

The Holy Family of Bordeaux

in Britain and Ireland

Glory to God alone in Jesus Christ through Mary and Saint Joseph

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The Leadership Team of Britain and Ireland meeting in Martillac

Editorial

Whatever the circumstances may be that gave rise to the story of the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt it remains an abiding tradition in the Church, even to the extent of having a day dedicated to it (p. 11). Legends have grown up around the event and artists have depicted it in wonderful ways.



It is historically true that there were many Jews in Egypt at the time of Jesus' birth so, rather than making the journey alone, it is possible the Holy Family joined a group of travellers, among whom were migrants or refugees. They would have been similar to such people today, commercial travellers, some who were fleeing persecution and danger in their own country, and others seeking a better life elsewhere.

The hardship and dangers of such a journey might not have been as harsh as those the refugees we see daily on our TV screens have to endure but the stark reality is that *"no one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark"* (Warsan Shire). That is why we can pray to the Holy Family as the *protector of refugees* and ask Jesus, Mary and Joseph to inspire and guide our actions on their behalf.

While we look for ways to help refugees today, a desire largely frustrated by the slowness of officialdom, we pray that the negotiations now taking place in Geneva to end the Syrian conflict will succeed. Then Syrians, like the Holy Family, will be able to return to their homeland.

Message from Sr. Gemma, (Unit Leader)

YEAR OF MERCY

Last year, Pope Francis proclaimed a Holy Year of Mercy to begin on 8 December 2015 and to end on 20 November 2016. Why the theme of mercy and why now?



This is a theme that speaks powerfully to Pope Francis and one which he sees as central to God's mission in the Church. Pope Francis, from the first days of his pontificate has urged that mercy and compassion be moved into the centre of the Church's teaching and praxis. Instead of condemning and judging and punishing, the Church (we) must continually offer mercy, compassion and forgiveness.

In September 2013, in an interview published in America magazine he said: "The thing the Church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful." Calling upon the Church's leaders to be ministers of mercy above all, he laid out a vision of the Church that is mother and shepherdess. "The Church's ministers must be merciful, take responsibility for the people and accompany them like the Good Samaritan, who washes, cleans and raises up his neighbour."

During one of his Angelus addresses, Pope Francis recommended a work of theology that "has done me so much good" because it "says that mercy changes everything; it changes the world by making it less cold and more fair."

That book is *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life* by Cardinal Walter Kasper. It was recently published in English by Paulist Press.

In his book Cardinal Kasper says the question about God's mercy is more pressing today than ever. He continues: "we [who evangelise] ought to be silent

about God if we don't know how to speak anew the message of God's mercy to the people who are in so much physical and spiritual distress" (p. 5). In other words mercy must be at the centre of our lives and our witness as followers of Jesus who showed mercy and compassion to all who came to him in their distress. It is we who must communicate God's mercy and compassion to the most vulnerable of our societies.



The Pope repeats this challenge to us who profess to follow Jesus. In his annual message for Lent last year, he called on Christian communities everywhere to become "islands of mercy,"

transforming parishes, communities, and groups into places where God's mercy becomes visible. "How greatly I desire that all those places where the Church is present may become islands of mercy in the midst of the sea of indifference!" said Francis.

Let this be our task in the coming year as we take to heart Pope Francis' exhortation:

"Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help! May we reach out to them and support them so they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship, and our fraternity! May their cry become our own, and together may we break down the barriers of indifference that too often reign supreme and mask our hypocrisy and egoism!" (*Misericordiae Vultus: #15*)

Hopes and Challenges for 2016



The fervour and enthusiasm to welcome 2016 was promising and exciting as always. Amidst the array of festivities including fireworks, music, parties, New Year resolutions and messages of goodwill from family and friends, I couldn't stop my thoughts about the atrocities that happened last year. I am sure many people like me long to have peace and happiness around the world, to see witness positively and to bring happiness and peace in our lives.

I was reminded of the words of the Dalai Lama, "Happiness is not something readymade. It comes from our action". Peace and happiness cannot be experienced without having strength of mind and faith and it demands honesty. In particular, honesty helps to build trust and confidence in ourselves and with others. Being honest in our thoughts and actions enhances the strength of mind and faith that enables us to differentiate between actions for common good and self-interest based on power, greed and dishonesty. Dishonesty leads to destruction of mind, faith and humanity. You cannot take actions against a negative feeling until you first admit that you are experiencing negative emotions. Acknowledging these honestly will allow you to look at various issues through two lenses and perhaps through someone else's perspective.



Awais Mughal

Welcoming the new year, Pope Francis said it's time to end indifference and what he calls "false neutrality" regarding the injustice, persecution, wars and misery in the world. "Only God's mercy can free humanity from the many forms of evil, at times monstrous evil, which selfishness spawns in our midst," he said. "The grace of God can convert hearts and offer mankind a way out of humanly insoluble situations."

Queen Elizabeth II in her Christmas message also reminded us, "Despite being displaced and persecuted throughout his short life, Christ's unchanging message was not one of revenge or violence but simply that we should love one another. Although it is not an easy message to follow, we shouldn't be discouraged; rather, it inspires us to try harder, to be thankful for the people who bring love and happiness into our own lives, and to look for ways of spreading that love to others, whenever and wherever we can".

Seeking God's mercy to end indifference requires us to be honest with ourselves and others. Selfishness leads to injustice and provides us with cognitive reasoning to get involved in different forms of evil a, as mentioned by Pope Francis in his message. It also destroys the fabrics of precious relations, happiness and peace.

The thoughts shared by Pope Francis to seek mercy, and the Queen to love one another, do not concern one group or community; rather it is a call for all humanity irrespective of faith and culture. Grace, mercy, love, battling against evil and injustices is the foundation of every faith and culture. The growing incidence of wars, persecution and injustice is only adding miseries to people's lives. Why not challenge ourselves in the beginning of the New Year and think what action we, personally and collectively, can take to bring happiness and peace in someone's life within our local communities and worldwide?

Mrs Awais Mughal
Holy Family Lay Associate & CMS mission partner UK

Pope Francis' Message to young people at the start of the Holy Year of Mercy

Dear Young Friends,

The Church is celebrating the Holy Year of Mercy, a time of grace, peace, conversion and joy. It is meant for everyone: people of every age, from far and near. There are no walls or distances which can prevent the Father's mercy from reaching and embracing us. The Holy Door is now open in Rome and in all the dioceses of the world.



This grace-filled moment also concerns you, dear young people. I encourage you to take an active part in this celebration and to realize that each of you is a child of God (cf. 1 Jn. 3:1). I would like to invite you, one by one, calling you by name, as Jesus does each day. For you know that your names are written in heaven (Lk 10:20), in the heart of the Father, that Merciful Heart which is the source of all reconciliation and kindness.

The Jubilee is a year-long celebration, in which every moment becomes a chance for us to grow in holiness. It is a time when we can discover that life together as brothers and sisters is like a great party, perhaps the most beautiful party we can imagine, the endless party that Jesus has taught us to celebrate by his Spirit. The Jubilee is the party to which Jesus invites us all, without excluding anyone. That is why I also wanted to have some days of prayer and celebration

with you. I am looking forward to seeing many of you in April.

"Merciful like the Father". This is the theme of the Jubilee, but it is also the prayer we make for all of you as we welcome you in the name of Jesus. To be merciful means to grow in a love which is courageous, generous and real. It means to grow physically and spiritually. You are preparing to be Christians capable of making courageous choices and decisions, in order to build daily, even through little things, a world of peace.

Yours is a time of life which is full of amazing changes. Everything seems possible and impossible all at once. I repeat what I said to some of your friends: "Remain steadfast in the journey of faith, with firm hope in the Lord. This is the secret of our journey! He gives us the courage to swim against the tide. Pay attention, my young friends: to go against the current; this is good for the heart, but we need courage to swim against the tide. Jesus gives us this courage! ... With him will give us the joy of ben-
nesses. Commit

to the most important were not chosen by the on-
wards toward the high-
lives on noble ideals" (the Sacrament of Confir-



Pope Francis greets participants at Youth Symposium on Human Trafficking

Here I cannot forget those situations of war, extreme and loneliness. Don't ever great dream which, with come true! Your friends, ing in less trying condi-

not forgotten you; they are working for peace and justice for everyone everywhere. Don't be taken in by the messages of hatred or terror all around us. Instead, make new friends. Give of your time and always show concern for those who ask your help. Be brave and go against the tide; be friends of Jesus, who is the Prince of Peace (cf. Is 9:6). "Everything in him speaks of mercy. Nothing in him is devoid of compassion" (Misericordiae Vultus, 8).

we can do great things; he ing his disciples, his wit-
yourself to great ideals, things. We Christians Lord for little things; push est principles. Stake your Homily at the Conferral of mation, 2013).

of you who are living in poverty, daily troubles lose hope! The Lord has a your help, he wants to young people your age liv-
tions than your own, have

I realize that not all of you can come to Rome, but the Jubilee is truly for everyone and it is also being celebrated in your local Churches. You are all invited to this moment of joy. Don't just prepare your rucksacks and your banners, but your hearts and your minds as well. Think carefully about the hope and desires you will hand over to Jesus in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and in the Eucharist which we will celebrate together. As you walk through the Holy Door, remember that you are committing yourselves to grow in holiness and to draw nourishment from the Gospel and the Eucharist, the Word and the Bread of life, in order to help build a more just and fraternal world.

May the Lord bless your journey towards the Holy Door. I pray that the Holy Spirit will guide your steps and enlighten you. For you and your families, and for all who help you to grow in goodness and in grace, may the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of us all, be a true Door of Mercy.

From the Vatican, 6 January 2016, Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord



WORLD YOUTH DAY, KRAKOW JULY 2016

Update on preparations in Newbridge area

From the outset there was great interest in this proposed Pilgrimage and, after a series of information sessions in our local secondary schools and publicity through our parish newsletter, approximately forty young people have signed up to travel.

Of that number, twenty are girls from our Holy Family School. A number of boys from the Patrician Secondary and local Vocational School are also travelling, together with some third level students. There will also, of course, be adult leaders. The young pilgrims were introduced to our Parish community at a special Commissioning ceremony during weekend Masses and received warm rounds of applause.



Sr. Margaret and Creation

The total cost per pilgrim is €645. This covers flights, accommodation, a pilgrim pack and food for the week. As the ad. says; *'it's no frills'* accommodation - sleeping bags on a floor in a school! The first task for the group is fund raising, and that began this past weekend with a Church gate collection. T-shirts with the WYD logo were procured, collection buckets prepared, so all that was needed then were generous parishioners. Delighted to say that the generous parishioners showed up and donated a total of €2,610 – a fantastic response to our first effort.

Over the next few months the hope is, that as well as being engaged in fundraising events, the young people will be meeting together, getting to know one another and reflecting on the meaning of Pilgrimage in our Christian story.

It is very heartening to hear that the Sisters here in the Convent are going to be very much part of this venture. Plans are being put in place for a Fund Raiser involving some beautiful knitted creations from the needles of Margaret (O'Connell). Three of the girls travelling to Poland are part of the weekly Bingo sessions and the hope is that the money won at Bingo will go towards their funds. We are talking **serious money** here and the early signs of the gambling tendencies of some of the senior Bingo players are being ignored for now!!!



Watch out for our next letter to hear how the plans are unfolding.

Kate Cuskelly (Sonas Christ, Newbridge)

HOLY DOORS

As we know, an important symbolic act at the beginning of a Holy Year is the opening of Holy Doors in cathedrals, churches and shrines throughout the world. To perform the symbolic act of passing through the Holy Door into the holy place is, for pilgrims, to pass from this world into the presence of God.



In proclaiming the Holy Year 2000, Pope John Paul II stated that the Holy Door "...evokes the passage from sin to grace which every Christian is called to accomplish".

Speaking of the Holy Door during his general audience on 18 November 2015, Pope Francis said:

"It's a door that opens in the Church in order to reach out to those who for many reasons are far away." He also said that families, too, are invited to open their doors "to meet Jesus, who waits for us patiently, and wants to bring us his blessing and friendship... A Church that is not hospitable or a family closed in on itself would be a terrible reality that mortifies the Gospel and makes the world more arid".

A Special Holy Door in Lampedusa

The World Day of Migrants and Refugees, which we celebrated on 17 January, had a special significance in Lampedusa, Italy. The Cardinal Archbishop of Agrigento, Francesca Montenegro, presided over the celebration of Vespers and opened the Holy Door at the Shrine of Our Lady of Porto Salvo.



At 9.30 on the following Sunday, there was a moment of prayer and reflection on the theme of the World Day, "Migrants and Refugees challenge us. The Response of the Gospel of Mercy", at the *Door of Europe*, a monument dedicated to the memory of the drowned migrants.



'Door of Europe' Monument

Thus Cardinal Montenegro was symbolically opening a second "Holy Door", a place of entrance, not to a Church, but to hope for a better future for all those who have survived the perils of the sea and for those who lost their lives.

Then, at the end of Mass in the parish of Saint Gerlando, the gift that the Cuban President Raul Castro gave to Pope Francis, during his pastoral visit to Cuba last September, was given to the inhabitants of Lampedusa. It is a crucifix made with wooden oars by Cuban artist Khco.

A Holy Family Holy Door

from Sr. Catherine Moran



Sr. Eileen Fitzpatrick, Newbridge

When Denis Nulty, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, visited the parish of Newbridge on Sunday, 14 December 2015, we asked him to bless the front door of our Convent which he graciously agreed to do.

The icon of Mercy on the back of the door is a reminder to us that Mercy is not simply extended to those who come through our 'holy door'. We, too, are challenged to get involved.

As individuals and as a community we are constantly in need of God's Mercy.

Looking at the icon of Mercy is a constant reminder that we need to reach out to one another in order to build a community of Mercy. We may not remain indifferent to the pain and suffering of others.



We, too, are sinners.

Westminster Cathedral

from Sr. Carmel Bateson



Cardinal Vincent Nichols opened the Door of Mercy in Westminster Cathedral on Sunday, 5 December, to mark the beginning of the Year of Mercy. This took place within Vespers, sung by the Cathedral Choir. Having been present at the event, I could well understand why this choir is recognised as one of the best in the world.

The congregation were all invited to walk outside and return inside again by the Holy Door. This was done in silence and took quite some time.

When all the congregation were back inside the Cathedral, we sang the Magnificat. It was truly a prayerful occasion.



Sr. Carmel Bateson, Aberdare

Carmel Bateson represented the sisters from Provincial House and Margaret Muldoon represented St Gabriel's Road Community. We felt united with very many others over the world who were at similar events.

My Visit to Pakistan

I went to Pakistan for my holidays in October 2015. I received a very warm welcome back home from the Sisters, who arranged a traditional dance by the students, who included my nephews, as I arrived. I was overwhelmed by the welcome which I received by the sisters, students as well as my family.

I was happy to see the progress that is taking place gradually in the delegation of Pakistan. There are 4 pre-novices and nearly 10 candidates. I was happy to be there when our two novices, Toshiba and Tahira, made their first vows on 18 December 2015. I was happy also to get the chance to participate in the celebration as the Sisters celebrated their 40th year anniversary in Pakistan. Sr. Angelina and I are the first Pakistani sisters who have celebrated 25 years as religious, so for me it was a great occasion to be there on this great day.

The Holy Family Sisters in Pakistan are thriving. They are mostly working with the poor, visiting, catechising, and working in the hospitals. A few years ago, the sisters opened a new mission in Okara. Before I came to England in 2013, I got a chance to visit that mission; the condition of the buildings, especially the school, looked like ruins. But now, gradually, each classroom is being repaired through the hard work of the sisters. There are more than 300 students.

Although there were many happy occasions to celebrate, I was deeply disturbed to see and to hear the suffering our Christian people endure daily in different parts of Pakistan. Sad to say, many young girls are being targeted, abducted and forced to convert to Islam. According to one of the Muslim NGOs, "Movement of Solidarity and Peace", around 700 Christian women are abducted, raped and forced into Islamic marriages every year.



Sisters of the Unit of Pakistan



Holy Family School, Pakistan

A recent incident took place on 22 January 2016, when a Christian girl was killed after she and her two friends (Christian girls) shrugged off the advances of some young, drunken Muslim men from one of the elite areas of Lahore Defence colony. The families of the three girls demanded justice but, despite the cruelty of this brutal attack and death of an innocent girl, the police forced the parents to pay a bribe in order to have the FIR registered. There is very little hope that justice will prevail.

I am extremely sad to say that violence against Christians is rarely investigated and highly unlikely to be met with justice. However, there is a Justice and Peace Commission who continue to fight for the rights of the poor people.

Pakistan is a developing country and politically it is unstable. Most of the leaders usually fail to complete their mandate. There are a few families that dominate the whole country, but they never produce long-lasting, fruitful results. There are also many ethnic groups, and much of the politics is based on these ethnic groups. This is one of the main reasons for the slow development in some areas of Pakistan compared to others. Because the leaders continue to manipulate different groups to benefit themselves, the ordinary people continue to suffer under the hands of monarchs and landlords. The role of the youth is missing in Pakistani politics. Many people who are leading the country are uneducated. Sad to say, our education system needs to improve if we, as a nation, want to strive for betterment.



Young Scholars

I must admit that in spite of all the persecutions the Christians endure daily, most of them are very courageous and proud to be Christian. We live together in colonies; we do not know when we are going to be attacked and parents are worried about their young sons and daughters. But it is only through faith and trust in God that they live day to day. Though many of our families are poor, we try to educate our children as much as possible because, without education, we do not have any future.

“Let’s join hands, let’s walk together, and let’s make Pakistan a better nation”.

Nasreen Nazir (Bradford)

It was only after her return from Pakistan that Nasreen heard from her sister, a teacher in a Holy Family school, of the developments recounted in the recent Flash from Rome. We join wholeheartedly in her prayer for her country. Ed.

Award of Commendation

British Red Cross, West Yorkshire

Nasreen has been a volunteer with the Red Cross refugee support team in Bradford since February 2014. She was originally recruited as a Refugee Support Project volunteer and interpreter and has now started to train as a caseworker volunteer.

Her Line Manager, Zeraslasie Shiker, nominated her for an Award of Commendation in these words:

"I would like to nominate Nasreen for the Volunteer Certificate Award as she has been a committed and reliable volunteer.

She continues to support our team in her capacity as an interpreter, screener and caseworker. She is excellent in listening and providing emotional support to our beneficiaries most of whom are feeling lonely and experiencing delays in their asylum claim. Providing emotional support is one of the key elements in our service provision. She donates all her time and energy to supporting people who are in need of help.

Nasreen is an ideal volunteer from whom our service can learn."



DEDICATION

“I would like to dedicate this award to all the Holy Family Sisters working in Britain and Ireland for their untiring service, whatever form it might be.”

Nasreen

We are the ones we have been waiting for.

"You have been telling the people that this is the Eleventh Hour, now you must go back and tell the people that this is the Hour. And there are things to be considered . . .

Where are you living?

What are you doing?

What are your relationships?

Are you in right relation?

Where is your water?

Know your garden.

It is time to speak your Truth.

Create your community.

Be good to each other.

And do not look outside yourself for the leader."

Then he clasped his hands together, smiled, and said, "This could be a good time!"

"There is a river flowing now very fast. It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid. They will try to hold on to the shore. They will feel they are being torn apart and will suffer greatly.

"Know the river has its destination. The elders say we must let go of the shore, push off into the middle of the river, keep our eyes open, and our heads above water. And I say, see who is in there with you and celebrate. At this time in history, we are to take nothing personally, least of all ourselves. For the moment that we do, our spiritual growth and journey comes to a halt.

"The time for the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves! Banish the word struggle from your attitude and your vocabulary. All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration.

"We are the ones we've been waiting for."

**-- attributed to an unnamed Hopi elder
Hopi Nation
Oraibi, Arizona**

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 2016

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1 Féile Bríde (St. Bridget) in Ireland	2 World Wetlands Day	3 Miraculous Benediction 1822	4 World Cancer Day	5	6
7	8 Death of our Founder 1861 Feast of St. Josephine Bakhita*	9 Shrove Tuesday	10 Ash Wednesday	11 Founder's Funeral 1861 World Day of the Sick	12 Leadership Team Meeting	13 LT Meeting contd.
14 St. Valentine's Day	15	16	17 The Flight into Egypt	18	19	20 World Day of Social Justice
21	22	23	24 World Sustainable Energy Day	25	26	27 Holy Family Focus Team Meeting (Wrexham) Exodus Team Meeting (Arran Road)
28	29					



*Saint Josephine Bakhita was born in Sudan's embattled Darfur region in 1869 and died in Schio (Vicenza, Italy) in 1947. This African flower knew the anguish of being kidnapped and slavery. She is the patron saint of Sudan. Pope Francis recently named Saint Bakhita as the patron saint for the victims of slavery and trafficked persons.

In Schio (Vicenza), where she spent many years of her life, everyone still calls her "our Black Mother". The process for the cause of Canonisation began 12 years after her death. In the year 2000 she was canonised by Pope St. John Paul II.

For more information, [click here...](#)