragé.

Mais surtout j'étais à vos côtés dans un moment très marquant, la signature de création de notre partenariat avec « Saint Helena Napoleonic Heritage » en 2015. Ce qui m'a permis quatre ans plus tard de passer trois semaines sur l'île pour une célébration de musiques française et anglaise de l'époque napoléonienne. Dans ce contexte, je remercie en passant Michel Dancoisne Martineau pour son

amitié et collaboration dans toutes mes recherches dans le dédale de Longwood et aux alentours.

C'était pendant cette visite que j'ai rencontré et noué amitié avec Jean Mendelson. Nous nous sommes connus à bord du RMS St Helena en voyage vers l'île de Sainte-Hélène en 2015. Notre amitié s'est créée autour d'une discussion de la 'liberté constitutionnelle' pour laquelle, inexplicablement (nous étions tous les deux d'accord) le Royaume-Uni luttait contre la France impériale. Cette amitié s'est étendue autour de notre intérêt pour le premier évangéliste de Sainte-Hélène, Barry O'Meara.

Pour terminer donc, je voudrais remercier tous mes collègues et amis pour tout leur soutien et toute leur patience !

Vive la France, vive la République, et, bien entendu, vive l'Empereur !

A MUSICAL CELEBRATION

In early October of this year, Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, was the scene of the annual Celebration Day of the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM). At this event, a number of honorary awards were presented to thank those who have made a significant contribution to the advancement of church music...

Congratulations go our Editor and Chaplaincy Council member, John Crothers, who was awarded an Associateship of the RSCM for his work over many years in the cause of the music of the Church.

In addition to his career as a modern linguist, John has found time to contribute much, in terms of time and effort, to what he describes as 'a passion'. Since the late 1980s, he has served on RSCM Committees and has been Chair of both RSCM Ireland and RSCM France – the latter for the whole of its existence.



While in Ireland, he founded and directed the RSCM Ireland Singers and has done the same for the equivalent in France. The latter have led the Royal British Legion's annual Service of Remembrance in Paris, the music for which Service John has planned and directed for many years.

For most of the present century John has also been a member of the Executive Committee of the Hymn Society of Great Britain and Ireland, working alongside internationally known hymn writers and composers.

At present he acts as lead proof-reader for the English Music Festival, continues to play the organ for church services when requested, composes music for the Church and directs the Paris-based choir, *Voces Musicae*. He regularly publishes articles on church music in scholarly reviews and has lectured on hymnology in locations including London and Washington, DC. His first book, *Echoes of a Distant Music*, was published in late 2019 and received glowing reviews in national music magazines. He is currently researching the life and work of the renowned hymnwriter, Timothy Dudley Smith.

OUR SPECIAL LINK WITH SIR RICHARD – AND LADY – WALLACE

A unique naming ceremony with a link to St George's took place in Paris during the summer. Barbara Lambesis, Secretary of the Society of the Wallace Fountains (a group which exists to celebrate the heritage of Sir Richard Wallace), explains...

On July 7, 2025, dignitaries from the City of Paris and British Embassy, as well as friends of the Wallace Fountains and members from organisations with historical links to Richard Wallace, gathered to inaugurate Place Lady Wallace. This public square is in front of the original entrance to the *Domaine de Bagatelle* in the Bois de Boulogne, where Sir Richard and Lady Wallace lived when they were in Paris. They were the last private owners of the estate, which was purchased by the city in 1905. The square now pays tribute to the wife of Sir Richard Wallace, Julie Amélie Charlotte Castelnau, and recognizes her cultural and humanitarian contributions to the people of France and the United Kingdom. The dedication ceremony was followed by a champagne reception at the *Château de Bagatelle*.



Sir Richard and Lady Wallace were prominent figures in the history of Saint George's Church. In 1884, land was purchased at rue Auguste-Vacquerie (then rue des Bassins) for the location for a new Anglican church in Paris. The congregation struggled to find funds to pay the debt on the land and build an adequate church to meet their needs.

At the instigation of longtime friends, Richard Wallace became personally involved with the planning for the new church. He chaired many of the committee meetings and was the driving force behind its design. He covered most of

the costs for construction and he gave a stipend to provide for a permanent Chaplain.

Julie Amélie Charlotte Castelnau came from a humble, French working-class background. She was the mistress of Richard Wallace for years until they finally married in February 1871, when their illegitimate son was thirty years old. Wallace then legally recognized his son George, who took the name Edmond Richard Wallace.

Julie Castelnau became Lady Wallace in August 1871, when Richard Wallace was made a Baronet by Queen Victoria in recognition of his extraordinary contributions to the welfare of British nationals in France during the Franco-Prussian War and the Siege of Paris. Her sudden elevated status among the privileged élite in Britain late in life must have been difficult. By choice, she remained in the shadow of her illustrious husband but quietly performed many acts of charity and kindness on her own before and after the death of Sir Richard Wallace in 1890.

As a member of St. George's Church, Lady Wallace was a regular contributor. Upon her death, she left a substantial endowment to the church in her will.



SOLID AS A ROCK

Published last June, this leader article from the 'Church Times' is still valid, reminding us, as it does, of the joy and responsibility experienced by those of our number who give themselves to serve the Church of God and of our call to support them in every way we can. In particular, we think of Anastasia Riabchuk, who, God willing, graduates from St John's College, Oxford, in 2026...



It is Petertide, which means that this weekend most dioceses are holding their ordination services. As always, this represents a significant milestone in what is frequently a long and arduous path. Behind the smiling face of every candidate lies a unique story of faith explored and vocation tested. Just as importantly, there may be a

story of significant support and sacrifice on the part of a candidate's family who have walked alongside an ordinand in the years and months leading up to this moment.

Ordinations can – should be – occasions of great joy and celebration, as well as appropriate solemnity. Yet, it is hard to imagine any candidate approaching the altar without a degree of trepidation. Certainty in one's calling and the sense of accomplishment of having come this far is unlikely to dispel all anxiety. No amount of training and study can entirely prepare someone for the realities of parish

ministry, and there will doubtless be moments of uncertainty and inadequacy. Added to these entirely normal qualms is the sense right now that we are living through turbulent, dangerous, times. The Church is under strain: the Covid effect on numbers of worshippers, the acute stress on finances, a shortage of clergy, the responsibility of maintaining ancient buildings, and the never-ending arguments about Living in Love and Faith can all be dispiriting.



And, in our wider society, there is the very real sense that Christian values have been cast aside in favour of secular arguments. [...]

The new legislation on abortion and the passing of the assisted-dying Bill in the House of Commons have, for many, felt like a renunciation of once universal Christian convictions. And then there is the crescendo of war in the Middle East, and, with it, fears that there may be worse still to come. The planet is in peril, and the news just last week suggested that the Earth is likely to breach the 1.5°C warming limit in as little as three years, based on the current levels of carbon-dioxide emissions. It would be easy to despair.

Yet, this is, surely, part of the point. The candidates called to serve are — as ever — called to serve a broken world. Across the centuries, ordinary people have shown extraordinary dedication in their answering of God’s call. The Church can at least offer the long view, simultaneously drawing on our history and tradition and looking forward towards eternity in these challenging times. We can offer stability, comfort and hope. We can follow in the footsteps St Peter, that most human of the apostle-martyrs. Though as flawed as any of us, he was the solid rock on which the Church was built.

HERBERT’S ADVENT ‘WREATH’

Richard Harries celebrates the Advent artistry of George Herbert



Advent wreath in St Peter’s Cathedral, Osnabrück, Lower Saxony

*A wreathed garland of deserved praise,
Of praise deserved, unto thee I give,
I give to thee, who knowest all my ways,
My crooked winding ways, wherein I live,
Wherein I die, not live: for life is straight,
Straight as a line, and ever tends to thee,
To thee, who art more far above deceit,
Then deceit seems above simplicity.
Give me simplicity, that I may live,
So live and like, that I may know thy ways,
Know them and practise them: then shall I give
For this poor wreath, give thee a crown of praise.*

Wreaths have been made in Europe since the time of the Etruscans. In our own time, people often associate them with death, but their main significance in the past was as a sign of victory, as in ancient Greece where, made of olive leaves, a wreath would be put on the head of the victor in the Olympic Games. Sometimes, the association with death and the sign of victory are combined, both in the ancient world and now, as in the Remembrance Sunday ceremony.

This beautiful and highly crafted poem itself takes the form of a wreath, as will be explored later. The poem is about praise, deserved praise, made even by someone whose ways are “crooked” and “winding”. A crooked and winding life is one that leads to death. Here, death means not just physical death, but death in the sense of being cut off from God. In the Hebrew scriptures, the people are given the choice of life or death - true life, that is, life in union with God. So in this poem in line six we have the alternative to death, which is a life that is

*Straight as a line,
and ever tends to thee.*

The winding life is characterised by deceit and self-deception; for we are reluctant to properly know ourselves. This is in sharp contrast to the honest self-knowledge and simplicity of the truly good life. Here we have the line, “Give me simplicity, that I may live”, discussed in relation to an earlier poem. So the poet ends by asking that he might live like that, both knowing and practising the way of God. If that happens, then he will “For this poor wreath, give thee a crown of praise”.

The point here is that the wreath is made by threading a branch in and out, which is the best we can do. But if we live it as true as we can it will be not just a garland to hang round the neck, which is such a frequent and lovely custom in India when someone is welcomed, but a chaplet that goes on the head, like the crown of thorns, but in this case “a crown of praise”.

If we look back at the poem, we see it takes the form of a winding wreath, the last word of each line being repeated near the beginning of the next. Then, again the last word of each of the first four lines is repeated in the last four lines of the poem but in reverse order so that the “deserved praise” of the first line comes to a climax in “a crown of praise” in the last line. The whole poem, like our lives, is an interlacing, but with the possibility of making a crown at the

end. It is Herbert's poetic mastery at its highest, without losing the essential simplicity of his theme, which is praise. An extra musicality is given to the poem by the repeated use of the words "give" and "live".

Herbert is above all a poet of praise. In a cynical age, praise does not come easily. There is, as W. B. Yeats put it in "The Seven Sages":

*A levelling, rancorous, levelling sort of mind
That never looked out of the eye of a saint
Or a drunkard's eye.*

Praise begins in recognising something good, then appreciating and admiring it. It takes us out of ourselves as we focus on what is worthwhile in itself. Sometimes, the good is so good we are astonished and lost for words. For those keen on tennis, it happened when Roger Federer was at his peak. It felt a privilege to have lived at a time when he played. Other people will be able to draw examples from elsewhere: perhaps ballet or football, music or gymnastics.

The main purpose of having minds like ours is to discover the things that are of real value, setting aside all shams, shows and stunts to know what will last — the kind of qualities we saw in the late Queen Elizabeth II, for example, which the country as a whole, even republicans, were able to recognise and praise.

Suppose we come to recognise that there is a reality that is good, all good, supreme good, our true and everlasting good. Then there would be praise indeed. Herbert recognised this reality, which is why he was a poet of praise who wanted to sing "My God and King" all his days. Christopher Smart, who wrote a famous poem about his cat praising God, also wrote, in 1776, in his long praise poem "A Song to David":

*Praise above all — for praise prevails;
Heap up the measure, load the scales,
And good to goodness add:
The gen'rous soul her saviour aids,
But peevish obloquy degrades;
The Lord is great and glad.*

The Rt Revd Lord Harries of Pentregarth is a former Bishop of Oxford. This is an edited extract from his book Wounded I Sing: From Advent to Christmas with George Herbert, published by SPCK Publishing at £10.99 (Church Times Bookshop £8.79); 978-0-281-08942-0.

THE FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS TELL OF GOD'S LOVING PURPOSE

Moving and memorable, the words inspire a new poem by priest-poet Malcolm Guite... (Our thanks to the Church Times for permission to reproduce this article.)

The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, together with its many successors and variations, is one of the great liturgical innovations of the modern era. Yet it is not so much an innovation as a recovery: a recovery of a lost way of

reading the Bible, an ancient way of telling the salvation story, which is also and always our story.

The service in its present form goes back not just to the service on Christmas Eve of 1918 in the chapel of King's College, Cambridge, put together by Eric Milner-White and first broadcast by the BBC in 1928, but to the very first Lessons and Carols, devised by E. W. Benson, the Bishop of Truro, and celebrated on Christmas Eve 1880 in the great wooden shed with which they made do before the present cathedral was built. Benson's son has described how his father "arranged from ancient sources a little service for Christmas Eve — nine carols and nine tiny lessons, which were read by various officers of the Church, beginning with a chorister, and ending, through the different grades, with the Bishop".

The genius of that first liturgy of lessons and carols was that the readings reached back to Genesis instead of beginning with the Gospels, so that they set out the over-arching narrative of scripture as a whole. Benson was alive to the way in which the Gospels re-read and reimagine the Old Testament so coherently and helpfully — a way of reading scripture which was natural to patristic and medieval readers, but was lost and overwritten — one might say, scribbled over — by all the speculations and atomising analysis of 19th-century form and historical criticism, dissolving the imaginative unity of scripture into a series of detached fragments and urtexts.

Though he was not the first to devise such a service, special credit must go to Milner-White for the brilliant bidding prayer that he placed at the beginning of the service at King's, especially in the second paragraph, where he says: "Let us read and mark in Holy Scripture the tale of the loving purposes of God from the first days of our disobedience unto the glorious Redemption brought us by this Holy Child. . ."

With the phrase "read and mark", he alludes to the familiar and comforting words of the old collect that we should "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" God's word in the scriptures; but his addition to that of his own phrase "the tale of the loving purposes of God" is pure genius. Suddenly, we are taken out of the classroom and into the circle round the fireside telling tales, leaning in, finding ourselves in the story. The primal tale of the first Adam through whom everything went wrong suddenly comes into focus and makes sense of the tale of how the second Adam came to be born to set things right. At long last, we are reading with the grain of the scriptures, and not against it.

A couple of years ago, I was asked to write a poem to go with a variation of the Lessons and Carols service being celebrated in New York. It gave me a chance, in my own way, to follow with joy the narrative threads that lead from the Garden of Eden not only to the manger at Bethlehem but to Gethsemane, Golgotha, and, at last, to the Easter Garden. I'm glad to publish "A Tale of Two Gardens" here, and to share it this Christmas with readers.

A Tale of Two Gardens

God gave us all a garden once
And walked with us at eve
That we might know him face to face
With no need to believe.

But we denied and hid from him,
Concealing our own shame.
Yet he still came to look for us
And call us each by name.

He found us where we hid from him.
He clothed us in his grace.
But still we turned our backs on him
And would not see his face.

So now he comes to us again
Not as a Lord most high,
But weak and helpless as we are
That we might hear him cry.

And he who clothed us in our need
Lies naked in the straw
That we might wrap him in our rags
Whom once we fled in awe.

The strongest comes in weakness now,
A stranger to our door.
The king forsakes his palaces
And dwells amongst the poor.

And where we hurt, he hurts with us
And when we weep, he cries.
He knows the heart of all our hurts
The inside of our sighs.

He does not look down from above
But gazes up at us
That we might take him in our arms
Who always cradles us.

And if we welcome him again
With open hands and heart,
He'll plant his garden deep in us,
The end from which we start.

And in that garden, there's a tomb
Whose stone is rolled away,
Where we and all we've ever loved
Were lowered in the clay.

But lo! the tomb is empty now
And, clothed in living light,
His ransomed people walk with One
Who came on Christmas night.

So come, Lord Jesus, find in me
The child you came to save.
Stoop tenderly with wounded hands
And lift me from my grave.

Be with us all, Emmanuel,
And keep us close and true.
Be with us till that Kingdom comes
Where we will be with you.

THEOLOGY MATTERS: WHEN LESS IS MUSICALLY MORE

The writer Andrew Davison celebrates the depth and variety of hymn tunes...

Robert Schumann's autograph of a chorale, probably written in Eendenich, in June 1856 (source: Robert Schumann House, Zwickau)



Wiki Commons

When I think about the sorts of music that have moved me to tears, two kinds stand out. One is the grand orchestral piece, played by a great many musicians, perhaps alongside a large choir. The other lies at the opposite end of the spectrum, in the simplest hymn tune, with perhaps only four people singing. In that way, I remember being stopped in my tracks by J. S. Bach's Christmas chorale "*Uns ist ein Kindlein heut' geboren*" ("This day to us a child is born").

I am not alone in my reverence for hymn tunes. The brilliant, maverick Canadian pianist Glenn Gould regarded the hymn tunes of the English composer Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625) in that way, too. "Ever since my teenage years," he wrote, "[Gibbons' hymns (and anthems)] moved me more deeply than any other sound experience I can think of." His favourite will probably be familiar to readers as the tune for "Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go" (usually called either *Song 34*, or *Angels' Song*). Do not despise the humble hymn tune.

Although more than enough on their own terms, these tunes also have a life beyond the hymn book. There are anthems built on a hymn and its tune ("hymn anthems"), for instance. There is also an enormous repertoire for organ based on these tunes, usually called a chorale prelude (if it deals with the tune once), or a chorale partita, or chorale variations (if it works through the tune several times, in markedly different ways). One marvellous example is Johann Sebastian Bach's "*Sei gegrüßet, Jesu gütig*", as is Johann Pachelbel's "*Werde munter, mein Gemüte*" — Pachelbel excelled in this musical form — which is also the hymn tune behind Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring".

Baroque cantatas and Passions were often punctuated by chorales, but these tunes also turn up in less expected places. Luther's *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott* ("A mighty fortress is our God") dominates Mendelssohn's Fifth Symphony (known as the *Reformation Symphony*). Even when composers are not quoting hymn tunes, the majesty of the chorale, moving from one chord to another, the notes stacked on top of each other, has become something of a mainstay in symphonies, including Mahler's Fifth, and

Bruckner's Fifth and Ninth (the latter, dedicated "to the beloved God", remaining incomplete at the composer's death).

Igor Stravinsky closed his *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* with another freely composed chorale, originally written and published in 1920, in memory of the composer Claude Debussy, who had died two years earlier.

Alban Berg's Violin Concerto (1935) is among the most accessible and widely admired pieces written in the usually difficult "serial" style of the 20th century. It ends with variations on another Lutheran chorale melody: *Es ist genug! Herr, wenn es Dir gefällt* ("It is enough! Lord, if it pleases you"). The American composer Virgil Thomson's first symphony — *Symphony on a Hymn Tune* — makes substantial use of not one but two such tunes (those of "Jesus loves me, this I know" and "How firm a foundation").

The music of his compatriot Charles Ives abounds with real and imagined hymn tunes of that more revivalist variety. His four violin sonatas are good examples, while his Third Symphony, *The Camp Meeting*, draws on several more (*Azmon, Erie, Cleansing Fountain, Happy Land, and Woodworth*). Here, Ives often had a marching band in mind. Along these lines, the contemporary American songwriter Rufus Wainwright has a brass band wander on, playing "Immortal, invisible, God only wise", during his song "Sally Ann".

This story of hymn tunes, and how they have featured in musical history, illustrates one of the things that a theologian might want to say about created things: that, in its finitude and humble particularity, all that God has made possesses an unfathomable depth. Just think how many times composers have drawn out new beauties and subtleties from tunes such as the ones that we sing to the words "O sacred head, sore wounded" (*Passion Chorale*) or "All people that on earth do dwell" (*Old Hundredth*). It is because these hymn tunes are so circumscribed — not too full of detail — that they offer so much. It would take a Ph.D. or more to collect and survey what has been done with any of many tunes of a Lutheran lineage, for instance.

Hymn tunes play a powerful part at the porous boundary between the Church and wider social identity. Even in much secularised society, the songs that people know communally, the songs they sing together outside the church, are predominantly hymns: "Jerusalem", "Abide with me", the National Anthem, "Guide me, O thou great Redeemer", "Amazing grace".

Whereas people used to know a substantial body of folk songs, such as the ones that my grandmothers used to sing to me when I was a child, that tradition is now largely gone, alas. Only the hymns remain, serving a folk function.

That relationship also runs in the other direction, however. Many of the best tunes in our hymn books have a folk origin, and were collected and harmonised (but not directly composed) by musicians such as Ralph Vaughan Williams, giving us *Kingsfold* for "I heard the voice of Jesus say"; *Forest*

Green for "O little town of Bethlehem"; and *Picardy* for "Let all mortal flesh keep silence".

Many tunes that we think of today only in relation to some hymn or other also, if we go back far enough, have folk roots, sometimes sacred, sometimes secular. Examples include the tunes for "Christ the Lord is risen again", and "*In dulci jubilo*".

While I have mentioned things that can, and have been, done with these tunes, their glory does not lie simply in being something to be built or embroidered upon. They have a perfection of their own, just as they are.

Gould testified to that, and so does the story of the tragic, attenuated days of the composer Robert Schumann. As he was dying in an asylum, it seems that the last musical task that occupied his mind was to harmonise two simple chorale tunes. Only for the first did he write out the words, beginning "*Wenn mein Stündlein vorhanden ist*": "If the hour of my death is at hand, And I must travel on my way, Accompany me, Lord Jesus Christ."

The final verse ends "I go then from here to Jesus Christ. I stretch out my arms, I fall asleep and rest well, No man can wake me, For Jesus Christ, God's son, Will open heaven's door And lead me to eternal life." I hope that Schumann found in that hymn tune the sort of consolation that I have often found in this music.

The Revd Dr Andrew Davison is Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford and a Canon Residentiary of Christ Church.

Article from Church Times, 30 May 2025

MISSION THROUGH THE GREAT SACRED MUSIC PROJECT

Samuel Wells is one of the great Anglican theologians of our day; Andrew Earis is one of the great Church musicians (and the producer of the BBC Radio 4 broadcast of St George's Bicentenary Year service in 2024). Together, they work at the central London church of St Martin-in-the-Fields. Here, they describe the genesis and growth of a new project designed to involve the church in outreach, while offering something substantial and attractive to people who might otherwise never enter a church building...



The east window of St Martin-in-the-Fields

There are broadly two kinds of evangelism. In the first, you assume you have something rich and glorious, but

appreciate that not everyone might immediately appreciate its worth; so you lower the threshold as far as you can, provide your best hospitality, offer harmless incentives to get people to take the risk of entering, and serve up your offering on your own territory.

The second kind goes to the other person's territory, or seeks neutral ground, and affirms it, seeking to build trust, express appreciation, and then supplement that common ground with fresh insights of one's own, either by requesting the opportunity, or by waiting to be asked the reason for the hope in your heart. Often, the second is the precursor to the first.

Evangelists talk a great deal about the unchurched, but the Church of England could reverse decline overnight by simply doing a better job of finding ways for those who used to enjoy its life to cross the threshold again. Two insights offer hope in this project. One is that *church is about the most profound things in people's lives*. To find out what those are, one simply needs to investigate where people go for solace in the face of pain or joy that surpasses expression.

For a host of people, the answer to that question is music. If you can offer music of a quality that yields the recognition "You had to be there," you are halfway to offering something that will persuade people to cross a threshold. The second insight is that *most people are embarrassed by their lack of understanding of music*, and that that embarrassment is an inhibitor to their enjoyment or participation.

Out of these two insights, "Great Sacred Music" was born. The principle is research that says people need to be in a church seven times before they feel comfortable worshipping there; so, you need to give people enthralling ways to be in a church which don't intimidate or discourage. What better way than to offer glorious music, and accompany that music with commentary offering brief, interesting, informative and amusing introductions to assist appreciation of each piece?

At our own church, St Martin-in the-Fields, in central London, we offer a weekly, 35-minute Thursday-lunchtime event (we don't call it a concert or a service), where we present six choral anthems and invite those gathered to join (seated) in two hymns. Each piece has an introduction highlighting its theological, biographical, historical or musical features — but with a lightness of touch that makes the event more like a playful commentary than an earnest lecture.

We offer a handout with the words of the two hymns, details of composers and signposting to other events. We take a retiring collection "for those who'd like this wonderful tradition to continue". We have been doing it since 2013 — and online also since 2020.

A programme of this kind, blending choral and congregational singing with light-touch commentary and an unthreatening welcome, has immeasurably enhanced the enjoyment and understanding of regulars, attracted and

kept many who might have found the threshold of attending a Sunday or weekday worship service too daunting, and offered a way to promote a culture around music appreciation that doesn't take itself too seriously, yet is a memorable aesthetic, educational and devotional experience. We now have spin-off events on Sunday afternoons and Monday lunchtimes.

These things are perfectly possible in other social and ecclesial contexts. Let's imagine you have a lively tradition of visiting around each other's denominations in a market town during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity; an interdenominational choir could practise suitable pieces, and there could be four or five events that transcend the difficulties presented by ecumenical worship. Or, if you have a pattern of a Lent course, you could take five great choral works, and (months in advance) invite a choir to perform them.

The key is to see what is possible and not succumb to the "If only!", or "We can't do that", or "It's all right for some" mentality. *A church must strive to be what only it can be and not be a failed version of somewhere else*. Perhaps your community has got used to online community during Covid, and kept up that practice since; maybe you could do a series that works for people as an online event.

And it doesn't have to be classical choral music. Some churches have used the same format for contemporary music. We once did a Thursday lunchtime, "Great Sacred Worship Songs". And it doesn't have to be sacred — or at least, not explicitly so. Just as Sister Wendy Beckett made much of drawing out the spiritual and devotional potential of abstract art, so it doesn't take much research to do the same for familiar ballads or contemporary pop music.

The format can work equally well for any age group, or any social class — it is not an élitist thing at all. The music does not have to be live: provided it's not live-streamed, it can be taken off any suitable online resource. That affects the "You had to be there" experience; but you can compensate for that by attractive forms of hospitality and publicity.

In fact, it doesn't have to be music at all. Other things can move the soul profoundly: art has great potential, although ensuring everyone present has access to the image in question requires printing a leaflet, or using audio-visual facilities. *The point is not about resources, or training, or investment or location: it is about an infectious enthusiasm, a hospitable attitude and a playful tone of voice*. It alters the power dynamic from "I have the truth, and you need to accept it," to "Isn't this beautiful and intriguing? — and here's a funny story you might not know about it."

Fundamentally, it is about trusting the Holy Spirit to act, provided you have curated a suitable environment of trust and expectation. Most of all, it is huge fun — because we are enjoying ourselves, celebrating creativity and beauty, and learning interesting things on the way.

From Church Times. Used by permission.

THE ENGLISH POPE

A fascinating historical perspective on a figure who is largely unknown today except to historians. Janet Warby relates the story of Adrian IV, the only English pope...



For most of history, the Italian branch of the Catholic Church has managed to clutch the papacy in its grasp with an enthusiasm and single-mindedness worthy of the

Sicilian mafia. To date, there have been 267 popes, a mere sixteen of those being French, while other countries have barely had a look-in. Those that have comprise a scattered few, including a number of one-offs, from which emerged the late, lamented Francis, the very first from the New World, after a mere five-hundred-year wait.

On examining the list of those few popes from more obscure origins, one finds only one Englishman, Pope Adrian IV. (I say English and not British advisedly, given Adrian's deplorable role in the subjugation of Ireland...)

He was born Nicholas Breakspear, son of a monk at St Albans. As monks were subject to a vow of celibacy, the charitable view would be that his father had turned to religion in his widowhood. A less charitable view might result from the fact that Nicolas was turned down by the abbot when he applied to join the abbey. Ostensibly, his lack of education was advanced as a reason...

Undeterred by this, Nicolas took himself off to France, studied there and joined the monastery at Saint-Ruf in Avignon, where he became abbot. He was then sent to Scandinavia as a Papal Legate, where he created the first Archdiocese, covering Norway, Sweden and parts of Denmark, thereby ensuring independence from the German Church and consolidating the pope's authority.

Following the death of Eugenius III in 1154, Breakspear returned to Rome from Scandinavia. Impressively, he was unanimously elected by his fellow cardinals on the first ballot as 170th pope. There was considerable rivalry in the Christian world at this time, both the pope and the Holy Roman Emperor contending for primacy. However, the new pope, Adrian IV, soon showed his mettle: when Frederick Barbarossa became Holy Roman Emperor in 1155, he sought Adrian's blessing for his imperial coronation. Adrian demanded that Frederick perform the traditional gesture of kissing his foot; the latter refused, on the grounds that it would be humiliating for an emperor. This diplomatic tussle typified the ongoing competition between their two roles and delayed the coronation. However, Frederick eventually relented and kissed the

pope's foot. The coronation followed on 18 June 1155. Adrian remained Bishop of Rome until his death in 1159.

Sometime before Adrian had taken his papal authority, a radical reformer, one Arnold of Brescia, had gained support for his opinion that the Church should renounce worldly power and embrace poverty. He had even succeeded in getting a former pope exiled from Rome for a period. Given Adrian's character, it was unsurprising that he disagreed with Arnold and eventually succeeded in having him eliminated. The upstart was hanged, but such was his popularity that it was considered necessary to burn his body and cast his ashes into the Tiber to reduce the chances of his remains becoming a cause for the creation of a martyr's shrine.

Meanwhile, it would seem that Adrian had not completely forgotten his English origins. In 1155 Henry II of England was looking to add Ireland to his possessions; Adrian, keen to bring the Irish Church into line with the rest of the Roman world, issued a Bull called *Laudabiliter*, giving Henry and his Anglo-Norman lords approval to invade and govern Ireland in order to make the Irish Church conform. Clearly, five hundred years after Hilda's Synod of Whitby had ostensibly settled differences between Celtic and Roman Christianity, Irish independence had, not for the last time, exerted itself...



In Britain, Adrian is virtually forgotten, in spite of his unique position in history. Only in and around his hometown of Abbots Langley, Hertfordshire,

are there a few reminders of its distinguished former resident. Streets such as Pope's Road, Adrian Road and Breakspear Road still exist. There is a tablet commemorating Breakspear displayed on the wall of the Church of St Lawrence the Martyr, while Nicholas Breakspear Catholic School in nearby St Albans holds an annual pilgrimage to Adrian's tomb in Rome for pupils and staff.

Modern opinion has it that he likely died of quinsy – a throat infection with complications – but a more picturesque, popular belief subsists, according to which he choked on a fly which flew down his throat when he was drinking. At all events, this uniquely English pontiff did not only mark the history of the pontificate but also that of his home islands in ways which he could not have foreseen – ways which, over the centuries right to our own day, have had many repercussions, for good or ill.

Adapted from the Newsletter of the RBL, Paris Branch. Used by permission.

CHAPLAINCY NEWS

A brief snapshot of what has been going on in our Chaplaincy over the past six months...

Confirmation on Sunday 23 November 2025 – the Feast of Christ the King

Audry Turner	Age 14
Adarsh Janumala	Adult
Ethan Ho Nins Yu	Adult
Kevin Green	Adult
Robyn Ferragu	Adult
Alexander Rankine	Adult
Louis-Alexandre Delahais	Adult
Aya Keddam	Adult



Holy Baptism

13th July 2025	Child	Aurora Rachman
10th August 2025	Adult	Ethan Ho Ning Yu
23rd November 2025	Adult	Adarsh Vadharan Janumala



Funerals

4th September Robin Anthony Baker (87) St George's

Marriages / Blessing after a Civil Marriage

On 7th September 2025 at Christ Church, Neuilly between Herbert Mullalay and Victoria Messina-Ramos

Christmas Bazaar

