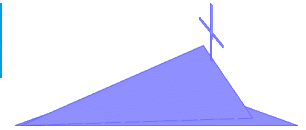




The St Francis Chronicle



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Editorial

Rejoice! The Lord has come, and shown Himself to the world. Here we are, embarking on another, New, year so it is also a good time to welcome new parishioners, and the young people who were confirmed when Bishop Ralph visited St Francis. This issue reports on some

activity groups such as the Dance Company and Catholic People's Weeks. A planned full review of the Pantomime just cannot be squeezed in. There will be plenty of opportunities to join something this year! In the parish community some new members have been born, some have died – does this begin to sound like Ecclesiastes? Anyway, Happy New Year to all our readers!

Jenny

Catholic Peoples Weeks

St Francis Parish is strongly represented in an organisation called Catholic People's Weeks (CPW) (catholicpeoplesweeks.org). This provides inexpensive holidays for families and adults in lovely places around the UK. There are essentially three types of holiday: family weeks; walking holidays and adult weekends. You don't have to be part of a family to come to a family week, but they are great for stressed parents! Each morning and evening the children are looked after by helpers while the adults listen to talks and take part in discussions related to faith.



Picture: Open-air Mass at Rievaulx: April 2023

Walking holidays can be over several days or a week and are usually based in one centre. Adult weekends are often in monasteries and consider a theme with speakers and discussion.

CPW is lay-led but usually has a religious chaplain. CPW has a glorious history of over 60 years in keeping the faith alive! From our Parish, Liz Dingle serves on the Board of

Trustees as Treasurer and Lindsay Reynolds has been the Secretary.

Last spring Mike Campbell led an adult walking week based at Ampleforth. The picture shows Mass celebrated outdoors at Rievaulx Abbey by the Chaplain Fr John Farrell OP. Last summer Alan and Gabrielle Wenham were the organisers in the family week at Kintbury near Newbury.

In 2024 so far there are three events planned and all easily accessible from Sheffield:

- Down to Earth! Meditation and Mindful Walking
All-age Walking Weekend based in the Yorkshire Dales
Friday 12th to Sunday 14th April 2024
- What are we doing at Mass? All-age week
Thornbridge Outdoors near Bakewell, Sunday 4th to Sunday 11th August 2024 chaired by Chris Dingle and with Claire Levesley as chief helper.
- Eat, Pray, Love All-age Weekend
Alton Castle Staffordshire , Thursday 31st October – Sunday 3rd November 2024.

Why not go on the website (<https://catholicpeoplesweeks.org/>) to get more details or ask one of the parishioners mentioned above?

Mike Campbell

The Saint Francis Dance Company

Earlier this year we celebrated our twentieth anniversary. September 24th., 2003, had been our inaugural dance class, the first in a series which continues to this very day! The idea for this came to me while I was at Mass and noticed Tony Womack, the choreographer well known in the world of local theatre, a newcomer to the parish. I'd heard about his reputation and after introducing myself I asked him if he would be willing to start a dance class at St Francis, and he readily agreed. This was my opportunity to fulfil a lifelong yearning to be a performer! This first practice took place in the Assisi Hall, attended by parishioners, family and friends. It was a surprise to most of the dancers when what they thought was to be an 'exercise to music' class turned out to have the purpose of producing an annual dance show! Thursday evening practices became the norm. The show had the dual purpose of providing entertainment for the parish and raising money for Church charities, principally supporting Sister Helen in Rwanda and CAFOD appeals during world crises.

Twelve ladies of varying abilities participated in Move It in October 2004; three of these are still involved! A total of £750 was given to CAFOD for the famine in Ethiopia. The original show soon became several performances, greatly increasing the amount raised. When we eventually had to bid a sad farewell to our wonderful Tony due to illness, other teachers briefly took charge, until the arrival of Sarah Bennett; her vision,

commitment, enthusiasm and endless patience have breathed new life into the company. Our many supporters will surely agree that from a relatively modest beginning, the scale and professionalism of the dance shows have increased significantly.

Our lessons are fun, challenging, and always focused on the end-goal of the show. The dances cover a wide range of genres, from ballet to tap to Latin American to jazz. We are a diverse group of people of mixed abilities, united in a common purpose. We work all year in preparing the show, thereby creating friendships and supporting each other. The group has become multi-generational, with the addition of children's dance performances. The young participants are mainly grandchildren of the adult members and their energy and vitality have added an extra dimension, but right from the early years the shows have been more than a set of dance routines, with a marvellous variety of singers and musicians all giving their talents freely. On certain memorable occasions groups of dancers have surprised the audience with versions of songs, for instance dressed as nuns ('Sister Act') and as members of Abba .

The Dance Company is entirely self-sustaining. The dancers' subscriptions pay for the hire of the practice room and the tuition and also for the spectacular costumes, designed and made by members of the group, which have become such a feature of the shows, and the decoration of the show venue. So every penny raised by each show is donated to its designated charity; ticket sales are augmented by generous donations from parishioners, family and friends, and also from sales of raffle tickets. Raffle prizes are generously given by parishioners, the dancers themselves, audience members and local shops. The dancers even provide refreshments, such as home-made cakes, for the interval.

The dance company has always adhered to the maxim 'the show must go on', no matter what the circumstances! Although post-Covid we have not been able to enjoy the facilities of the Assisi Hall for classes and performances, the parishioners of St Francis continue to be hugely supportive. We are very lucky that after losing our first home, excellent practice facilities were found at the Scout Hall on Benty Lane. Possibly even more important is that Stephen Hill Methodist Church has provided an outstanding location for the annual show. In 2024 the performances will be in March 15th.,16th and 17th. Please come and enjoy a great night or afternoon out! After that, if you are interested in joining us, please contact Grazyna on 2308196. Coincidentally, our first show took place in the same year as that of 'Strictly Come Dancing'!

Grazyna Swales



Pantomime pictures

Left: Snuggly Sisters (Bob Levesley & Chris Dingle) with poorly shown enhancements. Right: Fairy Godmother (Richard Bushell), Cinderella (Emma Dale) Isabel Ruvinski, Adam Levesley & Nathaniel Dingle.



Why Pray?

This might seem like a very controversial title, but for a long time I wondered in what way prayer can affect the eventual outcome of the situation being prayed for. We all know the Catechism's answer to the question. There are four purposes of prayer: adoration, thanksgiving, repentance and petition.

I could easily understand the need of the first three aims, but I had trouble with the necessity of describing our needs and asking God to intervene and change the eventual outcome. After all God knows everything and does not need us to explain what is wrong with a particular situation and how it must be rectified. Surely God has no favourites, so having lots of people pray for an eventual outcome should not give one an unfair advantage, compared to those who have no one praying for them.

My recent brush with cancer, however, soon set me right on the need for the petition aim of prayer. Yes, God knew about my situation and being an all loving, all knowing God, would have wanted the best outcome for me. However, having the parish, family and friends praying for me, had an amazing effect on my wellbeing. I felt buoyed by the prayer of others for me. Knowing others were praying for me made me less anxious and more ready to face the tests and treatments that followed. I came to the conclusion that God does know about my illness, but prayer reminded me that God knows and that I need not fear since He/She will look after me and my loved ones whatever the outcome.

My experience of being prayed for, not only made me aware of God's grace but also enlightened me on the part prayer played in two family events. Two teenage nephews, Matthew and Mark, were diagnosed with different cancer types. Both were dangerously ill with the illness, and both were prayed for extensively. Matthew died four years after diagnoses. He used to tell his friends that his faith was becoming stronger as his body grew weaker. Despite the family grief when Matthew died, there was no way we could be angry with God when Mathew had accepted his own suffering and death so bravely. In Mark's case the eventual outcome matched the one we all prayed for. He is a healthy young man making the most of life. Despite the fact that the two outcomes were so different, looking back with the benefit of hindsight, I can see God's grace working in both situations.

Petitionary prayer works, not always by giving us what we are asking for, but by making one more aware of God's grace and therefore making one more courageous when facing a stressful situation. This prayer effect is not just limited to the person facing the situation, but spills over to help family and friends. Of course, sometimes miracles do happen as a result of prayer, but we should not be too disappointed when the eventual outcome is not the same as the one we prayed for. As the saying goes, God always answers our prayer, but sometimes the answer is 'No'.

In conclusion, on a personal level, I would like to thank the many parishioners who prayed and supported me in my illness. Alex and I are most grateful and thank you all for your help and support. Our petitionary prayer has now been replaced by prayers of thanksgiving.

Rose Krzyz