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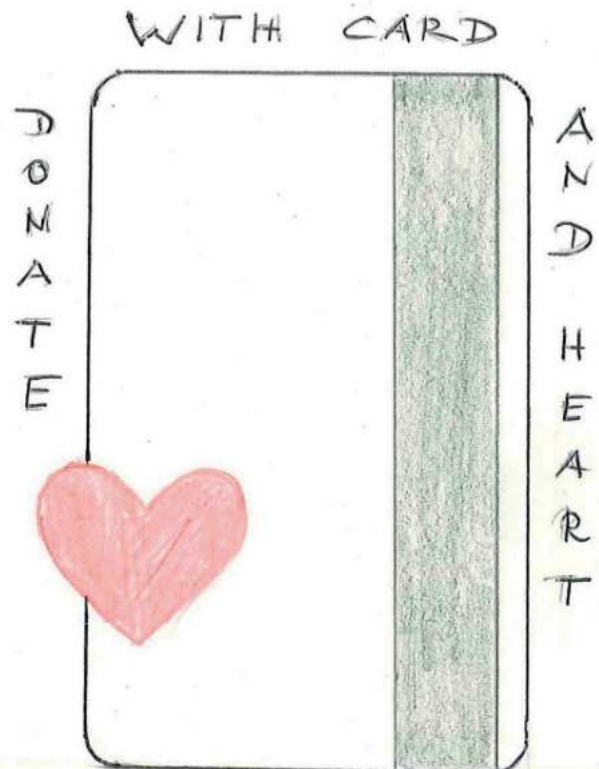
Editorial

Lent, and spring at last. The two may not seem to go together but we can think of Lent as a time of growing towards Easter, just as 'Lent' comes from a word for the lengthening of daylight hours. Among articles in this issue are ones about Lent itself, an account of a conference about faith and culture, and some of the history of the development of our parish. If you are new or newish to St Francis, something about your experience of joining the parish, good, bad or mixed, would be very welcome.

Wishing everyone a useful Lent. Jenny

Card reader screen saver competition

Thanks go to Susanne Staub for her winning design for the card reader encouraging us to donate with card and heart.



From Satellite to Sandygate via Crosspool

A brief history with some memories of the development of our parish.

The establishment of a new Catholic church in the western suburbs of Sheffield was considered a priority during the post war years. In 1957, St. Marie's church in the city centre arranged for a former Church of England schoolroom on Benty Lane at Crosspool to be used as a Catholic Chapel of Ease where Masses could be celebrated on Sundays. The old schoolroom had served as a wartime food office and one time library but it then became a satellite chapel for St. Marie's church. Over the next few years, the diocese acquired two adjoining semi-detached houses on Ringstead Crescent, the gardens of which abutted the old school yard. The ultimate plan was to construct a new church at Lodge Moor and for some time an extra Sunday Mass was celebrated at Hallam School.



In August 1968, St. Marie's released its satellite and the parish of St. Francis of Assisi was founded. Fr. Ronald Fox was charged with developing the new parish. The houses on Ringstead Crescent were converted to be used as the presbytery. The Benty Lane Church was very small. There were rows of ancient pews either side of a narrow central aisle. Getting past people was quite tricky. In the early 1970s there was an old foot pump driven organ at the back of the church. This was normally operated and played by a visiting nun. The central aisle led to a small altar and ambo. The sacristy was behind the altar and was cramped to say the least.

Fr. Fox encouraged many traditional parish family and meeting groups together with the usual Catholic organisations within the parish. Just as nowadays, families put forward their children (only boys in those earlier decades) to act as Altar servers.

It was always thought that there would be a need for a new larger church and the Diocese acquired a plot of land at the northern "top" end of Crimicar Lane at Lodge Moor. There the matter rested for many years. In the meantime, church attendances were constant if not rising. By the middle of the 1970s all three Sunday Masses were concentrated at Benty Lane. Fr. Fox felt the need for some better facilities to accommodate meetings and social gatherings and a parish centre was constructed in the old school yard. The new building was partly pre-fabricated and some of it was lifted by crane and carried over the roof of the church itself!

There was a kitchen in the parish centre and the local council would put frozen meals in the freezer for volunteer parishioners to take round on Sundays. These meals had to be put in the oven before Mass and then after Mass the meals would be delivered to people in various houses and flats. This was a rewarding experience for both the recipients and the volunteers themselves. The first parish young persons' youth group was



set up by Fr. Fox and it used to come together for discos and the like in the parish centre on Benty Lane. He also established the Parish Council.

In 1981 the Diocese disposed of the land on Crimicar Lane.

In 1982, Fr. Fox departed to the parish of St. Michael in Hathersage and Fr. Michael Killeen was appointed as the new parish priest of St. Francis. On his first day, Fr. Killeen apologised to the congregation because in his words, the bishop had sent us only half a priest. Fr. Michael was not a tall man!

Church attendances were still increasing and it became clear that the church building on Benty Lane was no longer adequate. Much thought and prayer was devoted to considering various proposals. In the end, the difficult decision was made easier by the generous donation in 1987 of the land on Sandygate Road where we now have our lovely modern church building which incorporates the church itself, plus a presbytery, a church hall, a Blessed Sacrament Chapel and a car park. Construction was completed in 1989 and the whole is built on the site of part of the garden of the home of the late Miss Marion Young.

In the 1990s and later, a combination of the general spirituality of the parish, our vibrant religious services, our parish priests (Fr. Killeen and Fr. Thornton) and the new church building itself attracted a large number of newcomers to our parish services and activities. Many of these people and their families have remained with us. In addition, our parish must have one of the best sets of musicians in Sheffield (if not THE best) and they contribute skilfully and wonderfully to our joyous celebratory Masses and other spiritual services.

Fr. Killeen moved away from the parish in 1998 and Fr. Kevin Thornton became and is still our parish priest.

The parish continues to be busy and active. If you are unaware of all that our parish can offer you then do please click on <https://www.stfrancisrc-sheffield.org.uk/> to read of the various activities and organisations within your Parish of St. Francis of Assisi.

Kevin Exell with contributions from Angela Titman and Paul Doherty



Evangelisation & Culture

On the 21st February 2025 I attended the Word on Fire Institute first conference at the Excel conference centre in London's Docklands.

The Word on Fire Institute is an American organisation set up by Bishop Robert Barron 25 years ago, that in the last few years has begun to spread through the world. Its aim is to proclaim Christ in the Culture. The theme of the conference was Evangelisation and Culture; how reading scripture is important, highlighting the Bible's interpretation, introducing resources, and how it can influence the Common Good and be a source of great beauty through art.



Its one UK employee, Brendan Thompson, introduced the whole conference to an audience of close to 2000 from all over the UK, Eire, Europe and as far as New Zealand. To get to the auditorium you needed to pass the European Pokemon convention with many of its attendees dressed in their strange costumes and the Muslim shopping event. The contrasts between that style of dress together with shopping bags and the clerical collars, rosaries, habits, & cassocks made for thought.

UK contributors included Abbot Igo, from Ampleforth, who started the event with a moving homily. Quoting the rich, young man from Mark 10 who could not make the final step to inherit eternal life, he asked us to discover the barriers that interfere with personal progress and change. Bishop Barron then made his keynote speech on four great themes of the Bible that showed Jesus as the fulfilment of the Old Testament: Creation, the God of Israel, Right Praise and Kingship. If you have not experienced the power of his oratory, can I suggest you listen to his podcast of weekly sermons? He has a way of explaining the Bible that is clear, impelling and based on many years of priesthood, leadership in a seminary and now as Ordinary.

We broke on Friday night to enjoy a curry in London's Brick Lane with a couple of Scottish priests. Meeting new people was a theme of the conference. The goodwill and companionship was delightful. Catholic culture can be rich and diverse.

The second day commenced with Professor Tracey Rowland's theological presentation on interpretation of the Bible. She is a member of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences and winner of a Ratzinger prize for theology. She is Professor of Theology at Notre Dame University in Australia. She explained how reading the Bible requires the techniques of Kant without his desire to debunk the message. We had a whistle-stop tour of major philosophers from the last 150 years and how their interpretations of the truth of scripture are false. Her conclusion that revelation required a combination of scripture, the reader and the Holy Spirit was compelling.

A much more accessible panel talk on modern media of the Bible followed. We had presentations from Martin Kochanski, the creator of Universalis, Angel Anyamele and Greg Finn of the Mark 10

mission and Hayley Stewart of the Word on Fire, Votive. I cannot recommend these resources enough. I was familiar with the first, using the app regularly and ensuring Fr Kevin's android and computer has the up to date version installed. The Mark 10 mission produces YouTube content aimed at KS 1&2 with bible readings and their explanations. The songs and hymns are joyful. They are great resources for the school teachers and catechists, but would be really useful for those parents who want to do it all at home. Votive publish books and accompanying podcasts for children that look fun and colourful.

For those who like the heavy theological hitters, there was a well received panel meeting with Bishop Robert and the Anglican theologian, past bishop of Durham, Professor NT Wright. The highlight was the feeling they both had that with the passing of the atheistic generations that the new youth are becoming curious about that cheery odd place on the corner (the church) and want to know more.

To the projected backdrop of Michelangelo's Pieta, Fr Marcus Holden, Jo Boyce, and Fr Patrick van der Horst showed how the art of sculpture and Jo's composition to accompany the Stations of the Cross can bring out the full picture of biblical passages. Moving stuff, even if just after lunch. The final session was an hour of Eucharistic Adoration led by the Sheffield lad, Archbishop John Wilson.

'Evangelisation and Culture' sounded a little difficult to explain before this conference. Perhaps now I could do a much better job. If you get a chance at attending another one of these you should be aware of just how many levels it worked at and should grab it with both hands.

To learn more about the Institute go to <https://institute.wordonfire.org/>

David Bellamy



The Bethlehem Care and Hospice Trust - November Ball 2025



The Bethlehem Care and Hospice Trust held a Bethlehem Ball dinner and dance at the Niagara Conference Centre in Sheffield, drawing a crowd of 150 people from across the Diocese of Hallam in support of its vital work.

The event was a blend of dining, entertainment and generosity, with all proceeds going to aid hospice care initiatives in Bethlehem.

The evening began with grace by Fr Gus O'Reilly and welcome addresses by the chair of the organising committee Joe McNally and chairman of the trust Professor Philip Hopkins.

Attendees were then joined by Fr. Rami Asakreih OFM, parish priest of St Catherine's parish in Bethlehem, over Zoom. He outlined the importance of the trust's work in providing vital palliative care in the Holy Land.

Fr Rami's words set the tone for an event that celebrated both community and compassion across borders.

Guests enjoyed a three-course meal and a lively auction led by former All Saints headteacher Bob Sawyer who kept the room engaged with his humour, driving up bids for a variety of donated items.

Entertainment was provided by talented local band The Grand Plan who performed free of charge as their contribution to the cause and their lively set kept guests on the dancefloor all night.

The Bethlehem Care and Hospice Trust, the only licensed palliative care service in Palestine plays a critical role in providing palliative care and support in Bethlehem, a mission made possible through fundraising efforts like this. Joe McNally thanked all attendees, donors and volunteers, emphasising the importance of their contributions in delivering pain relief to people who otherwise would be consigned to die in pain.

This year's dinner dance stands as a testament to the power of collective goodwill, uniting the Diocese of Hallam and Bethlehem in shared humanity.

To discover more and, even better, make a donation go to <https://bethlehemcareandhospicetrust.org> or speak to John Booth.

L.Siggs

Easter Appeal

For many of us, Easter is a time of renewal, hope, and family. But for those we support in Bethlehem, it is often a time of pain, uncertainty, and suffering. Right now, 7 in 10 cancer patients in Bethlehem are diagnosed too late for treatment, leaving them to face the end of their lives without specialist care.

At Bethlehem Care & Hospice Trust, we are doing everything we can to change that. We provide the only licensed palliative care service in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, ensuring that people can spend their final days without pain and with dignity. Last year, our nurses made over 2,000 home visits, bringing comfort to 146 terminally ill patients—but many more still have no access to care.

Consider Bethlehem Care & Hospice Trust in your Lenten almsgiving

Lent is a time for reflection, prayer, and giving. Almsgiving is a powerful way to put faith into action—offering support to those in desperate need.

By donating to our Easter Appeal, you can provide vital care for the sick and dying in Bethlehem including home visits from our palliative care nursing team, pain relief for terminally ill patients and full end-of-life-care for a patient's final days.

Every donation, no matter the size, brings real comfort to those who need it most.

<https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/27942#!/DonationDetails>



Some thoughts on Lent

At the time of writing Lent is just round the corner, and by the time you will be reading this, we will be well and truly in the season of Lent. Lent was always associated with a period of 'doing without' and self imposed suffering. It always followed directly after Carnival, a word originating from two Latin words 'carne' meaning 'meat' and 'vale' meaning 'remove'. So the Carnivale period was the festive and hedonistic period, that preceded the period of fasting and preparation for Easter.

In the Malta of my youth, Lent was taken very seriously. Cinemas were closed and diets were restricted to frugal quantities with no desserts. There was some discrepancy between how rigorous different families kept to the script. I remember a friend of mine's boyfriend, always made a point of politely refusing invitations to eat with her family during Lent, choosing instead to eat with his own family who had a less rigorous interpretation of the the Lent fast. The Maltese also found a way around the 'no dessert' rule by promoting a special Lenten sweet meat called Kwarezimal, that circumvented the Lenten rules by not using any eggs or shortening. Sugar was allowed, because at the time of the Knights, when the recipe originated, sugar was considered a spice. The Shrove Tuesday pancake tradition similarly was supposedly started to empty the food cupboards of eggs and flour in preparation for the Lenten fast.

Nowadays Lent has evolved into a period of spiritual reflection. It has less to do with eating less and more with actively doing good deeds, and helping others. Richard Rohr paraphrases Hosea and reminds us, in a Lent reflection, that "What God wants is merciful people, not heroic sacrifices". In keeping with this idea, CAFOD invites us to join 'The Big Lent Walk' and walk 200km over 40 days to raise money to help fight Global Poverty. Other initiatives invited us to fast from bad habits, eg gossiping, rather than food.

I will finish by giving you the Maltese recipe for Kwarezimal, in case you want to give it a go. It is delicious and I prefer to eat it when it is just baked and soft. Do not over bake!

Ingredients:

400g sifted self-raising flour
400g ground almonds
100g caster sugar
1 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp mixed spice
zest of 1 orange
zest of 1 lemon
30ml orange flower water
Water as required
Honey and chopped nuts to decorate.

Method 1

Mix all the ingredients together. Add enough water to make the mixture into a stiff dough. Shape into oblongs about 14 cm long and bake at 180 degrees for 10 minutes. While hot brush the biscuits honey and chopped nuts. Recipe makes six oblongs.



Rose Krzyz