

“Saints in the making” – SPANNED project for 2014

“Not that I have become perfect yet; I have not yet won, but am still running, trying to capture the prize for which Christ Jesus captured me...All I can say is that I forget the past and I strain ahead for what is still to come. I am racing for the finish, for the prize to which God calls us upward to receive in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:12-14)

Introduction

Following on from last year’s project on the “Year of Faith”, and what it means to believe, this year we are taking the words of our much loved Sister Mary David of Loughborough who, when told by someone, ‘you’re all saints’, quickly replied: “not saints, dear, just saints in the making’! In creating this programme, therefore, we are thinking about several things:

- Who are the ‘saints’ and what do we know about them?
- What do their stories tell us about following the Lord and accepting his call to holiness?
- What is ‘holiness’ anyway?
- What would it mean for us to be ‘saints’?
- Can ordinary people like us really aspire to being ‘saints’? Yes, if we accept our calling from God
- What do we know about people who were ‘called’ from the Bible? We could revisit some of our work last year on ‘people of faith’ like Abraham, Samuel, David and Amos, as well as considering the call of Jesus’ first friends
- We could consider different ‘callings’ – marriage, religious life, the priesthood, the single life, and ask people to come and talk to us about them
- While we are not to be over-concerned with ‘personalities’ or ‘celebrities’, in considering the stories of the saints, either in detail or briefly, we can discern their humanity, their making mistakes, their overcoming serious difficulties and even their ultimate courage in surrendering their lives, and try to link those elements to our own lives

In planning the project we need to:

- have sufficient work for 4 liturgies and 14 group sessions
- make it interactive with art, drama and music
- engage all group members in the project
- introduce a little humour
- make use of scripture texts and stories
- record all our responses and send them in so that they can be placed in the finished book at the end of the year - it is very important that he note what our friends have to say; it also helps us in planning the project as we go along.

We must decide which of the saints we are going to deal with in detail, with stories to be acted out and which we can cover in a sort of ‘snapshot’ biography at the end of each group

session. Possibly the main ones should be Mary, the Mother of God, St. Bernadette, SS. Peter & Paul, S. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Francis and S. Joseph. Interesting brief biographies might be provided by stories of: S. John, Martha & Mary of Bethany, S. Mary Magdalene, S. Benedict, S. Ignatius, S. Clare of Assisi, S. Dominic, S. Vincent de Paul, S. Theresa of Avila, S. Elizabeth of Hungary, S. Margaret Clitherow, S. Thomas Becket, S. Thomas More, S. Therese of Lisieux, S. Edmund Campion, S. Ralph Sherwin, S. Thomas Aquinas, S. Francis Xavier, Bl. Teresa of Calcutta, Bl. Jerzy Popieluszko, Bl. John XXIII and Bl. John Paul II or other named saints who are 'patrons' of our group members.

Throughout the year we could intersperse our sessions with stories of particular saints which are relevant to the time of the year, eg. St. Bernadette (see Appendix B) on around February 11 Ss. John and Mary Magdalene, plus the women at the tomb – at Easter time; watch the 'canonisation' of Blessed John XXIII and Blessed John Paul II on April 27 and talk about them; SS. Peter & Paul in June and at the Scunthorpe Retreat; S. Francis in October, S. Martin in November and St. Joseph in the time leading up to Christmas.

We could talk about certain 'qualities' that were required of some of the saints in telling their story, eg. Care for the poor (S. Vincent de Paul), enduring adversity and sickness (SS. Bernadette & Teresa of Lisieux), changing your life style (S. Francis), facing up to mistakes and serving the Lord (SS. Peter & Paul, S. Augustine), being great missionaries (S. Paul, S. Francis Xavier), preachers (S. Dominic) teachers and thinkers (S. Thomas Aquinas). Some groups will tell the stories of a particular saint that is special to some of their members, so there may be a little interchanging of whom we speak of and when.

Bibliography: These books might be useful:

Penguin Dictionary of the Saints

Meet the Saints, ed. by Bishop Robert F. Morneau*

115 Sainly Fun Facts by Bernadette McCarver Snyder*

The Book of Saints by Victor Hoagland*

Saints for Young Readers for Every Day, Vols. 1 & 2 by Susan Helen Wallace & Melissa Wright*

Maximilian Kolbe, Martyr of Charity by Fr. James E. McCurry*

St. Francis, a short biography, by Kathleen M. Carroll*

(*all available from Redemptorist Publications)

From "Meet the Saints", edited by Bishop Robert Morneau

The saints have been, throughout the ages, teachers and witnesses of gospel living. These holy men and women are held up by the church as examples of what discipleship is all about. They followed Jesus and lived the life of the Holy Spirit in powerful ways, sometimes in the public arena, as in the life of St. Thomas More, sometimes in a hidden cloister like St. Therese of Lisieux. Some saints were scholars and kings, some were housewives and mystics, some were farmers and fishermen. Regardless of their state in life, they all heard God's call and responded fully in love and fidelity. Lest we put our beloved saints on an unreachable pedestal, we know from their own writings and confessions that they, like all of us, were also sinners. We need but read the 'Confessions of St. Augustine' to witness the struggles of a fellow pilgrim who contended with unbridled sensuality, intellectual arrogance and blatant

deception. We know from the gospels the story of Peter's denial of the Lord and of St. Paul's persecution of the early Church. Saints were flawed individuals who, through God's mercy and grace, were able to embrace God's forgiveness and become transmitters of God's extravagant love and mercy. It is not surprising that humility, living in the truth of things, was foundational to their lives....Through them God's radiance shines, in them the poison of self-interest is killed, from them we receive support still....Do saints have any relevance to our contemporary age, a culture so pragmatic, active and frenetic? Are not our true mentors and models individuals who excel in the fields of science, politics, economics, sports and cultural affairs? Simply put, who are our heroes or do we have any at all? Saints, canonized or uncanonized are significant to our times for three reasons: first, they lived authentic human lives. They walked the path, not of fame or fortune or power, but the way of love, compassion and forgiveness. Second, they challenge our potential and disturbed our complacency...In reading the lives of the saints we are often convicted of our selfishness and greed, our self-indulgence and pride. And the third reason that saints are relevant today is that they put first things first. This sense of priority is desperately needed in our times. The options are so many, the voices calling us here and there so distracting, the rapidity of change and constant mobility so overwhelming. The saints had a centre, they knew the one thing necessary: God was first in their lives and everything and everyone else revolved around that centre."

We will pray this prayer throughout the year at all our club gatherings and liturgies. Above all else, it shows us what 'belonging to God' will mean for us:

Loving Father, fill us with your presence in Jesus your Son. May we think with the mind of Christ, see with the eyes of Christ, speak with the words of Christ, serve with the hands of Christ, love with the heart of Christ and live with the life of Christ, who is Lord for ever and ever.

What does it mean to:

Think with the mind of Christ?

See with the eyes of Christ?

Speak with the words of Christ?

Serve with hands of Christ?

Love with the heart of Christ?

Live with the life of Christ?

How many saints can you think of that lived like this and what did they do? Another prayer we could use is that of Bl. John Henry Newman :

"God has created me to do him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good. I shall do his work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place while not intending it – if I do but keep his commandments. Therefore, I will trust him, whatever, wherever I

am. I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve him; in perplexity, my perplexity may serve him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what he is about. He may take away my friends, he may throw me among strangers, he may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me – still he knows what he is about.”

Some people are ‘called’ by God to serve him as married people, priests, sisters and brothers or as single people. After the initial meeting of trustees in January, it was decided to divide the work into blocks, and to see if we could visit religious communities for a club night and ask the nuns or priests to talk to us about their way of life – Nottingham (Poor Clares), Loughborough (Rosminians) Hinckley & Leicester (Rearsby sisters) Derby (Mercy convent) Scunthorpe (Cleethorpes Sisters). We also decided to ask the monks at Mount St. Bernard Abbey to host us for an afternoon in May and to ask a married couple to come and speak to each group about answering God’s call in their marriage and a single person to tell us what it is like to serve Him in this way.

The use of music will also be important. Singing hymns like, “Make me a channel of your peace” (S. Francis) or “Christ be beside me” (S. Patrick) remind us of the saints who wrote them.

Session 1 “The saints”

Give an introduction on the year’s project – “Saints in the making” and then split up into small groups with someone in each group taking notes

Discussion: How many ‘special’ people do you know personally? What makes them so ‘special’ to you? How do they behave and what do they do? How many other ‘special’ people do you know about and what is, or was, so special about them? Do you think people you know in our group have any ‘special’ gifts or qualities? What might they be? (Try not to embarrass each other!)

Get back together and share the information.

1. What is a ‘saint’? – people who ‘belong to God’ in their hearts and minds and serve him all their lives. People who are truly ‘holy’ – what does ‘holy’ mean and what does it not mean? Sometimes, people think that it means being ‘pious’, but it means much more than this. Listen to these stories Jesus told about ‘holy people’ or people who thought they were holy.

Act out these stories where possible

Narrator Once upon a time there was a traveller on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho. While on the way he was attacked by robbers, beaten up and left half dead on the road

This is acted out. Then the priest and the Levite enter, looking very pious and turning

away from the man on the road

Now there was a priest who happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he crossed the road to the other side and walked away. Then a temple official came along and did the very same thing. But eventually another traveller, who belonged to a group that nobody liked, called Samaritans, came along and saw the man. He didn't walk away but stopped because he felt so sorry for the man. He bandaged him up and took him to a local inn, where he gave some money to the inn-keeper to look after him and said:

Samaritan Look after him till I come back and if you need any more money, I will pay you then.

Narrator Which of these three do you think turned out to be the real friend to the man who was attacked?

We hope the right answer from the group will follow!

Narrator That's just what Jesus said to all those people who were listening to him and then he said:

Jesus You do the same yourselves

Narrator Now here's another story. Two men went to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, who belonged to a strict religious party. These were people who thought that they could never make a mistake and that God was lucky to have friends like them. The other man, was a public sinner whom nobody liked because he collected taxes from his own people to give to the Romans. The Pharisee went right up to the front of the temple and prayed out loud so everyone could hear him:

Pharisee I thank you God that I am not like other men, greedy, selfish and grasping and particularly that I am not like him

He points to the tax collector

I fast twice a week as a sign of penance, not to lose weight, I give money to the temple and donate to the poor. Thank you for making me the person I am.

Narrator Now the other man hid at the back of the temple so that no-one could see him. He lifted up his head to God and said:

Tax collector God, be merciful to me, a sinner

Narrator Now which of these two do you think God would like more –the Pharisee or the tax collector?

We hope for the right response!

Narrator That’s just what Jesus said, and there were lots of people who thought he was getting at them and so didn’t like him for it.

2. Some saints are ‘personalities’ that we know about – SS.Peter & Paul, S.Joseph, S.Francis, S.Bernadette, S.Maximilian Kolbe and of course, Our Lady.

3. Others we never hear about, thousands and thousands of them; others too are ordinary people that we have known who have gone to God after a life of humble service – can we think of any people like that?

4. Some are our ‘patron’ saints – we might be named after them or our church, school etc. is. How many places like churches, schools and hospitals can we think of that are named after saints? Why is that? What do you know about the saint after whom you have been named? Why did your parents choose that name for you?

5. How many saints can we think of that we know and what do we know about them?

6. Now we will say our prayer together:

Loving Father, fill us with your presence in Jesus your Son. May we think with the mind of Christ, see with the eyes of Christ, speak with the words of Christ, serve with the hands of Christ, love with the heart of Christ and live with the life of Christ, who is Lord for ever and ever.

What do you think it means to: Think with the mind of Christ?

See with the eyes of Christ? Speak with the words of Christ?

Serve with hands of Christ? Love with the heart of Christ?

Live with the life of Christ?

Next time we will talk about that together.

Session 2 The Lord’s servants

We will use the words of “Mother Mary” to guide us and help us in this project because so much of it is about living in God’s way. First of all, we carry on where we left off last year and think about Mary, the mother of Jesus, who was the very first person to believe in him, even before he was born. To believe, we have to be ready to serve, to trust, to change our lives as Mary did when she said: “I am the servant of the Lord; let what you have said be done to me”.

If any of the group could sing these words, that would be very special. Highlighted words and phrases would be the ones we hope that people might single out as 'qualities' of saints.

a) Agreement – The Annunciation

*There's a lady born without sin, **wickedness has touched her never;**
From the first day she'd be the **most special woman ever.**
Full of holiness and love, the Father chose her and called her,
to do something for him, the world's greatest ever favour.*

*So a messenger came to earth, and eventually he found her
Praying patiently to hear what her God would ask her.*

*'Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is truly with you,
Most blessed and holy you, he has good news to tell you.
With a message I've been sent and to ask you a question,
Please be his son's mother, bear within you the world's Saviour'
'How can this be', she replied, 'because I'm not even married?'
'God will come to you with his son to bear and carry'*

***'I will do what the Lord says, because I am his servant.
Whate'er he wants will be, for he is my God and Father.
From this moment all of my life will now be given over,
To all that it will mean to be his son's mother'***

*Blessed is she who believed, and **agreed to God's offer**
In her was then conceived, the world's Lord, and God and Saviour*

What key words and phrases can we pick out from here about Mary being a 'saint'?

b) What the agreement meant for Mary

*'Now there's a child in my arms, I'm a mother and I'm burdened
with all the joys and cares it brings;
What he'll become, I don't know, but I'm promised that in time,
he'll make the coldest hearts to sing.
**I know that pain and agony await me, and one day I may have to watch him die;
and see his friends abandon him, pretending they don't know him, that's a lie.**
You can be so little, yet so great, so vulnerable and yet so powerful,
it's such a puzzle;
You can be so little yet so great, come among us to redeem our hate,
the pain and hurt we cause each other, you take away;
you can be so little yet so great.
In years to come how they'll use your birthday as the reason to do
all you hate to see or hear;*

pampering themselves in self-seeking forgetting what the truth is of your coming now and here.

Forever you are destined to be slighted because you will not matter any more;

if only they'd come back to you to know your love and share it as before.

Now there's a child in my arms, I'm a mother and I'm burdened with all the joys and cares it brings.'

What did Mary feel like being the mother of Jesus?

c) Why we honour Mary, and what she teaches us about being 'saints'

You were chosen by God, for a very great task;

Willingly you agreed, when eventually asked.

Change your lives just because Jesus came,

All you do should be done in his name

You gave the world its Saviour, changed us in our behaviour;

You, you taught us how to live and love.

For a Saviour to come we've been waiting so long

Trying to get things right, but we've got it all wrong;

Selfish and proud, not the humble way,

Raucous and loud, from his path we stray every day,

In all that we think and say.

Give away everything that you have, living's not about what you can grab.

You've shown the truth in living, is to be found in giving,

Now, now, how we love and honour you.

Mother Mary, now we really know, how much we should love and honour you.

'Let what you've said be done to me,' your agreement that set us free,

free from hatred and sin, ever looking in-wards to our own minds.

Recognising we're called to serve, giving God just what he deserves,

All the glory and praise, every one of our days, loving and honouring him.

This is the prayer you made:

Praise the Lord, all my soul, for he's done great things for me, you proclaim,

now we know what you mean, you are our heaven's queen.

Now we know the meaning of joy, ever since you gave us this boy,

innocent and weak, sent among us to speak powerful words from God;

Asking us to be his friends, sharing life that will never end,

what we've learnt from you, how to live in true service and faith in him.

What does Mary teach us about 'belonging to God'?

Now we are going to act a beautiful story about one of God's most special friends, who was also a friend of his mother, Mary – St. Bernadette of Lourdes. As we listen, think about what it cost her to 'belong to God' and how much she suffered because of it?

- Narrator 1 Our story begins nearly a hundred and fifty years ago in a small town in the mountains of southern France, called Lourdes. There was a poor family called the Soubirous - mother, father, two boys, two girls, and the eldest daughter was called Bernadette.
- Narrator 2 On February 11 1858, Bernadette went with her sister and a friend walking along the banks of the river, looking for dead wood so that they could make a fire to cook the lunch. They arrived at a little spot or grotto, and Bernadette was just taking off her shoes to cross over the stream, when she heard a noise like a gust of wind.
- Narrator 1 She looked up and in the rocks she saw a lady dressed in white with a rosary in her hands. She couldn't believe what she saw. She rubbed her eyes again but she could still see the same lady. She took her rosary from her pocket and was shaking with fear as she tried to pray. The lady made the sign of the cross and Bernadette tried to do the same. All the time she was praying, Bernadette could see the lady, who beckoned to her to come closer and then suddenly disappeared.
- Narrator 2 Bernadette gathered up the wood and found the others. She asked them had they seen anything and they said 'no'. She thought she must have been mistaken but eventually told them what happened. When they got home, the others blurted it out to her parents, who were angry with her
- Mother Bernadette, you musn't go back to that grotto again
- Narrator 1 By the next Sunday, though, Bernadette felt she had to go back. It was as if something was telling her to do this. She went back with her sister and a friend and took with her a little flask of holy water from the church to sprinkle on the vision if it happened again. They knelt down at the grotto and began to say the rosary. Very soon, she saw the same lady appear again. She sprinkled her with water and begged her to say if she had come from God or not. The lady simply smiled and bowed her head. When Bernadette finished her rosary, the lady disappeared again.
- Narrator 2 They all went home and she told her mother
- Mother Bernadette, you are not to go back there
- Narrator 2 But she did go back the next Thursday and took some adults with her and also a sheet of paper to write down anything the lady might say to her. The lady did speak to her and said

Lady There is no need to write down what I have to say to you. Will you do me the favour of coming here every day for two weeks?

Bernadette I will if my parents give me permission

Lady I do not promise to make you happy in this world but in the next.

Narrator 1 Then she disappeared. So Bernadette went back every day and each day more people went with her, hoping to catch a glimpse of the lady as well, but only Bernadette saw her.

Narrator 2 Many people did not believe Bernadette and said she was mad. Doctors and scientists examined her at the grotto but they could find nothing wrong with her, only that her face changed when she was seeing the lady; sometimes she would be radiantly happy and other times terribly sad and crying.

Narrator 1 On the 24th of February, the lady spoke a message to Bernadette:

Lady Kiss the ground and pray to God for sinners

Narrator 1 The next day the lady told her to drink from the spring, but Bernadette could not find it, only a pool of muddy water. Eventually, she scooped away the mud and the water was clear; she could drink and the stream began to flow on that spot.

Narrator 2 Bernadette kept going back to the grotto every day; sometimes the lady was there and sometimes not. More and more people heard of it and came with her. The local town officials were angry that so much attention had been drawn to the place, and threatened to put her in prison if she did not stop going to the grotto.

Narrator 1 On the 2nd of March a very special thing happened. Bernadette went to the grotto as usual with her two aunts. The lady appeared and gave her a message for priests. Bernadette went to her parish priest to tell him:

Bernadette The lady I saw asked me to go and tell you to have a chapel built here at the grotto. She also told me she wants people to come here in procession.

Priest What is this lady's name?

Bernadette I don't know; I have asked her but she just smiles at me

Priest Well you ask her again. I think she's making a fool of you. If you want my advice, I wouldn't go back to that grotto again if I were you.

Narrator 2 But Bernadette did go back and eight thousand people with her. She asked the lady her name, but the lady simply smiled. When she went back to tell her parish priest this, he said:

Priest If this lady really wants a chapel, let her say her name and provide the money for it to be built.

Narrator 1 Bernadette went away downhearted and for twenty days she did not go back to the grotto. She did not feel as if she could. But on the 25th of March, she felt drawn to the grotto once more. When she got there she saw the lady again and was overjoyed. She knelt down and said:

Bernadette Madame, will you be so kind as to tell me who you are

Narrator 2 But the lady was silent. Bernadette repeated the request three times so that she could get an answer for her parish priest, but there was still no reply. But when Bernadette asked her the fourth time:

Bernadette Please tell me who you are

Narrator 1 The lady raised her eyes to heaven, joined her hands in prayer and said:

Lady I am the Immaculate Conception

Narrator 1 Over the next two weeks she also told Bernadette three secrets she was not to reveal to anyone. Bernadette went back to her parish priest and told him:

Bernadette The lady said 'I am the Immaculate Conception'

Narrator 1 And the priest was at last convinced that Bernadette Soubirous had truly seen a vision of Our Lady, the mother of Jesus. On the 16th of July 1858, Bernadette saw the lady in the grotto for the last time, and thought she was more beautiful than ever..

Narrator 2 Six years later after much hounding and threats from the local authorities and police, Bernadette entered the convent of the Sisters of Charity at Nevers. She wanted to give her life to God completely, even though her health was very poor. After much examination and discussion, the local bishop finally declared that the Mother of God

had indeed appeared at the grotto of Lourdes to Bernadette, and that a chapel should be built there, so that people could come in procession as the lady requested.

Narrator 1 Bernadette spent nearly 13 years in the convent, years of much trial and suffering. On the 16th of April 1879, at the age of 35, Bernadette died. her last words were:

Bernadette Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for me, poor sinner, poor sinner

Narrator 2 Since that time, people have gone in their millions to the shrine at Lourdes, to do penance for their sins and to seek health of mind and body. They often bathe in the cold waters of the stream, walk in procession day and night, and celebrate Mass together in one of the many chapels. Many sick people have been cured of their sickness, but all pilgrims leave Lourdes feeling happier and closer to God.

Narrator 1 On December the 8th 1933 in Rome, the Pope declared in the company of his bishops that because of her holiness and simplicity, and of the devotion that had grown to her, Bernadette Soubirous, the shepherdess of Lourdes, would henceforth be known as Saint Bernadette

Reflection A little music from Lourdes and quiet prayer

Prayer **Loving Father, fill us with your presence in Jesus your Son. May we think with the mind of Christ, see with the eyes of Christ, speak with the words of Christ, serve with the hands of Christ, love with the heart of Christ and live with the life of Christ, who is Lord for ever and ever.**

Hymn Holy Virgin by God's decree

Session 3 "Belonging to God..."

Here is a summary of what the Nottingham and Hinckley groups replied to the questions in Session 1:

Who are the 'saints'? – people who have gone to God; people in the Bible; often quite ordinary; people who make sacrifices; people who sometimes make mistakes but God forgives them, so they give their lives to him

Are there any people or groups of people who you think are special? – Eddie's key worker Denise, Pope Francis, Bishop Malcolm, Nelson Mandela, Jim & Margaret Dobbin, The Queen, Prince Philip, Medecins Sans Frontieres, InterCare, Nurses, Doctors, Nuns like the

sisters in Llandudno, Armed Forces, Firemen, Police, the Missionaries of Charity, all our club members, not Justin Bieber!

What makes them special? -

William Wilberforce – he was troubled by the buying and selling of slaves, especially from Africa, so campaigned to abolish slavery ‘God did not make us in his image to treat others like this’. He was a friend of John Newton, who wrote ‘Amazing Grace’.

Our OT’s – they are cheerful, and helpful, especially with children – they have the ‘patience of a saint’.

Jim and Margaret look after us and gave us a home

Ian puts up with Caroline and she with him!

Loreto Club members for listening to Eddie’s jokes!

SPANNED members who put up with each other and are good to each other – many people put themselves out to get to club nights and gatherings for all of us

They do things they don’t have to do

They help people in need, make us safe and better, teach and encourage us

They give their time and energy to us and ask for nothing back

‘Saints in the making’ – so how can all of us be like those people we call ‘saints’? How do we come to ‘belong to God’, live in his way, speak the words of Jesus to ourselves and others? What would it mean for us to be ‘saints’? Can ordinary people like us really aspire to being ‘saints’? How do we become ‘saints’ too? Look again at the words of ‘Mother Mary’:

*Jesus shows us how to live and love, **putting others’ needs before ours forgetting everything we want or crave then finding our joy in giving.***

When you love like this you come to life learning how to hope and pray all your self-interest left behind, celebrate in joy today

It’s different now, that we have heard and accepted for ourselves the message of the truth that comes from him alone, if you believe, you’ll live for him, and in him and be one

Can you change your mind, and be good and kind?

Look around and see, come and follow me.

I will turn your life around, I will make you give;

I will show you how to love, how to truly live.

Come and follow me; come and follow me

It doesn’t take that much effort, once you are committed

To me and what I stand for.

You can leave old ways behind you, follow on this new road,

Be caring and be cared for

Listen to me now: if you can believe in me,

I’ll be there to set you free from yourself

And I’ll take away your pride, ‘cos I’m always at your side

I will make you whole, give you back your soul.

Don't live in your head, live in mine instead.
Look around and see, come and follow me.
I will show you other things you've not thought about;
I will give you joy inside, make you want to shout.
Open up your heart, make a brand new start,
There's so much to see, come and follow me.
See the suffering near to you, maybe far away,
Let them all be dear to you, this and every day.
Come and follow me; come and follow me
I have giv'n my life and endured the strife,
Of the pain and cross to achieve the loss
Of all the pride in us, all the greed and sin,
Shutting other people out, letting no one in.
By me you're redeemed, from all that it seemed
to be crushing you filling up your life
with boredom, emptiness, feeling lost and sad
all that dragged you down, all that made you bad

Now you're free at last, what is past is past
Look around and see, come and follow me
And you don't have to care what your friends might say.
Just be strong and dare, live in me today.

What do we see here?

a) Getting it wrong - *Listen to me now: if you can believe in me,*
I'll be there to set you free from yourself
And I'll take away your pride, 'cos I'm always at your side
I will make you whole, give you back your soul... Shutting other people out, letting no one in.

b) Getting it right - *It doesn't take that much effort, once you are committed*
To me and what I stand for. You can leave old ways behind you, follow on this new
road, be caring and be cared for. Listen to me now: if you can believe in me,
I'll be there to set you free from yourself

c) Concern for others - *putting others' needs before ours... Can you change your mind, and*
be good and kind?... See the suffering near to you, maybe far away,
Let them all be dear to you, this and every day.

d) Forgetting about ourselves - *all your self-interest left behind.... Don't live in your head,*
live in mine instead. Look around and see, come and follow me... Open up your heart, make
a brand new start,

e) Don't be afraid - *And you don't have to care what your friends might say, just be strong*
and dare, live in me today.

Discussion in groups

Look at these things we have taken from the script of “Mother Mary” and ask each other these questions?

1. How many times do I get things wrong and in what way? *(eg. Do I think too much about myself and what I want? Do I live inside my head and not see or think about anyone else? Do I shut others out from my life and how? Do I worry too much about what others think about me?)*

Nottingham

Eddie broke a ladder. Simon spends too little or too much for Ruth’s birthday. Fr.Frank feels bad if he has misjudged anyone’s behaviour without knowing the real reason for it, or just by their appearance. Martin suffers if the family do not trust him – he keeps telling them what he can do. Neil threw his Dad’s new stereo through the window because he wouldn’t fix the one he had given Neil. Declan walked into the nuns’ bedrooms in the convent and one day he put porridge oats in the washing machine instead of soap powder! Ian sucked up his sister’s hair with the vacuum cleaner!

Hinckley

Forgetting birthdays; swearing; not doing housework; telling fibs; exaggerating stories; not doing paperwork; too busy thinking about ourselves to think about others, because we are basically selfish; thinking we are always right; worrying too much about what others may think of us.

Derby

Lots of times. We question ourselves. We worry about what people think of us. This can lead us to be inward-looking. We try to learn from our mistakes. We shouldn’t care what people think of us because we are all unique and different. Sometimes we are ungrateful.

2. What could I do to make life better for others? *(What ‘suffering near to you, maybe far away’ do I recognize and what could I do about it? Am I willing to ‘change my mind and be good and kind?’ – how could I do that every day?)*

Nottingham

Be conscious of our elderly neighbours and help them where possible; Eddie needs to stop telling awful jokes!! Take tins of food to the foodbanks – there are many people in our country starving because they do not have enough money even if they are working; remember that many places, homes and facilities for those in need were actually set up by the church – eg. YMCA, Padley Centre (Derby), Emmanuel House (Nottingham).

Hinckley

Recognise the needs of others; 'change your minds and be good and kind'; be willing to do things differently; treat others like you would like to be treated; smile at strangers and make them feel better; greet people on the way into church; be kind and helpful; little things can make a lot of difference – eg. a phone call, text message or short message can make all the difference to someone living alone; listening to other people; supporting and protecting them; be sympathetic and apologetic.

Derby

We need to care for people both near and far away and treat them as we would like to be treated. We can support charities such as the Salvation Army, St. Wilfred's Centre, the Padley Centre which look after homeless people, also the Foodbanks. We can care for others by being calm, saying 'thank you' noticing other people and saying 'hello', by being polite to everyone. We can send shoeboxes at Christmas and reach out to people, praying for them as well as supporting them.

3. Do I ever really think about God and what he might want from me? Do I every pray and how often?

Nottingham

When we do drama and little plays, it helps us to think about God; Jesus shows us how to behave when we listen to him.

Hinckley

Sometimes first thing in the morning or last thing at night; some of us talk to God rather than actually pray (but that is praying, isn't it??); we like to thank him for the blessings he sends us and to pray for our family members, especially those who are ill; John goes to Albert Road Methodist Church every Sunday; Danny and Lauren go to St. Peter's and Daniel sometimes goes to St. Mary's as well!; often we think about what God wants from us but are not able to relate to it; sometimes he gives us a cross to carry because he believes we can handle it.

Derby

God wants us to be kind to everyone. We pray for people and think about those we care about. We think about God everywhere. Mary thinks of God most of the day. We try to see him in everybody. When we pray we can reflect on everyone's needs. We say prayers at the Tuesday Club, in church and at home.

Interactive drama

Here is an extract from St. Matthew's gospel (6:1-21) in which Jesus tells his friends how to behave:

Narrator 1 When you want to be God’s friends, don’t show off so that others can see you

Group A enter showing off

Narrator 2 So when you are giving money away, do not have it trumpeted before you

The group imitate trumpet players

 This is what the hypocrites do in the churches and streets so that everyone will notice and be impressed

They mime giving money away and waving to everyone

 I tell you, they have had their reward

The group stop and look shocked

Narrator 1 No, when you give money away, your left hand must not know what your right hand is doing

Group B enter and slap their left hands with their right

 Give your money away in secret

They put their fingers to their lips and say ‘sssh!’

 And your father, who sees all that is done in secret will reward you

They join their hands in prayer and look upwards

Narrator 2 And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites

Group A all pray loudly and raucously – “can you hear me God? Here I am, yoo hoo, look at me, I’m praying” etc.

 They love to say their prayers in church standing up where everyone can see them

They carry on waving and stretching out their hands

 I tell you, they have had their reward

The group stop and look shocked

Narrator 2 But when you pray, go to your private room and shut your door

Group B mime shutting their door and then praying

And then pray to your Father who is in that secret place

They put their fingers to their lips and say 'sssh!'

And your father, who sees all that is done in secret will reward you

They join their hands in prayer and look upwards

Narrator 1 And when you fast do not look miserable like the hypocrites do

Group A look miserable

They pull long faces to let everyone know they are fasting

They moan and groan – "Look at me, I'm fasting; it's terrible" etc.

I tell you, they have had their reward

The group stop and look shocked

Narrator 2 But when you fast put oil on your head and wash your face

Group B mime this

So that no one will know you are fasting, except your father, who sees all that is done in secret

They put their fingers to their lips and say 'sssh!'

And your father, who sees all that is done in secret will reward you

They join their hands in prayer and look upwards

Narrator 1 And when you pray, do not babble as some people do

Group A 'babble'

They think that by using many words, they will make themselves heard

They make a show of speaking very quickly and asking for things (eg. 'give me money, make me rich, make me strong', etc.)

Narrator 2 I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward.

The group stop and look shocked

Narrator 1 Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need even before you ask him

Group B look upwards and smile. Then all the group gather together in a big circle and hold hands

This is how you should pray

All the group say or sing the 'Our Father'

Something practical – following Jesus in Lent. In a practical way this means:

- learning more about Jesus and his way
- looking at what happened to him and asking why?
- following him on his journey in prayer eg. Stations of the Cross
- giving up some luxury or pleasure to help people in need – CAFOD boxes

What does it mean to:

Think with the mind of Christ?

See with the eyes of Christ?

Speak with the words of Christ?

Serve with hands of Christ?

Love with the heart of Christ?

Live with the life of Christ?

How many saints can you think of that lived like this and what did they do?

The Story of St. Clare of Assisi *(1194-1253) Feast day: August 11*

Chiara Favarone was born around 1194, in Assisi, Italy, the eldest daughter of a noble family. Her devout mother, Ortolana, named her Chiara (meaning "light") following a dream in which Ortolana was told she would give birth to the "light which would illuminate the world." When she was a teenager, Chiara, or Clare, heard Francis of Assisi passionately preach about new ways of living the gospel, having given up a life of wealth and status himself in order to live in poverty and serve the Lord. His words reached right to Clare's soul: She vowed to answer the Lord's call. Francis became her friend and spiritual guide. In those days marriages were arranged for young girls by their parents or family and so Clare's uncle tried to arrange an advantageous marriage for her. Refusing all suitors, Clare ran away and sought refuge with Francis and his community. He immediately accepted her into the gospel life and she lived very briefly with neighbouring Benedictine sisters who gave her sanctuary.

Her sister Agnes soon joined Clare, who was then living in another religious house nearby. They soon moved to San Damiano the small chapel outside of Assisi in which Francis had

heard the Lord's call. Clare worked with Agnes (now St. Agnes of Assisi) and others who joined them to found the Order of Poor Ladies (Poor Clares). They provided a place for women who felt called to a humble life of prayer and hard work and to share what they had with those in need. Adopting austere practices, eating little meat, speaking only when necessary and living in strict poverty, the members of the new foundation eventually become enclosed. Clare's Order depended on the generosity of friends to keep them going and to help them to travel to establish new foundations.

Clare was appointed abbess in 1216. When her father died and left her a small fortune, she gave it all away to the poor. Following Agnes's example, Clare's mother, Blessed Ortolana, her younger sister, Beatrice and other relatives joined the group at San Damiano. Clare considered Francis her spiritual father; she was his trusted friend and cared for him during his last illness before his death in 1226. Clare was a formidable woman and scared off a whole army! So how do you think she did it? In 1234, the convent at San Damiano faced attack by marauding soldiers. The army invaded the valley where her convent was located and began devastating the countryside. The soldiers put a ladder against the wall of the convent intending to come in through a window, but Clare, rising from her sick bed, got a monstrance (a receptacle in which the host is exposed for adoration) and held it up to the window while she and the other Sisters prayed. Asking the Lord to hear her prayers and save her sisters, she heard the following reply "I will protect them as I always have and always will." When the soldiers saw the monstrance with the Blessed Sacrament they were suddenly filled with fear and ran away in terror. The convent was saved, and it was said that the soldiers retreated from the area, never attacking San Damiano. St. Clare didn't use a gun or a knife to fight the enemy. She used faith and prayer. Today, too many people think they have to own dangerous weapons and use them. They have forgotten the words from the Bible: "Love your neighbour as yourself". Will you ever forget these words?

Clare died on August 11, 1253, just two days after Pope Innocent IV confirmed Clare's Rule. She was fifty-nine. She was canonized two years later in 1255. The Poor Ladies' name was officially changed to the Order of Saint Clare in 1263. Today they are commonly known as Poor Clares. In a rather odd gesture, In 1958, Pope Pius XII designated Clare as the patron saint of television as a result of an event near the end of her life. Clare was bedridden and too ill to attend Mass, but she was able to see -miraculously—the Mass on the wall of her room! The scope of Clare's patronage also includes communication services (telephone, telegraph, and TV writers), eyes, eye diseases, needle workers, goldsmiths, launderers, and good weather. Today, the Poor Clares number approximately seventeen thousand sisters living in about a thousand monasteries/convents in sixty-seven countries. Their timeless dedication to contemplative prayer for others and refusal to rely upon worldly goods provide a shining example of piety, love of the Lord, and faith in the twenty-first century and beyond. As part of our project, the Nottingham group went to visit the Poor Clares convent in Bulwell. The six sisters there, all from Africa, live an 'enclosed' life of prayer, and can never leave the convent or go home again. One of them is called the 'extern' and she can mix with people on the outside. They have no television, no newspapers, but you can phone them up and they do have an e.mail address! Reverend Mother told us about their lives and the fact that they have no income at all. They live entirely on what people give them (So we made them a donation from the Loreto Group). We could only speak to them from behind a 'grille'

– like a large trellis you might find in the garden, and even when we went into their chapel, they are still separated from us. She showed us the knots on the cincture of her habit – three knots to represent their vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and told us that they prayed several times a day, beginning early in the morning. It’s amazing to think that these women can live for Our Lord like this in the middle of a big city. What a wonderful witness they are to us all and it is great to think that they are praying for us as well!

The Story of St.Patrick *(to be used round the time of March 17)*

This could be accompanied by some art work in which we make green ‘shamrocks’ and write our names on them with the words, ‘I bind unto myself today, the strong name of the Trinity’.

It is believed that St.Patrick was born in Kilpatrick, near Dumbarton, Scotland in the year 387, to Roman parents. When he was 14, he was captured by a raiding party of pirates and taken to Ireland, where he was sold as a slave and worked as a swineherd as well as tending sheep on the mountains. He had very little food and clothing yet he took care of the animals in rain, snow and ice. Ireland was at the time a land of druids and pagans, so Patrick learned the language and practices of his captors. He was so lonely on the hillside that he often turned in prayer to Jesus and his mother, Mary. His life was hard and unfair but Patrick’s trust on God grew stronger all the time. Six years later, Patrick had a dream from God in which he was told to leave Ireland by going to the coast and when he escaped from Ireland, Patrick decided to become a priest, because he had another dream in which the people of Ireland cried to him, ‘we beg you holy man to come and walk among us once more.’ After years of study and preparation he was ordained and later on he was made a bishop. What Patrick wanted more than anything was to return to Ireland and bring the light of faith in Jesus to the Irish people. He eventually made it back there in 433 and was so happy to tell the people who had once kept him as a slave the Good News of Jesus Christ. But he knew this was dangerous and that his message would not necessarily be welcomed. As a result he suffered much. His family wanted him to get out before the people of Ireland killed him, but he kept on preaching about Jesus regardless. He and the followers he had gathered round him converted thousands and began building churches all over the country. Kings, the families and entire kingdoms converted to Christianity when hearing Patrick’s message. He seldom rested and performed great penances for the people that he loved so much, preaching among them for many years.

Before he died in 461, the whole nation of Ireland was Christian, but Patrick never grew proud. He called himself a poor sinner and gave all the praises to God. There is a legend that when he was trying to explain to the Irish people how God could be three in one, he bent down and picked up a plant, the shamrock, which had three leaves, and used it to demonstrate this great truth of faith. He is also responsible for writing one of the most beautiful prayers of the Christian tradition on this very subject:

I bind unto myself today,
the strong name of the Trinity
By invocation of the same,
the Three in One and One in Three.

I bind this day to me for ever,
 by power of faith, Christ's incarnation,
 His baptism in the Jordan River,
 his death on the Cross for my salvation.
 His bursting from the spiced tomb,
 his riding up the heavenly way,
 His coming at the day of doom,
 I bind unto myself today.
 I bind unto myself today,
 the power of God to hold and lead:
 His eye to watch, his might to stay,
 his ear to hearken to my need;
 The wisdom of my God to teach,
 his hand to guide, his shield to ward;
 The Word of God to give me speech,
 his heavenly host to be my guard.
 Christ be with me, Christ within me,
 Christ behind me, Christ before me,
 Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
 Christ to comfort and restore me.
 Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
 Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
 Christ in hearts of all that love me,
 Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.
 I bind unto myself today,
 the strong name of the Trinity
 By invocation of the same,
 the Three in One and One in Three.
 Of whom all nature hath creation,
 Eternal Father, Spirit, Word;
 Praise to the God of my salvation
 Salvation is of Christ the Lord. Amen

This prayer has been turned into a popular hymn ('Christ be beside me') and also a beautiful piece of music which we will now hear called "The Deer's Cry". Patrick was a humble, pious gentle man, whose love and total devotion to and trust in God should be a shining example to each of us. He feared nothing, not even death, so complete was his trust in God and of the importance of his mission.

Session 4 "What me...?" – accepting the call

Being a 'saint' means living in God's way, not just because we have decided to do so but because we realise that he has 'called' us.

1) What do we know about people who were 'called' from the Bible?

2) Think of 'people of faith' like Abraham, Samuel, and Isaiah:

Abraham (Genesis 12:1-5)

God said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your family and your father's house, for the land I will show you. I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name so famous that it will be used as a blessing.' So Abram went as God told him. He was 75 years old, and he took his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot and all his possessions and his friends. They set off for the land of Canaan and arrived there.

Samuel (1 Samuel 3:1-18)

Narrator 1 This is the story of how Samuel was called by God to be his friend and do his work. He lived in the temple because his mother, Hannah had brought him to God as a child, so pleased was she that she could have a child at all. So he was brought up there by Eli, the priest.

Narrator 2 Samuel spent his time in the special part of the temple where the scrolls of God's law were kept. He was lying on his bed one night when the voice of God spoke to him

God Samuel, Samuel

Samuel Here I am

Narrator 1 Then he ran to Eli and said

Samuel Here I am, since you called me

Eli I did not call you my son; go back and lie down

Narrator 2 So he went back and lay down and then God spoke to him again

God Samuel, Samuel

Samuel Here I am

Narrator 1 So he got up again and went to Eli and said

Samuel Here I am since you called me

Eli I did not call you, my son; go back and lie down

Narrator 2 So he went back and lay down and God spoke to him a third time

God Samuel, Samuel

Samuel Here I am

Narrator 1 Once again, Samuel went to Eli and said

Samuel Here I am since you called me

Narrator 2 Eli then realised that it was God who was calling the boy and said to him

Eli Go back and lie down in your place and if someone calls, you say, ‘speak Lord, your servant is listening’

Narrator 1 So Samuel went back and lay down and once again, God called him

God Samuel, Samuel

Samuel Speak, Lord, your servant is listening

Narrator 2 And this is how Samuel became a friend of God.

Isaiah (Isaiah 1: 1-9)

In the year of king Uzziah’s death I saw the Lord sitting on a high throne, surrounded by angels . The temple rocked and was filled with smoke. I said, ‘what a wretched state I am in; I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips and I have looked at the face of the Lord God’. Then one of the angels flew towards me with a burning coal in his hand. With this, he touched my mouth and said, ‘ see now, this has touched your lips; your sin is taken away and you are forgiven.’ Then I heard the voice of God asking, ‘whom shall I send? Who will be my messenger?’ and I answered, ‘here, I am; send me.’

3) What about Jesus’ first friends? How did he call them and what happened? eg. Peter, Andrew, James and John, Matthew, Paul

Mark 1:16-20 As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother, Andrew, casting a net in the lake, for they were fishermen. and Jesus said to them, ‘follow me and I will make you fishers of men.’ and at once, they left their nets and followed him. Going on a little further, he saw James and John, the sons of Zebedee; they too were in their boat, mending their nets. He called them at once, and leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the men he employed, they went after him.

Matthew 9:9 As Jesus was walking on from there, he saw a man named Matthew, sitting by the customs house, and he said to him, ‘follow me’, and he got up and followed him.

Acts 9:1-20 Saul was still breathing threats to slaughter the Lord’s disciples. He had gone to the high priest and asked for letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, that would give him authority to arrest any followers of the Way, men or women, that he could find and take them to Jerusalem. Suddenly, while he was travelling to Damascus there came a great

light from heaven all round him. He fell to the ground, and then he heard a voice saying, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' 'Who are you, Lord?' he asked and the voice answered, 'I am Jesus and you are persecuting me. Get up now and go into the city where you will be told what to do.' Saul got up from the ground and he was blind, so he had to be led by the hand into the city, where he ate nothing for three days. A disciple called Ananias, who lived in Damascus, had a vision in which he heard the Lord say to him, 'Ananias, you must go to Straight Street and ask at the house of Judas for someone called Saul, who comes from Tarsus. At this moment he is praying, having had a vision of a man called Ananias coming in and laying hands on him to give him back his sight.' When he heard that, Ananias said, 'Lord, several people have told me about this man and all the harm he has been doing to your saints in Jerusalem. He has only come here to arrest any more people who follow you.' The Lord replied, 'you must go all the same, because I have chosen this man to preach my name to people all over the world, Jewish and pagan.' So Ananias went, found the house and went in. At once he laid his hands on Saul and said, 'brother Saul, I have been sent by the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on your way here so that you may recover your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' Immediately Saul could see again, so he was baptised there and then and took some food to regain his strength. After he had spent only a few days with the disciples in Damascus, he began preaching in the synagogue, 'Jesus is the Son of God'.

4) What do their stories tell us about following the Lord and accepting his call to holiness? What do you think it was like for those people who knew Saul before he was converted suddenly to see him preaching about Jesus?

Clearly for many the call represented a dramatic change in life and lifestyle – the disciples left their nets 'at once' and followed him. You wouldn't give them a reference for reliability would you?? This shows the impact that the personality of Jesus must have had on them, especially Matthew who left his money and his life as a tax-collector to follow Our Lord. Often this involved changing their name as well – Abram became Abraham; Simon became Peter; Saul became Paul. The new job demanded a new name. This happens often for people in the religious life. Many monks and nuns were given names when they made their profession to their congregation – think of any you know – and the most stunning example of all was a man called Jorge Mario Bergoglio. What was his name changed to and why? Jorge Bergoglio is an Argentinian, and archbishop of Buenos Aires. He arrived at the conclave to elect a successor to Benedict XVI with his return ticket in his pocket and the hope that he wouldn't have to be long in Rome before he could get back to his little flat and his poor people in the slums of Buenos Aires. This of course was not to be. As he sat in the conclave and it became obvious that his life was about to change for ever, his friend from Brazil, Claudio Hummes, sitting next to him whispered in his ear: "don't forget the poor" – and when asked what name he would wish to be known as in his new role as the pope, he replied, 'Francis', because Francis was the rich man who became poor in order to serve the Lord. Ever since, Pope Francis has lived up to his name in his manner of speaking and acting and he is showing us how to be a 'poor Church for the poor' in the most wonderful of ways.

5) What is 'holiness' anyway? What would it mean for us to be 'saints'? Can ordinary people like us really aspire to being 'saints'? Yes, if we accept our calling from God – how

many ways can we be 'called' by God to be his servants? Eg. ' – marriage, religious life, the priesthood, the single life.

We will ask people to come and talk to us about themselves, as married or single people, as priests or nuns. While we are not to be over-concerned with 'personalities' or 'celebrities', in considering the stories of the saints, either in detail or briefly, we can discern their humanity, their making mistakes, their overcoming serious difficulties and even their ultimate courage in surrendering their lives, and try to link those elements to our own lives

The Story of St. Joseph

Very little is known about St. Joseph, as he plays a part at the very beginning of Jesus' life and then seems to disappear. He was a good Jewish man who came from the family line of King David. His family was originally from Bethlehem, so that is why he had to go there to register his name as the emperor had demanded and of course, that is why Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Joseph himself lived in Nazareth in Galilee, quite some distance away. He was a poor carpenter by trade and was engaged to Mary when he heard in a dream that she was going to have a child. Other men would have walked away but not Joseph. He knew that if he abandoned Mary she might be stoned to death for having a child while not married, but more than this, he loved her and trusted her as indeed he loved and trusted God. Whatever God wanted him to do, he did at once, whether it was going to Bethlehem, looking after Mary as his wife or taking her to Egypt to escape from King Herod. Through the centuries St. Joseph has been honoured and loved. We think of him as the protector of our families and the patron of working people, and we always seek his help in our prayers when we are worried about our family and what might happen to us. Listen to these words from "Mother Mary", which help us to understand how difficult it was for Joseph when he found out Mary was pregnant with Jesus:

Joseph: What do I do now?
 My fiancée's expecting.
 The father is not me,
 What husband can I be
 To one whose child's not mine?
 But there's an explanation,
 She says he comes from God,
 It still seems very odd.
 But then I had a dream,
 So real and true it seemed:
 "Take Mary as your own
 And make with her your home.
 All that she says is true
 You too have work to do
 Protect and love your son,
 God's chosen special one."

Mary: Now I am afraid
To do what God is asking
But I'll do it still
And fulfil his will.
Joseph is my own
I have had no other
I know he'll love me now,
And find the way somehow.
For he's an honest man,
And he'll accept God's plan,
With me I hope he'll stay,
And work it out I pray.

He walks over to her

Joseph: Together we'll remain
In poverty or pain
For you will be my wife
The rest of my life

Both: What are we to do
It's such a painful journey,
To register our names
And play the emperor's games.
To Bethlehem we go
Sad and heavy hearted
And worried for the child
So frail and meek and mild.
But trust in God we will
Because we love him still,
and what he says we'll do,
because we trust him too
Because we love him still

Session 5 “No Greater love...”

“A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you...”

In this session we will concentrate on ‘giving your life away’ for God and focus initially on the greatest gift and greatest love of all that is of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave away his life for us on the cross:

*I have giv'n my life and endured the strife,
Of the pain and cross to achieve the loss
Of all the pride in us, all the greed and sin,*

*Shutting other people out, letting no one in.
By me you're redeemed, from all that it seemed
to be crushing you filling up your life
with boredom, emptiness, feeling lost and sad
all that dragged you down, all that made you bad (from 'Mother Mary')*

Once again, we are about to celebrate Holy Week and mark the events of Jesus' death and rising to new life on Easter Day. It is a wonderful and beautiful time, and it is good if we can take part in as much of the events as possible in our church. We will remember how Jesus came into Jerusalem and everyone was praising him, shouting, 'hosanna', and yet how, only five days later those very same people were shouting 'crucify him'. Why do you think that happened? We will have a little discussion on the subject now.

Then we note how Jesus' best friends, his disciples went to the Upper Room with them where he washed their feet in a gesture of service which they did not understand, how Peter promised he would never leave him and how Jesus told him that before the next morning he would have denied three times that he ever knew him. Then we see Jesus taking them to a garden to pray and how anguished he was, knowing what was going to happen to him and hoping that it wouldn't. One of his friends, Judas, betrayed him, and then Jesus was arrested, while all of his friends ran away in fear, and Peter did deny him when questioned by onlookers at Jesus' trial. Then Jesus was scourged, accused, humiliated, spat on and handed over to be crucified. Now we are going to make a very special prayer called the "Stations of the Cross", and we will go into church, and follow Jesus on his journey together. Look at the 'stations' or 'stages' on the church wall and see what you can notice about them. At the end of each station we will sing the prayer of the 'good' thief – "Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom".

First Station – Jesus is condemned to death. Jesus was brought before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, because the Romans occupied Israel at the time and the Jewish leaders could not try him themselves. They were angry and wanted to do away with him, but they needed Pilate, who just wanted a quiet life. He didn't really want to execute Jesus because he didn't think he was breaking the law, but he was frightened of the Jewish leaders, so had Jesus flogged and gave him to them and told them he was their responsibility.

What can you see in this Station; what do you notice about it? Let us pray for all those people who are unjustly accused and punished all over the world every day, even today.

Second Station – Jesus receives his cross. The reason Jesus was going to be crucified was that this was the way that Romans executed common criminals. The most humiliating and painful of deaths. So they gave Jesus a huge cross and made him carry it all the way to Calvary.

What can you see in this Station; what do you notice about it? Let us pray for all who are humiliated or bullied by others.

Third Station – Jesus falls the first time. Of course Jesus was already exhausted. He had lost a lot of blood when they flogged him and had been standing for hours, so it was natural that the weight of the cross should be too heavy for him and that he should fall.

What can you see in this Station; what do you notice about it? Let us pray for all those people who have heavy burdens of illness, sadness and misfortune to carry in life.

Fourth Station – Jesus meets his mother. Can you imagine what Mary must have felt like seeing all this happen to her son, who she knew was quite innocent? While it must have been difficult for Mary to agree to be Jesus' mother in the first place, this was far more difficult and painful.

What can you see in this Station; what do you notice about it? Let us pray for all parents who have to watch their children suffer and even die, and for those who are abandoned or neglected by their children

Fifth Station – Simon of Cyrene carries the cross behind Jesus. The guards were getting anxious that Jesus might not make it to Calvary, he was so tired, so they pulled a man out of the crowd, a stranger called Simon, who was just on his way to the city from the country, and they made him carry the cross with Jesus.

What can you see in this Station; what do you notice about it? Let us pray for all the strangers who help us or pray for us, and all the strangers we can help, like the starving people of the world, who we try to help through CAFOD, especially in Lent.

Sixth Station – Veronica wipes the face of Jesus. We don't know if this episode actually happened, but there is a legend that a woman came out of the crowd and wiped Jesus' face, which then left an imprint on the towel she used. We think of this as an act of kindness for someone in great pain and difficulty..

What can you see in this Station; what do you notice about it? Let us pray that we will always want to do acts of kindness for each other and particularly that we will notice when someone is unhappy or suffering and then want to help them.

Seventh Station – Jesus falls the second time. Now things were getting very bad for Jesus. He hardly had any strength left, even though Simon was helping him and so he fell down again.

What can you see in this Station; what do you notice about it? Let us pray for all those people who find life a real burden, and do not know how to cope with their difficulties.

Eighth Station – Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem. Not all the crowd were shouting insults at Jesus. Some of them, particularly the women, felt very sorry for him because they knew that he was innocent and that this should not be happening to him. When Jesus saw them he managed to speak to them and told them not to cry for him but for themselves and their children.

What can you see in this Station; what do you notice about it? Let us pray for those whose pity is misplaced, who cry because they want to draw attention to themselves or who feel sorry for other people but are not able or willing to do anything to help them.

Ninth Station – Jesus falls the third time. And now Jesus is completely spent; he cannot go another step, and falls down in the dust. The guards drag him up to make him crawl the last few yards to the place where they will crucify him.

What can you see in this Station; what do you notice about it? Let us pray for all those who cannot go on with life, who harm themselves or even take their own lives because of their despair and hopelessness.

Tenth Station – Jesus is stripped of his garments. We all like our clothes and we like to look good in them – for some of us that is easier than others! We certainly don't like the thought of being virtually naked in front of other people, particularly if our bodies are covered with sores. This is what happened to Jesus here. His clothes were torn off him and he was left with very little dignity.

What can you see in this Station; what do you notice about it? Let us pray that we can strip ourselves of all that is unnecessary for us to love God and each other and that we do not worry too much about how we look or what people think about us.

Eleventh Station – Jesus is crucified. When they got to Calvary, they threw Jesus to the ground and then nailed him to the cross. There were two criminals with him but they were attached to their crosses with rope. Only Jesus was treated so brutally. One of the thieves insulted him – “if you're what they say you are, why don't you get us down from here now” –but the other one knew that they deserved what they were getting and Jesus didn't so he said to him, “Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.” Our Lord replied to him, “today, you will be with me in paradise”.

What can you see in this Station; what do you notice about it? Let us pray for all those who are victims of cruelty of word or deed, at home in their families or at the hands of other people.

Twelfth Station – Jesus dies on the Cross. After three long painful hours on the cross, when his body was hanging and he could hardly breathe, when the nails in his hands and his feet tore at him, Jesus finally cried out in despair, “My God, my God, why have you deserted me?” and then died.

What can you see in this Station; what do you notice about it? Let us pray for all those who die in agony, through starvation, neglect, or murder.

Thirteenth Station – Jesus is taken down from the cross. There is a very famous statue in St. Peter's in Rome, called the 'pieta', which is of Mary, cradling the body of her dead son. What a terrible moment that must have been for her.

What can you see in this Station; what do you notice about it? Let us pray for all parents who have to bury their own children and then live without them.

Fourteenth Station – Jesus is laid in the tomb. The story goes that a secret follower of Jesus, called Joseph of Arimathea, did not want Jesus to be buried in any old tomb or left out for the birds, so he went to Pilate and asked if he could have the body and bury it himself. Pilate was probably feeling very guilty about what had happened and so gave Joseph permission. He took Jesus' body and buried it in a tomb he had made for himself, and rolled a large stone over the entrance to prevent anyone from getting in to it.

What can you see in this Station; what do you notice about it? Let us pray for all who are dead and forgotten, with no one to mourn them or think of them.

We know of course, that this was not the end of Jesus but that he rose to new life on Easter Day, which life he offers to all of us. He gave away his life completely and then found it again in a new and wonderful way, and so did all the saints, and so can we.

Hinckley We will take part in the Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's supper, help to strip the altar and mime the desertion of Jesus by his friends. Music: An Hani Ai Garan (Alan Stivell)

Now we will spend a little time making Easter cards to send to friends. We might ask our priest to take them round with him to people who are sick to let them know we are thinking of them. We end our evening with another saint's story. Here is a man who did what Jesus did and literally gave away his life for Our Lord and other people.

The Story of St. Maximilian Kolbe (1894-1941 - Feast day: August 14)

Raymond Kolbe was born in 1894 in Poland, and his father, who fought for Polish independence from Russia was hanged in 1914. On entering the Franciscan Order at the age of 16, took on the name Maximilian. He travelled to Japan and founded a monastery there. He contracted tuberculosis in 1920 and suffered from it for years. He had a great devotion to Mary, the 'servant of the Lord' and her role in the Christian story. Her obedience to God's word ("*I will do what the Lord says, because I am his servant*" – "*Mother Mary*") and her giving of herself prepared him for his own life of sacrifice and self-giving, which was to culminate tragically. In 1936 he returned to Poland just before World War 11 broke out. He was arrested by the Gestapo and then released, but gave shelter in his friary to refugees and Jews escaping the Nazis. He was arrested again in 1941 and sent to the notorious prison camp of Auschwitz. This was a time of great trial for all the prisoners, most of whom were killed in the gas chambers, but Fr. Maximilian encouraged and comforted them. When a prisoner tried escaped, the guards selected ten of them to die by starvation as a lesson to the others. Fr. Maximilian knew that one of them, Francis Gajowniczek had a wife and children and so offered to take his place. When asked why he should do something so reckless by the guards, he simply replied, "I am a Catholic priest". He and three others survived for two weeks and in the end the guards were so impatient for them to die that they injected them with carbolic acid, so he died on August 14. Like Our Lord, Fr. Maximilian gave up his very

life for another, and showed that faith is stronger than death. Saints are individuals who are willing to sacrifice all, who do not allow fear to govern their destiny. All of us, like them, are called to bear God's love and be agents of his light, through what we say and do and the small but significant sacrifices we have to make each day for Our Lord and others.

Session 6 The Easter Saints

Today we are thinking about Jesus rising from the dead. When he was on the cross, the only people left with him were his mother, St. John, and a few women, possibly including Mary Magdalen. This extract from "The First Witnesses" tells us what happened when three of the women went to Jesus' tomb on Easter morning. It is thought that they were Mary, the mother of James the apostle, Mary Salome, the mother of James and John, possibly even the sister of Our Lady, and Mary Magdalen.

Three women, Magdalen, Salome and Mary enter talking.

Salome Why are we doing this? It's dangerous

Magdalen We must, we must; we owe him

Mary Well I'm worried; what of we get arrested?

Magdalen They won't do anything to us; we're only stupid women; what do we know?

Salome All the same, I'm afraid

Magdalen Look, we owe him a decent burial. They rushed it the other night because it was the eve of the sabbath, and we couldn't do it yesterday. He's lying in that tomb unwashed and unanointed, like a common criminal. After all he's done for us, all he's given us, can we not do one last thing for him?

Mary You're right, Magdalen. My James deserted him - so did all the men. Fine 'disciples' they were.

Salome Men; they're all alike - all talk and no action. As soon as there's trouble, they're nowhere to be seen.

Mary But how will we get in? Who'll roll away the stone for us?

Magdalen It's probably still guarded - we'll ask one of them, if they're not still asleep!

Salome Won't they mind? They're not supposed to let anyone near it

Magdalen I told you, we're only women wanting to one last decent thing for a friend; they won't refuse us that

Salome I've got the ointment; it's the best money could buy; still, he's worth it

Magdalen No one has ever made me feel like he did; he made me feel alive, free, forgiven

Salome It was wonderful, wasn't it? Seeing all those people made well

Mary And seeing those Pharisees lost for words; he really showed them up for what they are - hypocrites

Salome They got him in the end, though, didn't they? I'd begun to hope, you know - hope that there would be a better life for us than this. He made me believe it, and now it's all gone again.

Magdalen Come on; it's no use crying over what we've lost - we've got a job to do

They walk around the church and slowly approach the sanctuary

Mary This is the place, isn't it? I recognise the garden

Magdalen Yes, but wait, there's no guards, and the stone, it's been rolled away

Salome Who could possibly be strong enough to do that?

They go in; Magdalen picks up the cloths

Magdalen He's not here; he's not here. There's no one here, only these cloths. Who's stolen him? Who's stolen him?

Mary We must find him; we must. So that he can have his final rest

Magdalen Let's go to Peter and the others; they'll know what to do

They run down the aisle, as Peter and a few disciples enter stage right. They sit, looking downcast and ashamed. The women are running up the central aisle, shouting

Magdalen Peter, Peter; it's empty; the tomb's empty!

Peter What are you saying, woman?

Magdalen They've taken his body out of the tomb and we don't know where they have put him

Peter They? Who?

Salome We don't know; we just went to the tomb to anoint his body, and when we got there - no guards, no stone; we went in and it was empty

James Peter, don't listen to them; they're hysterical; they're imagining it

Mary Imagining it, eh, James? Well we didn't imagine you lot running away like rats into a hole when he was arrested. We stayed with him, while you cowards hid

Salome Call yourselves men? You're a disgrace, that's what you are, and then you've got the cheek to accuse us of being hysterical

John I don't suppose it could be true, what he said - couldn't be true, could it? No of course it couldn't

Peter What couldn't be true, John?

John You know what he said about 'rising', from the dead

James Don't be ridiculous

Peter 'The Son of Man is destined to suffer grievously, to be put to death and to rise on the third day' - today's the third day. I'm going

James Going?

Peter To the tomb, to see for myself

He runs off

James Wait, I'll come with you

John And me

They follow. Magdalen follows slowly and eventually takes up a position some way from the tomb. The disciples eventually get to the tomb and Peter goes in, and picks up the cloths

Peter It's true; it must be true. If they stole the body, they'd have taken the cloths as well; he was wrapped up tight in them; why bother to take them off if they were moving him? He's done it, just like he said he would, risen from the dead

John Yes

James Yes

Peter Come on, let's tell the others

They rush off and Magdalen slowly approaches the tomb. She picks up the cloths, hugs them and starts to cry; she does not see a man approaching behind her

Jesus Woman, why are you crying? What are you looking for?

Magdalen Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, then I will go and remove him

Jesus Mary

It dawns on her who he is, and she flings herself at his feet

Magdalen Master! It's you; it really is you

Jesus Don't cling on to me; go and find the brothers, and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God

He lifts her up and points her in the direction of the disciples. She looks back at him and he very gently indicates for her to go. Jesus then backs away, leaving Magdalen alone, holding the cloths

Magdalen Peter! He's alive; I've seen him; he's alive

She rushes off, and the play ends

The Story of the women at the tomb

Very little is known about Mary, the mother of James and Salome. They appear to have been with Jesus quite a bit during his ministry and certainly at the end of his life. As such they would have been made fun of and insulted as women in those days were not supposed to be doing anything else but working at home. Here they were with Jesus on the road, helping those sick people who came to him for healing and feeding the group. At the end, when the men deserted Jesus, the women stayed near him; they were not afraid. They stood by the cross and then went to the tomb. They were the first 'witnesses' of the resurrection of Jesus. The most notable of them is Mary Magdalen. She was born in Magdala by the Sea of Galilee and was a wealthy business woman who is often portrayed as being very wicked but this is not necessarily true. She abandoned her wealth and was clearly the leader of the women who went around with Jesus and was present at the cross as well as on Easter morning. It was she who was the very first person to see the risen Jesus when he appeared to her, so she must have been very special indeed. Jesus asks her to go and tell the news to the others. Later, it was thought that she went to Ephesus with Mary, the mother of Jesus, where she stayed until she died. Mary Magdalen is for us the model of being faithful to Jesus even when it was

dangerous and difficult to do so. She was rewarded at the tomb when she saw him alive, and so will we be if we stay close to him.

Visit to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, Rearsby Leicester – May 8 2014

The Hinckley Sunshine Club made their visit to a religious community by going to see the sisters in Rearsby, where they got a great welcome. The congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace (CSJP) is an international community of women religious and women and men associates which was founded in Nottingham, England in 1884 by Margaret Anna Cusack, later known as Mother Clare, to work with others for justice and peace in the world. Through their prayer and work they seek to serve Our Lord and they often work with the poorest and most disadvantaged of people – those who are homeless, single mothers, people living on the street, caring for sick people who have no money to pay for their care, helping with the adoption and fostering of babies. One of the great sisters, Sr. Madeleine Campion, worked with us in SPANNED many years ago. She had been a Head Teacher but contracted a very difficult illness that mean she eventually lost as leg. She would go round the diocese in a specially adapted car, talking to and helping people who had become disabled like her, and they all loved her for it. Eventually when this became too much of a burden, she took a counseling course and became a fully qualified counselor, helping people with great sadnesses and anxieties, especially priests who were tired out by their work. Sr. Madeleine became ill herself again and she died last December aged 80. She is buried in the convent grounds and we all miss her. She is a great example of someone who has given her life to Our Lord in work, study and prayer.

When the group were at the convent, Sr. Bridgetta gave them a lovely talk:

“Have you heard about any people God called to do something special?

Have you heard stories about saints? a saint is someone who has lived a good life like us and is now in heaven.

Do you know anyone living or present here today who are saints?

Do you know someone here today who has been called by God?

Each of us is called to do something no one else can do:

In the cathedral last week, Danny went up with his book to Bishop Malcolm and gave him the thumbs up – no one else did that; that was what Danny felt called to do to let Bishop Malcolm know he was special.

Do you know someone who does things for people? That is their calling

Calling involves love; saints are people who loved. They loved God and they loved people. Mother Teresa loved the dying. St. Francis loved people but he also loved all that God created – flowers, trees, animals. He loved Jesus so much that he made the first Christmas crib so that everyone could love Christmas.

Here in our house, people are called to love God and others by becoming nuns and working for justice and peace. *(The nuns sang their special hymn, ‘we are called’ at this point)*

In the Bible God called a little boy called Samuel, but not everyone gets called in the way he did. Some people get a funny feeling inside themselves that they should be doing something for God. This feeling comes more and more until you have to do something about it. I was called to be a nun like that. There are some pictures in our big books of nuns in the past and some photos and pictures of young women who are called by God today.

Let us pray: O God we want to answer when you call us to be good, to be loving, to be saints, who shine. We will sing, 'shine Jesus shine' and since we are all called to be saints, we have made some special 'halos' for everyone to wear."

The evening ended with a splendid cup of tea and cakes.

Visit to Mount St.Bernard Abbey – May 18 2014

All of our groups gathered at Mount St.Bernard Abbey (where we had last been as long as 1985) for a lovely picnic, a talk from Fr.Joseph, sharing in the afternoon prayer of the monks and then Mass together in the beautiful abbey church. Fr.Joseph told us about the abbey, which is now 180 years old. The 30 monks belong to the Cistercian Order, which is a branch of the Benedictines. Our way of following God's call is that of the 'contemplative life'. We are devoted to the worship of God in silence and solitude like the Poor Clares. We have no schools or hospitals to work in as our work is entirely the worship of God in prayer. One of the reasons for this is that all people who have busy lives don't always have the time to devote to God and we see ourselves as doing this on their behalf. We start each day at 3.15am, which is very early and difficult in the winter when it is cold and dark and not so easy to get up! We have 7 'services' each day, the shortest being called 'None', which we have just celebrated with you. Throughout the day when we are not in church we each have different jobs to keep the life of the community going – farm, bee-keeping, lambs, orchards, growing vegetables, print shop, pottery, and monastery shop. This is how we earn our living. We feel we have our very own 'saint' in Blessed Cyprian Tansi, who spent many years here as a monk until his death in 1964. Many people come to pray at his shrine. He was a very simple man from Nigeria, and when he was declared 'blessed', his body was exhumed from our cemetery and taken back to Nigeria. In our devotion to the saints we realize that it is not we who have chosen them but they who have chosen us to be devoted to them. They see someone they like and want to be their friend, and they come into our lives because of it: they want us to be their friends first, and thus they help us to be friends with Jesus as well.

Liturgy for Mount St.Bernard Abbey Mass

Entry Hymn Christ be beside me

Introduction *Loughborough Group*

Reader 1 Good afternoon everyone and welcome to Mount St.Bernard Abbey for this very special Mass

Reader 2 We would like to thank the monks here for making us so welcome and sharing a little of their life in the service of Our Lord with us today

Reader 3 This year, our SPANNED project comes from the words of our dear friend Sr.Mary David from Loughborough many years ago: "We're not saints, dear, just saints in the making"

- Reader 4 And we've been thinking about that in our group work this year so far
- Reader 5 We've thought about all the special people we know and what makes them special – people who are good to us, do things they do not have to do, make sacrifices of their time and what they have for others. Some are famous and some are people we know ourselves
- Reader 6 We feel that 'saints' are people who belong to God in their hearts and serve him in their lives, and sometimes this costs them an awful lot
- Reader 1 Sometimes they were people who made big mistakes but Jesus changed them
- Reader 2 We've told some of their stories already – St.Bernadette, St.Clare, St.Patrick, St.Joseph, and St.Maximilian Kolbe
- Reader 3 And there are countless more ordinary people whom we do not know who live with God now as his saints
- Reader 4 We are all called to be saints – isn't that amazing? – God wants all of us to be 'holy', to belong to him and live in his way
- Reader 5 So today at Mass, we are going to think about how God called some of his friends – Samuel, Peter, James, John and Matthew – and what happened when he called them
- Reader 6 Already some of us have been to visit people who have been called in a special way – the sisters at Bulwell and Rearsby – to learn about their way of life
- Reader 1 Today we have come to this beautiful place of prayer to learn about how the monks accept God's calling and to hear the story of one of them, Blessed Cyprian Tansi
- Reader 2 We think too of the most special of all God's saints, the 'servant of the Lord', Mary the mother of Jesus
- Reader 3 Listen now to some of the words from her lovely musical "Mother Mary", which we saw in Hinckley, Loughborough and Nottingham before Christmas
- Reader 4 These are words which show us what being a 'saint' means, how all of us can be saint as well
- Reader 5 Jesus shows us how to live and love, putting others' needs before ours forgetting everything we want or crave then finding our joy in giving.

Reader 6 When you love like this you come to life learning how to hope and pray
all your self-interest left behind, celebrate in joy today

All Can you change your mind, and be good and kind?
Look around and see, come and follow me.
I will turn your life around, I will make you give;
I will show you how to love, how to truly live.
Come and follow me

Rite of Penance *Derby Group*

Reader 1 Can you change your mind and be good and kind? Lord Jesus for the times
we have thought too much about ourselves and not about you and what
you want us to be, Lord have mercy

Reader 2 You have giv'n your life and endured the strife, of the pain and
cross to achieve the loss of all the pride in us, all the greed and sin,
shutting other people out, letting no one in. Lord Jesus, Take away our
pride and sin and forgive us for neglecting you, Christ have mercy

Reader 3 See the suffering near to you, maybe far away; let them all be dear to you,
this and every day. Lord Jesus, for all the times we have not thought about
or tried to help others, Lord have mercy

Priest Jesus says to us: It doesn't take that much effort, once you are committed
to me and what I stand for. You can leave old ways behind you, follow on
this new road, be caring and be cared for. May almighty God have mercy
on us....

Opening Prayer

First Reading *Derby Group* The call of Samuel

Narrator 1 This is the story of how Samuel was called by God to be his friend and do
his work. He lived in the temple because his mother, Hannah had brought
him to God as a child, so pleased was she that she could have a child at all.
So he was brought up there by Eli, the priest.

Narrator 2 Samuel spent his time in the special part of the temple where the scrolls of
God's law were kept. He was lying on his bed one night when the voice of
God spoke to him

God Samuel, Samuel

Samuel Here I am

Narrator 1 Then he ran to Eli and said

Samuel Here I am, since you called me

Eli I did not call you my son; go back and lie down

Narrator 2 So he went back and lay down and then God spoke to him again

God Samuel, Samuel

Samuel Here I am

Narrator 1 So he got up again and went to Eli and said

Samuel Here I am since you called me

Eli I did not call you, my son; go back and lie down

Narrator 2 So he went back and lay down and God spoke to him a third time

God Samuel, Samuel

Samuel Here I am

Narrator 1 Once again, Samuel went to Eli and said

Samuel Here I am since you called me

Narrator 2 Eli then realised that it was God who was calling the boy and said to him

Eli Go back and lie down in your place and if someone calls, you say, 'speak Lord, your servant is listening'

Narrator 1 So Samuel went back and lay down and once again, God called him

God Samuel, Samuel

Samuel Speak, Lord, your servant is listening

Narrator 2 And this is how Samuel became a friend of God. This is the Word of the Lord

Psalm I the Lord of sea and sky

Gospel *Nottingham Group* The call of Jesus' first disciples

Narrator 1 This reading is taken from the gospels of St.Mark and St.Matthew and tells us how Jesus called his first friends

Narrator 2 As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother, Andrew, casting a net in the lake, for they were fishermen.

Disciples fishing; Jesus approaches them and calls them

Narrator 1 And Jesus said to them, 'follow me and I will make you fishers of men.' and at once, they left their nets and followed him.

They do so

Narrator 2 Going on a little further, he saw James and John, the sons of Zebedee; they too were in their boat, mending their nets. He called them at once, and leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the men he employed, they went after him.

James and John do the same and wave to their father

Narrator 1 As Jesus was walking on from there, he saw a man named Matthew, sitting by the customs house, and he said to him, 'follow me', and he got up and followed him.

Matthew sitting at a table, counting his money; he gets up and leaves it to follow Jesus

Narrator 2 This is the gospel of the Lord

Homily *The story of Blessed Cyprian Tansi*

Bidding Prayers *Leicester Group*

Priest Dear Father, we come to you today with love and thanks and offer you our prayers

Reader 1 We thank you for the saints, for their lives on earth and their prayers for us in heaven; help us to learn from them and be your saints in the making.
Lord hear us

Reader 2 Dear Father, show us how we can accept the call you give to each of us to love and serve you wherever we are. Lord hear us

Reader 3 We pray for all who have accepted Jesus' call to serve you as priests or in the religious life. We thank you for this community of Mount St.Bernard Abbey and all that it has meant to so many people for so long. Lord hear us

- Reader 4 We thank you for a very special person, our beloved Bishop Malcolm, who is now in Liverpool. Please bless him and look after him there. Lord hear us
- Reader 5 We pray for our dear friends who have died recently: Sister Bernardine Bill, Roy Phillips, May Walsh and Chris Theobald. Please take them into your light and love for ever. Lord hear us
- Reader 6 Mary is the servant of the Lord and our mother. We pray with her that we may be like her, as we say: Hail Mary
- Reader 7 And now we say the prayer of the servant church together:

Loving Father, fill us with your presence in Jesus your Son. May we think with the mind of Christ, see with the eyes of Christ, speak with the words of Christ, serve with the hands of Christ, love with the heart of Christ and live with the life of Christ, who is Lord for ever and ever.

In thanksgiving to Bishop Malcolm *Scunthorpe Group*

- Reader 1 As you know, our dear Bishop Malcolm has been asked by the Pope to go to Liverpool as the new archbishop. We will all miss him and have written messages to him today which we will place in a special book to send him with this letter:
- Reader 2 Dear Bishop Malcolm, we, your friends from SPANNED, are gathered here in the church of one of your favourite places, Mount St. Bernard Abbey, to think about special people and pray that we can be like them in the Lord's service.
- Reader 1 Of course, when we think of special people, we have to think about you and how special you have been to us. We all miss you very much and wish that you were still down the road from us. How are you getting on in your new home?
- Reader 2 We know you've hardly been there and that it will be quite a shock going to Liverpool, but we hope that you're doing all right and have made some new friends already. We wonder if they will ever know how lucky they are to have a friend like you as we have been.
- Reader 1 We're sure that you will do great things in Liverpool and that everyone will come to love you soon as we do, and we want you to know that whatever happens, we, your special friends, will never forget you. We have so much to thank you for – your goodness, kindness and

cheerfulness. How much we all loved the times we spent together; they were really great, weren't they? Please be sure of our prayers for you always.

Reader 2 We promise you that every time we meet together in SPANNED we will say a prayer for you and remember you at Mass. Hopefully you will think of us from time to time as well. If an opportunity comes before too long, we hope that we will have the chance to see you again and spend a little time in your company. That would be really great. In the meantime, take care of yourself but please, whatever you do, don't get a "scouse" accent – that would be so terrible! With lots of love from all your friends in SPANNED

Offertory *Scunthorpe Group*

Hymn All that I am

Prayer over the gifts

Preface

Eucharistic Prayer No.2

Our Father *Hinckley Group*

Narrator 1 When you want to be God's friends, don't show off so that others can see you

Group A enter showing off

Narrator 2 So when you are giving money away, do not have it trumpeted before you

The group imitate trumpet players

This is what the hypocrites do in the churches and streets so that everyone will notice and be impressed

They mime giving money away and waving to everyone

I tell you, they have had their reward

The group stop and look shocked

Narrator 1 No, when you give money away, your left hand must not know what your right hand is doing

Group B enter and slap their left hands with their right

Give your money away in secret

They put their fingers to their lips and say 'sssh!'

And your father, who sees all that is done in secret will reward you

They join their hands in prayer and look upwards

Narrator 2 And when you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites

Group A all pray loudly and raucously – “can you hear me God? Here I am, yoo hoo, look at me, I’m praying” etc.

They love to say their prayers in church standing up where everyone can see them

They carry on waving and stretching out their hands

I tell you, they have had their reward

The group stop and look shocked

Narrator 2 But when you pray, go to your private room and shut your door

Group B mime shutting their door and then praying

And then pray to your Father who is in that secret place

They put their fingers to their lips and say 'sssh!'

And your father, who sees all that is done in secret will reward you

They join their hands in prayer and look upwards

Narrator 1 And when you fast do not look miserable like the hypocrites do

Group A look miserable

They pull long faces to let everyone know they are fasting

They moan and groan – “Look at me, I’m fasting; it’s terrible” etc.

I tell you, they have had their reward

The group stop and look shocked

Narrator 2 But when you fast put oil on your head and wash your face

Group B mime this

So that no one will know you are fasting, except your father, who sees all that is done in secret

They put their fingers to their lips and say 'sssh!'

And your father, who sees all that is done in secret will reward you

They join their hands in prayer and look upwards

Narrator 1 And when you pray, do not babble as some people do

Group A 'babble'

They think that by using many words, they will make themselves heard

They make a show us speaking very quickly and asking for things (eg. 'give me money, make me rich, make me strong', etc.)

Narrator 2 I tell you solemnly, they have had their reward.

The group stop and look shocked

Narrator 1 Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need even before you ask him

Group B look upwards and smile. Then all the group gather together in a big circle and hold hands

This is how you should pray

All the group say or sing the 'Our Father'

Communion Music O Lord my heart is not proud (CD Rizza)

After Communion *Nottingham Group* The Deer's Cry – the prayer of St.Patrick

Prayer after Communion

Final Hymn Come and follow me ("Mother Mary")

Session 7 “Can you change your mind?”

If you remember our lovely day at Mt.St.Bernard Abbey, for our gospel reading we looked at the call of Jesus’ first disciples – Peter and Andrew, James and John and Matthew. We were told that they left their nets ‘at once’ and followed him. Wasn’t that strange – just to give up your whole livelihood and way of life in an instant and be willing to change everything to follow Jesus? What do you think it must have been like for them and their families? In these next two sessions, we will look at ‘changing your life’ for Jesus. How many saints do we know whose whole lives changed because of Our Lord and following him? What impact did it have on them and others? Are we willing to change or be changed so that we can live in his way too?

Zebedee’s story

My name is Zebedee and I fish for a living; it’s the only thing I’ve ever done, the only thing I know how to do. We live here by the Sea of Galilee as it’s called and we fish, all day, every day, and some of the nights as well. Some people might say that it’s a bit boring and maybe it is but it’s all I know. I’ve got a good wife, though she’s a bit pushy sometimes, and two sons, James and John. They help me most of the time, when they’re not chasing round here and there as young men seem to want to do these days, and they’ve got good at the work. I was hoping that they’d come into the business properly with me some day, but they’ll need to get a bit of sense first. Their mother’s got notions for them. She thinks they could do better in life than being just fishermen – just fishermen, excuse me, as if that wasn’t enough? – but I’d like them to settle down and maybe take over the business some day soon, but that’s hardly likely at the moment. They’re so impetuous, you know, and excitable – “Sons of Thunder”, that’s their nick-name and very appropriate too. They’re always after the next ‘big thing’ and going off at a whim and leaving me to the work all on my own, so they’ve not been here for a while, no regular job for them. They just pop in for a day or two now and then and give me hand and then they’re off again. You see, something happened to them and I’m sure it’s changed them, whether for the better or not only time will tell. Nearly three years ago, we were fishing away as normal, and this chap came along, sort of wandering preacher he was. I don’t take too much notice of these people; they’re two a penny round here. There’s always someone coming around with something to say and to be quite honest, it’s a bit annoying. These blokes ought to get a proper job and do a real day’s work instead of swanning around telling all sorts of stories. Many people believe them and are taken in by it, but not me. I can see through them straight away – well, usually, anyway. This bloke seemed a bit different from the rest. First of all he’d got warts on his hands, so he was obviously used to hard work. That’s enough to get my respect, I can tell you. I think they said he was some sort of carpenter or something. anyway, he comes up to my lads and me as we were working away and said something very strange: ‘follow me and I will make you fishers of men’. Whatever did that mean, ‘fishers of men’? He looked straight into the face of my lads, and they just upped and left me, without even a ‘goodbye’ or ‘see you later’. I’m used to them clearing off like this, ‘cos they usually come back after a day or two when they’ve run out of money, so though I was angry with them, I didn’t think too much about until they didn’t come back. They seem to spend all their time with this carpenter fellow going round and about preaching and that – preaching, my lads? You’ve got to be joking! Well, he must have had some huge

effect on them 'cos, they've not been back at all, only very rarely, and then they're off again. One thing, though, they don't seem so restless any more, and they've actually become quite kind and considerate, particularly to their mother and me. I wasn't prepared for that, especially since they just upped and left me to it in the boat and I hadn't a clue what they were up to – thought it was just another of their jaunts, but somehow this is different. So, I don't know what to make of it, I can tell you, but I just wish they'd come home. It's lonely here, and I'm beginning to feel my age. I could really do with the help now. I just wish they'd come home.

Matthew's story

I've always loved money you know, perhaps I shouldn't say that but it's the truth. I love the look of it, shiny gold coins in your hand and the feel of it, and even the smell of it. I suppose you could say I was a bit obsessed with it really – not so much having it but making it, acquiring it, stockpiling it even, for no real reason. It was a very strange way to be. Well, there wasn't much opportunity for a lad like me round here, no obvious job or career for me to make my way and it got a bit frustrating, so in the end, I cheated. I did a terrible thing, but I couldn't help myself. There was a job coming up, a job that everyone would have liked but no one dared go for, except me, because it would be seen as betrayal and you would lose all your friends overnight, but the lure of the money proved too much for me. I became a tax collector. That means I went to work for the Roman government taking money off my own Jewish people, who were being taxed and humiliated by the invaders. They just wanted more and more money for their splendid 'tributes' and shows, to support their armies and their lavish style of living. Any Jewish boy who wanted to get on could make a tidy sum helping them, if he could take the abuse and the shame, so I joined up. It was tough, I can tell you, sitting there by the customs house every day and collecting the taxes they knew they had to pay for fear of Roman justice – and believe me, these people know how to hurt you and be cruel; they're little more than barbarians when it comes to that sort of thing – but I know that for all the swearing and cursing at me from my own people, I was actually getting a percentage, so I put up with it. I could close my eyes to all the sin in it. There were a good few others doing it and we tended to stick together, if you know what I mean. We certainly weren't welcome among our friends and families, outcasts, we became, but I tell you what, at least we weren't poor. They certainly made enemies out of us, called us the 'scum of the earth' and all that sort of thing, but we had the money, didn't we, and they didn't. So I put up with it 'cos I liked the excitement of making money, that is until one day.... sometimes I don't think I can talk about it, it was so strange and so dramatic, and changed everything. This man came up to me as I was sitting there. I later discovered he was called Jesus of Nazareth. He looked me straight in the face, you know that penetrating sort of look that goes right through you, right into your soul, and he spoke softly but very firmly two words: "follow me". Well, I don't know what happened to me, to this day I still don't understand it, but do you know, I just got up and went after him. I left all the money, all the nice shiny coins I'd been handling right there on the table and went after him. Something changed me, just like that; it's so amazing, but this Jesus he was truly amazing. He'd got a group of friends and they went round talking to people about God. He calls God 'Father' – I never heard that before, nor did any of his listeners either and they didn't take too kindly to it, either – and he sat with people all around him, more and more each day, talking, slowly,

softly about our faith, the Jewish faith, and how we'd got it all wrong, how we didn't really understand the meaning of our own tradition, and do you know, it makes sense. It makes perfect sense. Can't say that I ever thought about it so deeply before, but I do now. I can't bear to think what I was like before 'cos now it's so different. He made me feel forgiven; he made me feel better about myself. He made me forget about my obsession with making money. Just as well 'cos we haven't got any. We're living from hand to mouth day in day out, but it really doesn't seem to matter. There's such an excitement in being around him. Not only does he say wonderful things but he does them as well – healing people who are sick, blind, lame, leprous. It really is quite amazing and more and more people seem to want to follow him. One day, you know, if I ever get time, I'd like to write a book about all this, so that in future I can look back and tell myself, 'yes, this really did happen'; it wasn't a dream or something I imagined. I don't know what'll be next for us. It's beginning to look a bit dangerous, 'cos not too many of the Jewish leaders are over-impressed with this Jesus. I think they think he's a bit of a nuisance, but I don't. He certainly did something to me and I know I'll never be the same again, never go back to the tax collecting. This life is scary but it's so much more exciting than before. Come to think of it, I wonder if I ever was living before at all.

Discussion in groups

“Can you change your mind and be good and kind? Look around and see, come and follow me” (*“Mother Mary”*)

1. If you were to 'follow' Jesus, what would that mean for you?
2. Is there anything you would need to give up?
3. What would have to change in your life for that to take place?
4. How can we be followers of Jesus in our lives today?

Please make note of the replies

Here is the story of another saint whose life changed dramatically once he became a follower of Jesus:

St. Ignatius Loyola

Ignatius was born in a castle in northern Spain in 1491, one year before the queen and king of Spain sent Columbus sailing off to discover America! Since Ignatius was a member of a noble family, he became a courtier (an attendant at a royal court) and a soldier. When he was fighting to defend the castle at Pamplona, his leg was shattered by a cannonball—and his life changed for ever. While recovering from the wound, Ignatius read a lot of religious books, and stories of the saints like St. Francis and wanted to imitate them so he decided to become a missionary. He left his sword at a shrine of the Blessed Mother and exchanged his fine clothes for those of a beggar. He lived in a cave for a year, praying and writing. There he wrote his great work, the “Spiritual Exercises”, which was designed to help people have a personal life with Jesus in prayer and is still used today for retreats. The main desire was to find God in all things. He went back to school for a while and then left Spain having been put

in jail for his teaching, to go to Paris, and while at the university there he, and a few friends – including those who would later become St. Peter Faber and St. Francis Xavier - formed a group known as the Society of Jesus or Jesuits. Ignatius did not plan to found a new religious order but a group of "commandos" who could respond quickly and go out on "missions" to preach and work wherever or whenever they were needed. The pope approved this new idea, and Ignatius' band of "apostolic adventurers" grew from ten to one thousand in a few short years and eventually spread to many countries. In 1541 he was elected as the first Superior of the Jesuits and remained doing this for 15 years until he died in 1556. The Society of Jesus, whose motto is: 'to the greater glory of God', became one of the Church's greatest religious organizations and still is today. One of their members became very famous recently – Pope Francis!

Session 8 The Story of SS. Peter & Paul – the men with 'new names'

Some of the great saints not only 'changed' their lives when they became followers of Jesus, but were also able to overcome their mistakes. Here is a story of two of them, which we will use for our gathering together in Scunthorpe on their feast day, June 29.

Voice 1 Peter wasn't always called Peter. He was called Simon, until Jesus changed his name for him, but more of that later. He was a fisherman, in Galilee, with his brother Andrew, and friends James and John, a bit rough and crude, but very keen, and liable to do things on the spur of the moment.

Voice 2 He could never have imagined what would happen to him that day when Jesus came along and called him when he was out fishing:

Jesus Come, follow me and I will make you a fisher of men.

Peter What me?

Jesus Yes, you.

Peter leaves the group and comes over to Jesus. The rest of the group assemble in front of Jesus

Voice 1 And do you know, that's just what they did, left everything they had at once, at once, can you believe it, and followed him. something amazing must have happened to Peter and the other to make them do that.

Voice 2 So, he did, follow Jesus, that is, all round the place, all the time, never left him, for three years.

Voice 1 They were astounded by the things he did and said, the people he healed, the words he spoke from God, but they had no idea of how much this might upset the Jewish leaders, who wanted Jesus out of the way

Voice 2 So when Jesus celebrated the last supper, and of course, the first Mass, with them, he washed their feet, but Peter would not let him

Jesus washes their feet and then comes to Peter

Peter You will never wash my feet

Jesus If I do not wash your feet, you can never be my friend

Ben Then Lord, not only my feet but my head and my hands as well

Voice 1 Then Jesus told them that he had to go away and that they could not come with him, but Peter was angry

Peter Why can't I come with you? I will lay down my life for you

Jesus Lay down your life for me; tonight you will all desert me, and run away.

Peter They might, but I won't; I'll die for you

Jesus Die for me? Before the cock crows tomorrow morning, you will have denied me three times.

Peter I won't, I just won't, ever

Voice 2 But he did. didn't he? Look what happened when Jesus was arrested:

Voice 1 After the meal, Jesus took them to the garden of Gethsemane, where he was sad and afraid because he knew what was going to happen to him. Judas came with some soldiers and betrayed Jesus with a kiss. The soldiers arrested him and all the disciples, including Peter ran away

Voice 1 They took Jesus to the high priest's palace and Peter stayed outside, hiding, but a servant girl spotted him

Two guards flank Jesus and Peter stands away. Three girls approach him in turn.

Girl 1 (to Peter) Hey you, you're one of his friends!

Peter I'm not, I don't know what you're talking about - I don't even know him.

Girl 2 Yes you do; I've seen you with him loads of times;

Peter No you haven't, I don't know him

Girl 3 You do, yes you do, you've even got the same accent.

Voice 2 Then Peter started screaming and shouting

Peter I don't know him; I tell you I've never even seen the man before.

Voice 1 At that very moment, the cock crew, and Peter remembered what Jesus had said – before this very night is over, you will have disowned me three times, and he was shamed. So he went outside and wept bitterly.

Peter holds his hands to his head.

Voice 2 But God can do great things, even with people who are ashamed.

Voice 1 Three days later, when Jesus had died and was buried. Mary of Magdala came to the tomb with some friends and they saw that it was empty. She found Peter and told him

She runs down the aisle to Peter

Magdalen They have taken him away

Voice 2 So Peter ran to the tomb with James and John. He saw and he believed

Peter Jesus is alive! Jesus is alive

They resume their fishing

Voice 1 Very shortly afterwards, when Peter and his friends had gone back to their day jobs as fishermen, they had been fishing all night and caught nothing. Jesus appeared on the beach but they did not know it was him

Jesus enters

Jesus Have you caught anything, friends?

Peter Nothing at all, nothing at all

Jesus Try fishing on the other side

Voice 2 So they went out in the boat again and this time, they caught so many fish that they could hardly bring the boat back. Then James realised who it was

James It's Jesus; it's Jesus

Voice 1 Peter came up to him and said

Peter Leave me, Lord, I am a sinful man

Voice 2 But Jesus told them to bring some fish and have breakfast. After breakfast, Jesus turned to Peter and said

Jesus Simon Peter, do you love me?

Peter Yes, Lord, you know I love you

Jesus Feed my lambs

Voice 1 Then Jesus asked him again

Jesus Simon Peter, do you love me?

Peter Lord, you know I love you

Jesus Look after my sheep

Voice 2 And then for a third time, Jesus asked him

Jesus Simon Peter, do you love me?

Peter Lord, you know everything. You know I love you

Voice 1 In fact Jesus asked him three times just to make sure and Peter told him three times, just so that he was sure. Then Jesus changed his name to Peter because he was giving him a new job and a new life. He said:

Jesus Look after my sheep. You are Peter, and that means 'rock'; on this rock, you, I will build my Church.

Peter gathers the group together and goes off, pointing back at Jesus.

Voice 2 And Peter did; he went around telling everyone about Jesus all around the country, and helping them to live in Jesus' way.

Paul comes up the aisle, looking strained.

Voice 3 Paul wasn't always called Paul, in fact his name was Saul. He was a very devout Jew, very holy and strict - probably a bit boring, well, you know how it is with people like that - too much religion and not enough love.

Voice 4 Saul was very serious, and completely over the top. He believed that there was only one God, and that he was the God of the Jewish people, as he had always promised. There could be no other God and no other religion, and that was that.

Voice 3 Then he heard about the Christians - a new group of people who claimed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and the one that God had always promised to his people.

Groups of people approach with their hands joined in prayer.

Voice 4 Well, Saul didn't like that, not one bit. He was very angry, and spent his time going round trying to find Christians and have them thrown into prison or even killed.

Saul goes round dragging people out.

Saul Here, here's one, and here another, and another - take them away and lock them up.

Voice 3 Saul was vicious; he could not abide the thought that he had been wrong all his life, and that he had not realized that this Jesus really was the Son of God. When he heard that there were a lot of Christians hiding in Damascus, he set out to go there, to find them and imprison them.

Saul goes round looking threatening then all of a sudden, stops short.

Voice 4 Suddenly, while he was travelling to Damascus there came a great light from heaven all round him. He fell to the ground, and then he heard a voice saying,

Saul falls to the ground

Jesus Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

Saul Who are you, Lord?

Jesus I am Jesus and you are persecuting me. Get up now and go into the city where you will be told what to do.

Voice 3 Saul got up from the ground and he was blind, so he had to be led by the hand into the city, where he ate nothing for three days. A disciple called Ananias, who lived in Damascus, had a vision in which he heard the Lord say to him, 'Ananias, you must go to Straight Street and ask at the house of Judas for someone called Saul, who comes from Tarsus. At this moment he is praying, having had a vision of a man called Ananias coming in and laying hands on him to give him back his sight.'

Voice 4 When he heard that, Ananias said,

- Ananias Lord, several people have told me about this man and all the harm he has been doing to your saints in Jerusalem. He has only come here to arrest any more people who follow you.
- Voice 3 The Lord replied, ‘you must go all the same, because I have chosen this man to preach my name to people all over the world, Jewish and pagan.’
- Voice 4 So Ananias went, found the house and went in. At once he laid his hands on Saul and said,
- Ananias Brother Saul, I have been sent by the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on your way here so that you may recover your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’
- Voice 3 Immediately Saul could see again, so he was baptised there and then and took some food to regain his strength. So Saul realized that Jesus really was the one he had been looking for. God changed his name to Paul, and not only that, God changed his whole personality. Paul then set out to tell everyone everywhere about Jesus and went all over the world doing so
- Voice 4 After he had spent only a few days with the disciples in Damascus, he began preaching in the synagogue,
- Saul Jesus is the Son of God
- Voice 3 God changed these two men as well as changing their names; he gave them both special jobs to do for him, and he helped them with his special help.
- Voice 4 God gives us names when we are baptized, and also special jobs to do for him. Sometimes we may not know what that job is, but if we listen hard enough to God when we pray, maybe He will tell us, and maybe we will want to do what he asks us, just as Saint Peter and Saint Paul did.

Discussion:

1. What do the stories of Peter and Paul tell us about following the Lord and accepting his call to holiness?
2. What do you think it was like for those people who knew Saul before he was converted suddenly to see him preaching about Jesus?

Clearly for many the call represented a dramatic change in life and lifestyle – the disciples left their nets ‘at once’ and followed him. You wouldn’t give them a reference for reliability would you?? This shows the impact that the personality of Jesus must have had on them, especially Matthew who left his money and his life as a tax-collector to follow Our Lord. Often this involved changing their name as well – Abram became Abraham; Simon became Peter; Saul became Paul. The new job demanded a new name. This happens often for people

in the religious life. Many monks and nuns were given names when they made their profession to their congregation – think of any you know – and the most stunning example of all was a man called Jorge Mario Bergoglio. What was his name changed to and why? Jorge Bergoglio is an Argentinian, and archbishop of Buenos Aires. He arrived at the conclave to elect a successor to Benedict XVI with his return ticket in his pocket and the hope that he wouldn't have to be long in Rome before he could get back to his little flat and his poor people in the slums of Buenos Aires. This of course was not to be. As he sat in the conclave and it became obvious that he was going to be elected and his life was about to change for ever, his friend from Brazil, Claudio Hummes, sitting next to him whispered in his ear: “don't forget the poor” – and when asked what name he would wish to be known as in his new role as the pope, he replied, ‘Francis’, because Francis was the rich man who became poor in order to serve the Lord. Ever since, Pope Francis has lived up to his name in his manner of speaking and acting and he is showing us how to be a ‘poor Church for the poor’ in the most wonderful of ways.

3. What is ‘holiness’ anyway? What would it mean for us to be ‘saints’? Can ordinary people like us really aspire to being ‘saints’? Yes, if we accept our calling from God – how many ways can we be ‘called’ by God to be his servants? Eg. ’ – marriage, religious life, the priesthood, the single life. We have heard about people who live what we call a ‘religious life’ in communities like the Poor Clares, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace and the monks of Mount St. Bernard Abbey. Soon we are going to hear from a married couple and a single person about how they feel they can be ‘holy’ and accept their calling from God.

Here is the story of another of the saints who made mistakes but who was able to overcome them once he became a follower of Jesus, St. Augustine

St. Augustine

St. Augustine lived in Africa a very long time ago, as he was born in 354 AD. His father died when he was 16 and his mother, St. Monica was a very holy woman who taught him about Jesus and his way when he was a boy. But when he grew up and left home, he forgot all about his mother's teachings and led a wild and crazy life. He was very clever and went away to Carthage to study philosophy. He met a woman and they had a son together, and he eventually went all the way to Rome to open a school for philosophers. This didn't satisfy him so he went up north to Milan to teach in the university there. He was really looking for wisdom, the thinking that would show him what to do with his life. While he was there, he met a great man, St. Ambrose, and listened to him preaching. It was as if something dawned on Augustine and he clearly understood what life was about. He decided to become a Christian and his mother came to Milan to be with him, when he was baptized by Ambrose in the year 387, but she was to die at the end of the very same year. People often think of St. Monica as the patron of long-suffering mothers, who pray for their sons and daughters to get a bit of sense and do something useful with their lives! So Augustine returned to Africa, to where he was born, and was ordained a priest and later a bishop in a place called Hippo in 396. He stayed there for over 35 years, teaching and writing. He wrote over 200 explanations of church teachings, plus letters and instructions, and his most famous works were called the “Confessions of St. Augustine” and “The City of God”. He became one of the greatest

thinkers in the history of the Church and his writings are still used today. He died in Hippo on August 28 430 and that is his feast day. St. Augustine wrote this beautiful prayer about how God had completely changed his life and made him want to be a follower of Jesus:

“Late have I loved you, o beauty so ancient and so new; late have I loved you. For you were within me and I was outside; I looked for you outside and saw the lovely things that you have made. You were with me and I was not with you. You called and cried to me and broke open my deafness; you shone your light upon me and chased away my blindness; you breathed fragrance upon me, and I drew in my breath and do now pant for you; I tasted you and now hunger and thirst for you; you touched me and I have burned for your peace.”

Discussion in groups

1. Did you ever make a mistake or mistakes and wish you hadn't?
2. Could you tell us what they were?
3. How did you get over it and change things?
4. Do you feel better now?

Hinckley group replies:

We all make mistakes and think we shouldn't. Sometimes we say we are sorry when we have done it. We can fall out with friends, turn up on the wrong day and time for events, shout at people, forget their names, forget appointments, go the wrong way in the car etc.

We say we are sorry to God first and then to our friends. We try not to make the same mistakes again. We try to make up and be friendly again. We think before we speak. We feel sad when we have made mistakes but happy when we say sorry and have made friends again.

Nottingham group replies:

John Leonard said he had never made a mistake! Ann said she once made dumplings with lard. Fr. Frank put his foot through the ceiling in the presbytery of his first parish when he went up into the loft to bring down the Christmas crib! Ian had a similar experience when the loft ladder got stuck and he fell through it and down the stairs as well and got concussed. Declan was out walking and saw this big blonde and said, as usual, 'hello lady' only to find it was a bloke! Caroline put meat stock in a soup for vegetarians. Simon gave a friend some bad advice while on holiday.

We pointed out how important it was to face people when you say you are sorry – there is no facial connection in an email! Jesus spent time with tax collectors and made them feel good about themselves when everyone else was doing the opposite. It is always important to 'man up' when you have made a mistake; these days people don't do it so much because they are afraid of being sued and hope that it all goes away.

No matter what we do, God will always forgive us if we are truly sorry. No matter how bad the mistakes we make, we can always 'change your mind' if we follow Jesus. This is what happened to some of the great saints as we have seen and will see.

Liturgy at St.Bernadette' parish, Scunthorpe – June 29 2014

Entry Hymn Will you come and follow me?

Introduction *Scunthorpe*

Reader 1 Good afternoon everyone and welcome to Sunny Scunny!

Reader 2 We hope you've been having a nice time already and that you will enjoy the rest of the day with us

Reader 3 We're always so proud when you all come here to be with us and we like to show you off to the parish!

Reader 4 Do you remember when we last met – with the monks at Mount St.Bernard Abbey – it was such a lovely day in a very beautiful place

Reader 5 Father Frank's so pleased he can now write an article for our magazine called "Abba at the Abbey"!

Reader 1 We sang our beautiful song from "Mother Mary" – can you change your mind and be good and kind, look around and see, come and follow me. We will sing it again today because it tells us so much about what it means to follow Our Lord

Reader 2 And we thought about those people called 'saints' who followed Jesus and changed their whole lives to do so

Reader 3 Jesus is calling us too, to change our minds, our hearts and our lives so that we can be his friends

Reader 4 Today is the feast of two of Jesus' most special friends, St.Peter and St.Paul, and we're going to tell you their story

Reader 5 As you will see, they weren't always the best of people. Sometimes they made mistakes; sometimes they got things very wrong, but Jesus loved them and forgave them.

Reader 1 Not only that, he changed their names as well for the new job he was giving them

Reader 2 Peter was a fisherman; Jesus called him to follow him and he left his nets with his brother Andrew. Peter saw all the great things that Jesus did, but when Our Lord was arrested, all his friends deserted him and Peter denied three times that he knew him.

- Reader 3 Peter was ashamed, but Jesus forgave him and chose him to be the leader of his Church.
- Reader 4 Paul was called Saul first of all. He was very religious and very strict. He lived in a city called Tarsus, and began to chase Jesus' followers and have them put into prison, because he thought they were not loving God in the right way.
- Reader 5 Then something really fantastic happened to Saul. He was on his way to a place called Damascus, when Jesus appeared to him on the road in a bright light, and asked him to stop hurting his friends.
- Reader 1 Saul changed his name - to Paul - and his ways, and instead of being one of Jesus greatest enemies, he became one of his greatest friends, and went all over the world telling people about him.

Rite of Penance *Loughborough Group*

- Reader 1 We know that we too can make mistakes, and get things wrong; Take a minute to think about how often you've got things wrong, the things you've done that hurt others or Our Lord, and how did you feel about it afterwards?
- Reader 2 I never make mistakes
- Reader 3 Well, that's the first mistake – because all of us do. It's just that we don't always see it or want to see it
- Reader 4 Sometimes we blame people for things we think they've done but they haven't
- Reader 5 Sometimes we say the wrong thing to people and hurt their feelings
- Reader 1 Sometimes we forget about God altogether and about each other. That's a mistake
- Reader 2 But we know that Jesus will forgive us as well and make us great people for him if only we tell him we are sorry and ask for his help. So we now turn to him and ask him to forgive us.
- Reader 3 Lord Jesus Christ you are our brother and our friend, Lord have mercy
- Reader 4 Lord Jesus Christ, you are our healer and our Saviour, Christ have mercy

Reader 5 Lord Jesus Christ, you are our Lord and our God, Lord have mercy

Prayer Dear Father, in celebrating the feast of Jesus friends Peter and Paul today, we are thinking about people who make mistakes, and how being with Jesus can change them completely. Help us never to be afraid when we make mistakes and get things wrong, and help us by being with Jesus in our prayers to change our lives as well. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

The Word of God a) *Derby Group*

Voice 1 Peter wasn't always called Peter. He was called Simon, until Jesus changed his name for him, but more of that later. He was a fisherman, in Galilee, with his brother Andrew, and friends James and John, a bit rough and crude, but very keen, and liable to do things on the spur of the moment.

Voice 2 He could never have imagined what would happen to him that day when Jesus came along and called him when he was out fishing:

Jesus Come, follow me and I will make you a fisher of men.

Peter What me?

Jesus Yes, you.

Peter leaves the group and comes over to Jesus. The rest of the group assemble in front of Jesus

Voice 1 And do you know, that's just what they did, left everything they had at once, at once, can you believe it, and followed him. something amazing must have happened to Peter and the other to make them do that.

Voice 2 So, he did, follow Jesus, that is, all round the place, all the time, never left him, for three years.

Voice 1 They were astounded by the things he did and said, the people he healed, the words he spoke from God, but they had no idea of how much this might upset the Jewish leaders, who wanted Jesus out of the way

Voice 2 So when Jesus celebrated the last supper, and of course, the first Mass, with them, he washed their feet, but Peter would not let him

Jesus washes their feet and then comes to Peter

Peter You will never wash my feet

Jesus If I do not wash your feet, you can never be my friend

Peter Then Lord, not only my feet but my head and my hands as well

Voice 1 Then Jesus told them that he had to go away and that they could not come with him, but Peter was angry

Peter Why can't I come with you? I will lay down my life for you

Jesus Lay down your life for me; tonight you will all desert me, and run away.

Peter They might, but I won't; I'll die for you

Jesus Die for me? Before the cock crows tomorrow morning, you will have denied me three times.

Peter I won't, I just won't, ever

Voice 2 But he did. didn't he? Look what happened when Jesus was arrested:

Voice 1 After the meal, Jesus took them to the garden of Gethsemane, where he was sad and afraid because he knew what was going to happen to him. Judas came with some soldiers and betrayed Jesus with a kiss. The soldiers arrested him and all the disciples, including Peter ran away

Voice 1 They took Jesus to the high priest's palace and Peter stayed outside, hiding, but a servant girl spotted him

Two guards flank Jesus and Peter stands away. Three girls approach him in turn.

Girl 1 (to Peter) Hey you, you're one of his friends!

Peter I'm not, I don't know what you're talking about - I don't even know him.

Girl 2 Yes you do; I've seen you with him loads of times;

Peter No you haven't, I don't know him

Girl 3 You do, yes you do, you've even got the same accent.

Voice 2 Then Peter started screaming and shouting

Peter I don't know him; I tell you I've never even seen the man before.

Voice 1 At that very moment, the cock crew, and Peter remembered what Jesus had said – before this very night is over, you will have disowned me three times, and he was shamed. So he went outside and wept bitterly.

Peter holds his hands to his head.

Voice 2 But God can do great things, even with people who are ashamed.

Voice 1 Three days later, when Jesus had died and was buried. Mary of Magdala came to the tomb with some friends and they saw that it was empty. She found Peter and told him

She runs down the aisle to Peter

Magdalen They have taken him away

Voice 2 So Peter ran to the tomb with James and John. He saw and he believed

Peter Jesus is alive! Jesus is alive

They resume their fishing

Voice 1 Very shortly afterwards, when Peter and his friends had gone back to their day jobs as fishermen, they had been fishing all night and caught nothing. Jesus appeared on the beach but they did not know it was him

Jesus enters

Jesus Have you caught anything, friends?

Peter Nothing at all, nothing at all

Jesus Try fishing on the other side

Voice 2 So they went out in the boat again and this time, they caught so many fish that they could hardly bring the boat back. Then James realised who it was

James It's Jesus; it's Jesus

Voice 1 Peter came up to him and said

Peter Leave me, Lord, I am a sinful man

Voice 2 But Jesus told them to bring some fish and have breakfast. After breakfast, Jesus turned to Peter and said

Jesus Simon Peter, do you love me?

Peter Yes, Lord, you know I love you

Jesus Feed my lambs

Voice 1 Then Jesus asked him again

Jesus Simon Peter, do you love me?

Peter Lord, you know I love you

Jesus Look after my sheep

Voice 2 And then for a third time, Jesus asked him

Jesus Simon Peter, do you love me?

Peter Lord, you know everything. You know I love you

Voice 1 In fact Jesus asked him three times just to make sure and Peter told him three times, just so that he was sure. Then Jesus changed his name to Peter because he was giving him a new job and a new life. He said:

Jesus Look after my sheep. You are Peter, and that means 'rock'; on this rock, you, I will build my Church.

Peter gathers the group together and goes off, pointing back at Jesus.

Voice 2 And Peter did; he went around telling everyone about Jesus all around the country, and helping them to live in Jesus' way.

b) *Nottingham Group*

Voice 1 Now we're going to tell you the story of St.Paul

Paul comes up the aisle, looking strained.

Voice 2 Paul wasn't always called Paul, in fact his name was Saul. He was a very devout Jew, very holy and strict - probably a bit boring, well, you know how it is with people like that - too much religion and not enough love.

Voice 1 Saul was very serious, and completely over the top. He believed that there was only one God, and that he was the God of the Jewish people, as he had always promised. There could be no other God and no other religion, and that was that.

Voice 2 Then he heard about the Christians - a new group of people who claimed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and the one that God had always promised to his people.

Groups of people approach with their hands joined in prayer.

Voice 1 Well, Saul didn't like that, not one bit. He was very angry, and spent his time going round trying to find Christians and have them thrown into prison or even killed.

Saul goes round dragging people out.

Saul Here, here's one, and here another, and another - take them away and lock them up.

Voice 2 Saul was vicious; he could not abide the thought that he had been wrong all his life, and that he had not realized that this Jesus really was the Son of God. When he heard that there were a lot of Christians hiding in Damascus, he set out to go there, to find them and imprison them.

Saul goes round looking threatening then all of a sudden, stops short.

Voice 1 Suddenly, while he was travelling to Damascus there came a great light from heaven all round him. He fell to the ground, and then he heard a voice saying,

Saul falls to the ground

Jesus Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

Saul Who are you, Lord?

Jesus I am Jesus and you are persecuting me. Get up now and go into the city where you will be told what to do.

Voice 2 Saul got up from the ground and he was blind, so he had to be led by the hand into the city, where he ate nothing for three days. A disciple called Ananias, who lived in Damascus, had a vision in which he heard the Lord say to him, 'Ananias, you must go to Straight Street and ask at the house of Judas for someone called Saul, who comes from Tarsus. At this moment he is praying, having had a vision of a man called Ananias coming in and laying hands on him to give him back his sight.'

Voice 1 When he heard that, Ananias said,

- Ananias Lord, several people have told me about this man and all the harm he has been doing to your saints in Jerusalem. He has only come here to arrest any more people who follow you.
- Voice 2 The Lord replied, ‘you must go all the same, because I have chosen this man to preach my name to people all over the world, Jewish and pagan.’
- Voice 1 So Ananias went, found the house and went in. At once he laid his hands on Saul and said,
- Ananias Brother Saul, I have been sent by the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on your way here so that you may recover your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’
- Voice 1 Immediately Saul could see again, so he was baptised there and then and took some food to regain his strength. So Saul realized that Jesus really was the one he had been looking for. God changed his name to Paul, and not only that, God changed his whole personality. Paul then set out to tell everyone everywhere about Jesus and went all over the world doing so
- Voice 2 After he had spent only a few days with the disciples in Damascus, he began preaching in the synagogue,
- Saul Jesus is the Son of God
- Voice 1 God changed these two men as well as changing their names; he gave them both special jobs to do for him, and he helped them with his special help.
- Voice 2 God gives us names when we are baptized, and also special jobs to do for him. Sometimes we may not know what that job is, but if we listen hard enough to God when we pray, maybe He will tell us, and maybe we will want to do what he asks us, just as Saint Peter and Saint Paul did.
- Hymn** God forgave my sin
- Homily** *Hinckley group*
- Voice 1 Do you know how often you can tell what someone is like when you see what is in their home?
- Voice 2 You know, things, like pictures, photos, CD’s, DVD’s. clothes and that sort of thing?
- Voice 1 Well, we thought we’d show you what one person is like by showing you some of the things that are in their house

Voice 2 Father Frank, we hope you don't mind – and it's too late now anyway – but we've stolen – eh, borrowed – some things from, your house to show everyone what you're really like

Voice 1 *(aside)* As if they didn't know already!

A number of items are displayed, hopefully to people's amusement!

A small rugby ball

A tankard

Voice 2 Now look at this... West Bridgford Rugby Club Veteran's XV player of the year... is this you?

Fr. Frank nods

All Oooh!

Voice 2 Ah yes.... 1985... well, that's a long time ago!

Voice 1 But here's another one.... player of the year 1997

All Ooh!

Voice 2 Ah... I know this because he told me. Fr. Frank is the only player in the history of his rugby club to get the player of the year award not for playing and this is it!

Voice 1 How can you do that?

Voice 2 Don't bother asking... it would take too long!

They bring out two pigs

Voice 1 Excuse me?

Fr. Frank Horace and Doris

Voice 1 Oh yes....

Fr. Frank I got them for Christmas some years ago and they represent the two real pigs that my friends gave away for me to a family in South America

Voice 1 Very nice, I'm sure

The book of 'Mother Mary' and the SPANNED magazine

Voice 2 Ah...we all know what these are, don't we? "Mother Mary" and the 150th SPANNED magazine – we all know how much love has gone into these, and this mightn't be a bad time to say thanks

Fr.Frank You're welcome

They take out a T shirt that says "Mr.Grumpy"

Voice 1 Would you care to explain?

Fr.Frank Marina gave me that...I can't think why

Voice 1 Nor can we..can we..??

Voice 2 And look at these mugs we found in his kitchen:

Voice 1 *(reads)* My staff say I never listen...or something like that

Voice 2 *(reads)* Just don't forget who's boss

Voice 2 *(reads)* This is a good one. It shoes a bloke who's just cut his leg off with a saw and says: 'Uncle Frank would keep us amused for hours'

Fr.Frank Sinead gave me that

Voice 1 Now what about this? Does anybody know whose picture is on here?
(holds up mug)

Voice 2 This is Father Frank's dark secret...the thing he doesn't want anybody to know. This is his favourite film star – Clint Eastwood – the man with no name

Voice 1 We're going to have a test now. I bet you he knows all of Clint Eastwood's lines

Voice 2 So Clint Eastwood, the man with no name, rides into town on his mule looking angry and threatening and as he passes the local undertaker he says...? Come on... *looks at Father Frank)* And says?

Fr.Frank Get me three coffins

Voice 1 So he rides on and see these four villains, shooting at a man's feet to make him dance. When they see him they stop and he says that they shouldn't

be doing that because it upsets his mule, but if they were to apologize to the mule...

- Voice 2 At first they laugh at him until they see that he's serious...then there is silence and they go for their guns and he goes for his gun andblows them all away!
- Voice 1 Then he gets back on the mule and rides out of town, and as he passes the undertaker he says.....he says?
- Fr.Frank My mistake...make that four
- Voice 2 Told you.....every time he does it...never fails
- Voice 1 This was the man with no name, but today we're thinking about new names, different names for people with new jobs, like Peter and Paul
- Voice 2 So here's a question – who is Harry Webb better known as?
- Voice 1 And what about Reg Dwight? Fr.Frank went to see him in Nottingham the other evening along with 8,000 other people!
- Voice 2 Sometimes film stars and pop stars change their names to make them easier for people to remember or to sound a bit flash, but that's not the real reason for changing your name
- Voice 1 Most of the monks and nuns we have met have had their names changed when they made a promise of their lives to Our Lord
- Voice 2 The most stunning example of all was a man called George Bergoglio. What was his name changed to and why? Jorge Bergoglio, as he is called in his own language, is an Argentinian, and archbishop of Buenos Aires.
- Voice 1 Last year, he arrived in Rome for the conclave to elect a successor to Benedict XVI with his return ticket in his pocket and the hope that he wouldn't have to be long in Rome before he could get back to his little flat and his poor people in the slums of Buenos Aires. This of course was not to be.
- Voice 2 As he sat in the conclave and it became obvious that he was going to be elected and his life was about to change for ever, his friend from Brazil, Claudio Hummes, sitting next to him whispered in his ear: "don't forget the poor"

Voice 1 So when he was asked what name he would wish to be known as in his new role as the pope, he replied, 'Francis', because Francis was the rich man who became poor in order to serve the Lord.

Voice 2 Ever since, Pope Francis has lived up to his name in his manner of speaking and acting and he is showing us how to be a 'poor Church for the poor' in the most wonderful of ways.

Voice 1 Jesus changed not only Peter and Paul's names but their whole lives, so that they could be his friends and do his work. He wants to change us too, but we have to let him

Hymn "Come and Follow me" (*from 'Mother Mary'*)

Prayer of the Faithful *Leicester Group*

Priest Gathered together in this holy place, let us offer our prayers to our loving God through Jesus his son

Reader 1 Dear Father, please help us to change our lives so that we can be the people you want us to be. Lord hear us

Reader 2 Stop us from living in our own heads and help us to live in yours instead. Lord hear us

Reader 3 Help us to be good and kind to all people as Jesus showed us. Lord hear us

Reader 4 Show us how to love, how to truly live. Lord hear us

Reader 5 Forgive us when we get things wrong. Lord hear us

Reader 6 Open up our hearts so that we can see the suffering near to us and far away and help all those in need. Lord hear us.

Reader 7 Look after us all in SPANNED especially our friends who are sick or unwell like Tim and Stuart. Lord hear us

Reader 8 We pray for all who have died and in particular today for Bess Mills from Leicester, Nettie Crowley from Derby, and David Lawson from Hinckley who have died since we last met. Help them to be happy with you for ever in heaven

Reader 9 Now let us ask Mary, the servant of the Lord to pray with us and for us. Hail Mary

Priest Now let us say the prayer of the servant church

Loving Father, fill us all with your presence in Jesus your Son. May we think with the mind of Christ, see with the eyes of Christ, speak with the words of Christ, serve with the hands of Christ, love with the heart of Christ and live with the life of Christ, who is Lord for ever and ever.

Offertory Hymn I give my hands

Eucharistic Prayer No 2

Communion Music “You are the centre of my life” (*Margaret Rizza*)

After Communion *The story of St. Augustine Nottingham Group*

Reader 1 Now here is the story of another of the saints who made mistakes but who was able to overcome them once he became a follower of Jesus, St. Augustine

Reader 2 St. Augustine lived in Africa a very long time ago, as he was born in 354 AD. His father died when he was 16 and his mother, St. Monica was a very holy woman who taught him about Jesus and his way when he was a boy.

Reader 1 But when he grew up and left home, he forgot all about his mother’s teachings and led a wild and crazy life. He was very clever and went away to Carthage to study philosophy. He met a woman and they had a son together, and he eventually went all the way to Rome to open a school for philosophers.

Reader 2 This didn’t satisfy him so he went up north to Milan to teach in the university there. He was really looking for wisdom, the thinking that would show him what to do with his life. While he was there, he met a great man, St. Ambrose, and listened to him preaching. It was as if something dawned on Augustine and he clearly understood what life was about.

Reader 1 He decided to become a Christian and his mother came to Milan to be with him, when he was baptized by Ambrose in the year 387, but she was to die at the end of the very same year. People often think of St. Monica as the patron of long-suffering mothers, who pray for their sons and daughters to get a bit of sense and do something useful with their lives!

Reader 2 So Augustine returned to Africa, to where he was born, and was ordained a priest and later a bishop in a place called Hippo in 396. He stayed there for over 35 years, teaching and writing. He wrote over 200 explanations of church teachings, plus letters and instructions, and his most famous works were called the “Confessions of St. Augustine” and “The City of God”. He

became one of the greatest thinkers in the history of the Church and his writings are still used today and he died in 430 AD

Reader 1 St. Augustine wrote this beautiful prayer about how God had completely changed his life and made him want to be a follower of Jesus:

The group mime this prayer:

“Late have I loved you, o beauty so ancient and so new; late have I loved you. For you were within me and I was outside; I looked for you outside and saw the lovely things that you have made. You were with me and I was not with you. You called and cried to me and broke open my deafness; you shone your light upon me and chased away my blindness; you breathed fragrance upon me, and I drew in my breath and do now pant for you; I tasted you and now hunger and thirst for you; you touched me and I have burned for your peace.”

Final Hymn Follow me, follow me

Session 9 “Saints in the making” – married people and ‘friends’

We used this session to ask married people about how they see their lives as serving the Lord and accepting his call to do so. First, we talked to Ian and Caroline Thomas, from Nottingham, who are shortly 30 years married and will celebrate the anniversary with their Loreto Club friends and the sisters in the Poor Clares convent, and then to Neville and Anne Hammonds of the Hinckley group:

How did you meet?

Caroline: We met 33 years ago when we both started to work for John Lewis. For me it was sort of ‘love at first sight’. I said to myself, “he’ll do for me; I’m going to have him”!

Ian: At first I didn’t really get the ‘vibes’ even though she seemed to be following me everywhere. I was young and not terribly experienced at this sort of thing, and didn’t notice that she was taking a shine to me!

Anne It was a good few years ago on Christmas Eve at the Palais de Danse in Leicester. I was at a company works ‘do’ and Neville was with some friends.

Neville When you ask someone to dance you get turned down so often that you keep walking along the line of ladies not expecting anyone to agree. It was a total surprise when Anne said ‘yes’.

Anne Was it love at first sight? Maybe not but there was certainly an attraction. He made me laugh and seemed to be a fun person.

Neville I ‘saw the potential’ and she certainly had good looks. I thought she had money too!

How did the romance grow?

- Caroline: I used to 'chase' him round the town with my friend, Donna, and kept 'popping up' in the pubs he'd go into. He'd do the decent thing and walk me to the last bus and then find that his bus had gone so he had to walk all the way to Clifton! He was questioned by a policeman as to what he was doing out walking the streets at that time of night!
- Ian: We started to go out regularly and often to the pictures. I asked her to meet me on a Sunday but she refused and told me that she 'did things' on a Sunday and went to church. I was completely taken aback by this, as all I knew about was Guinness and night clubs. Caroline thought that it might end our relationship if she told me about it too soon, and was shocked when I asked her if I go come with her. I went with her and before long I found myself being fascinated by it and 10 years later I became a Catholic myself.
- Anne We went round with a crowd and had mutual friends, so there was nothing too intense at first. We were only 18 and socialized in the crowd, but at some stage we realized that we had feelings for each other.

What happened next?

- Ian: This was something I never thought I would do and Fr.Gordon wanted me to think about becoming a priest! Eventually I plucked up courage to read in front of others and was very nervous doing so, and then I was asked to become a Eucharistic Minister and felt that I wasn't worthy of it but accepted nevertheless.
- Caroline: He proposed after a few weeks and I turned him down initially, and then gave in! We have a busy life in the church – parish council, youth clubs, Loreto Club, of course and we love doing it.
- Anne We got married three years later but we were only 21. Neville was studying then so we didn't actually see too much of each other at first, only at weekends.

Do you think of your marriage as a 'calling' from God?

- Ian: The older we get, yes we do. You think of things differently when you're young but hopefully become a bit more reflective later. It's like a pension – young people don't think about that sort of thing, but later they do. We found that we believed our paths were meant to cross. My life changed completely when I met Caroline. I have had a wonderful journey in the

church with Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary. I now realize that this was what was meant to be.

Anne You don't recognize it as such at first, but more and more as time goes by. We do a lot with our church now.

Neville For the first 20 years we went to church occasionally but we were looking for something, some sort of inner spiritual feeling, but didn't quite know what to do about it. Anne worked with Mary Forryan who asked her if she would like to go to Lourdes. We've been going for over 25 years now and it has a big part spiritually in our lives. We've developed a sort of like-mindedness and Lourdes feels very special to both of us, like coming home. It now plays a huge part in our lives.

Are you looking forward to the next 30 years?

Caroline: Absolutely. People who say they've never had a wrong word are liars! You can't beat a good argument or difference of opinion.

Ian: In married life it's important to say sorry and not go to bed on an argument.

Anne Yes certainly; if we could improve one thing what would it be? Nothing!

How do you think of your marriage as of service to Our Lord?

Ian: By doing exactly what we're doing now. We have not been blessed with children, but we've worked with young people and our friends here at Loreto and feel we have sort of 'adopted' people of all ages and try to look after them. We think that 'relationship' is the key word for us – with each other, this group and the wider church. This is our faith journey.

Caroline: We love the sisters here at the convent and want to help them as much as possible. They don't even need to ask us. Some time ago when Fr.Paul asked us what was the most important thing about our married life and when we both said, 'our faith', he was rather taken aback, but it's absolutely true.

Neville Basically, most of the things I have done Anne has supported. Initially I went to church and to Lourdes as a sort of 'pay back' to her and now am heavily involved in the church at Desford. We're both involved in its upkeep, which is a considerable task, and we try to use our skills to help the situation both in Desford and in Lourdes.

Anne We do things because we enjoy them and the feeling of 'family' it brings deep within us, so the 'service' part is easy –it's no big deal, we just do it.

You can also serve the Lord as men and women friends without being married. Here are two stories about saints long ago who loved the Lord and worked together for him:

St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane Frances de Chantal

Born in France in 1567, Francis was a patient man. He knew for thirteen years that he had a vocation to the priesthood before he mentioned it to his family. When his father said that he wanted Francis to be a soldier and sent him to Paris to study, Francis said nothing. Then when he went to Padua to get a doctorate in law, he still kept quiet, but he studied theology and practiced mental prayer while getting into swordfights and going to parties. Why did Francis wait so long? Throughout his life he waited for God's will to be clear. He never wanted to push his wishes on God, to the point where most of us would have been afraid that God would give up! God finally made God's will clear to Francis while he was riding. Francis fell from his horse three times. Every time he fell the sword came out of the scabbard. Every time it came out the sword and scabbard came to rest on the ground in the shape of the cross. His biggest concern on being ordained that he had to have his lovely curly gold hair cut off! He wanted to go over the border to Switzerland to preach the gospel to Calvinist people – very strict Christians – and for three years, he trudged through the countryside, had doors slammed in his face and rocks thrown at him. In the bitter winters, his feet froze so badly they bled as he tramped through the snow. He slept in haylofts if he could, but once he slept in a tree to avoid wolves. No one would listen to him, no one would even open their door. So Francis found a way to get under the door. He wrote out his sermons, copied them by hand, and slipped them under the doors.

The parents wouldn't come to him out of fear. So Francis went to the children. When the parents saw how kind he was as he played with the children, they began to talk to him. By the time, Francis left to go home he is said to have converted 40,000 people back to Catholicism. In 1602 he was made bishop of the diocese of Geneva, in Calvinist territory but he only set foot in the city of Geneva twice. It was in 1604 that Francis took one of the most important steps in his life, the step toward holiness and mystical union with God.

In Dijon that year Francis saw a widow listening closely to his sermon -- a woman he had seen already in a dream. Jane de Chantal was a person on her own, as Francis was, but it was only when they became friends that they began to become saints.

From a distinguished family, Jane de Chantal was the daughter of a prominent lawyer, the president of the parliament of the Burgundy region of France. Her husband, with whom she had a happy marriage, was the baron of Chantal. Her brother was the archbishop of Bourges. Jane gave birth to six children, but only a boy and two girls lived past early infancy. In 1601, Jane's husband was killed in a hunting accident, and for three years thereafter she was deeply depressed. A priest offered to become Jane's spiritual director, and she accepted gratefully. But as things developed, this priest was no great blessing. Jane struggled under his harsh and insensitive influence. Jane wanted him to take over her spiritual direction,. As a spiritual director, Francis de Sales respected the life experiences of those he directed. He was a good listener, and he refused to set himself up in the place of God "for fear," he said, "of harming souls." In the beginning, Jane was mystified because Francis did not give a set of firm rules to follow. Soon, however, she began to appreciate Francis' gentle style. "Never," she later recalled, "did that blessed one make quick replies." Rather, he knew that God's love was at

work in Jane and that both he and she must be patient. After Francis' return to Geneva, the two corresponded regularly. It was three years before the two met again, near Pentecost 1607. Jane put her life in Francis' hands, but he advised waiting patiently while she found her own answers.

Jane felt called to join an order of women religious, but at the time religious orders demanded a life of such austerity that Francis advised against them all. There was a need, Francis said, for a new kind of religious community for women, "not too mild for the strong, nor too harsh for the weak." It would be a community for women unable to join any of the existing orders because of their age, poor health, or need to care for children, and it would be especially appropriate for widows. These women religious would maintain their ties of affection with their families. But where would they get a convent for their contemplative Visitation nuns? A man came to Francis without knowing of his plans and told him he was thinking of donating a place for use by pious women. In his typical way of not pushing God, Francis said nothing. When the man brought it up again, Francis still kept quiet, telling Jane, "God will be with us if he approves." Finally the man offered Francis the convent. Francis was overworked and often ill because of his constant load of preaching, visiting. For him active work did not weaken his spiritual inner peace but strengthened it. He directed most people through letters, which tested his remarkable patience. At that time, the way of holiness was only for monks and nuns not for ordinary people. Francis changed all that by giving spiritual direction to lay people living ordinary lives in the world. But he had proven with his own life that people could grow in holiness while involved in a very active occupation. Why couldn't others do the same? His most famous book, "Introduction to the Devout Life", was written for these ordinary people in 1608. Written originally as letters, it became an instant success all over Europe, though some preachers tore it up because he tolerated dancing and jokes!

Jane named her community the Daughters of the Visitation of St. Mary, or Visitandines—a reference to the visit of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth. It was a great blow to Jane when Francis died in 1622, but with time and prayer she carried on. Later in life, Jane suffered great spiritual dryness and anguish, but she remained firm in her faith. By 1635 there were sixty-five Visitandine convents, and Jane worked tirelessly to nurture them all. It was on her way back to Annecy from a visit to one of the convents that Jane became ill and died on December 13, 1641. Her body was taken to Annecy where she was buried near her beloved friend, Francis.

St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise Marillac

Vincent de Paul is familiar to us because of the thousands of social agencies, in more than a hundred and thirty countries, in his name. Many don't realize, however, that Louise de Marillac worked closely with Vincent in serving the poor in seventeenth-century France. Vincent was born about 1580 to a peasant family. In 1596, he went to the University of Toulouse for theological studies, and there he was ordained priest in 1600.

In 1605, on a voyage by sea from Marseilles to Narbonne, he fell into the hands of African pirates and was carried as a slave to Tunis. His captivity lasted about two years, until he managed to escape and went to Rome before returning to France, where he began to preach missions to people who did not believe in Jesus and many who did already.

Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac met in 1623, and he became her spiritual director, even though his overriding concern was to serve the poor. Initially, she thought Vincent was rigid and distant. Gradually, however, the two became close friends, then Louise's dull, anger-prone husband, died. She decided that she would not marry again. Louise lived in her apartment and spent much time in prayer. She painted water-colours, knitted for Vincent's poor people, and sewed vestments for Vincent. Vincent pleaded with Louise not to work so hard and not to burden herself with pious devotions and disciplines. She was in her late thirties by this time, Louise had never known any warmth, but she knew that she had to decide what to do with herself. Gifted with practical wisdom when it came to spiritual matters Vincent told Louise that he would not tell her what to do, she would have to work it out for herself. Finally, more than two years later, Louise began to get her act together. Vincent had established groups of upper-class women, which he called the Ladies of Charity, who cared for the poor and the sick. Vincent asked Louise to travel about to inspect his growing charity activities, and Louise realized that she possessed talents she'd never known she had. She wrote out detailed reports for Vincent and, before long, she became very capable. In each place she found someone to teach the children to read because she believed that literacy was the key to improving people's lives. She also became a captivating public speaker. In a few places Louise met opposition, even from the local clergy who accused her of trying to do their work, but, for the most part, the people welcomed and supported her. Most of the Ladies of Charity were reluctant to serve the poor directly. They would send money or a servant instead. So Louise decided to recruit hearty country girls, who had common sense and didn't shy away from work. She would train them in religion and nursing. On November 26, 1633, she welcomed her first four recruits. At every opportunity, Vincent supported Louise and offered advice. When Louise's difficult son needed help to become self-sufficient, Vincent found him work. Later, he solicited enough money from Louise's father's family for the young man to marry. About this time, Louise named her fledgling community the Daughters of Charity. She drew up statutes, and Vincent gave them his approval. The women of the community learned prayer, meditation, basic nursing skills, and practical ways to help the poor. They wore peasant clothes rather than a traditional religious habit. Because most of the Daughters of Charity were not well educated, Vincent and Louise held conferences once or twice a month, and all the Daughters were encouraged to join the conversation. Over time, Vincent stepped away from the work of the Daughters of Charity, confident that Louise could take care of it. The two had a long and affectionate friendship, and they continued to correspond until Louise died on March 16, 1660. Vincent followed her in death on September 27 of the same year.

What these stories also show is that the work of the saints is still being done. Yes, the pray for us in heaven and we hope that their stories inspire us to be like them as we serve Our Lord, but also many of them set up orders of men and women, which are still in existence today and so their legacy lives on. There are also many societies that carry out the work started by the saints such as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul or SVP:

The Society of St.Vincent de Paul

St. Vincent de Paul is the patron of all works of charity. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, a charitable organization dedicated to the service of the poor, was established by French university students in 1833, led by the Blessed Frederic Ozanam. The Society is today present in 148 countries with over 700,000 members. Frederic Ozanam was born in 1813 in Milan. In 1853 he died at the early age of 40. During those 40 years, Frederic Ozanam lived a life of Christian love that provided an example for his contemporaries.

As a student at the Sorbonne in Paris, this brilliant, sensitive young man of modest middle class background was confronted daily by the misery of the poor of Paris. It was at this time in his life Frederic was challenged to bring his faith to service. He not only devoted himself to service to the poor but, as a charismatic leader, he organized others to do the same. Frederic invited his friends to join his cause . In early 1833 Frederic met Sister Rosalie Rendu, a Daughter of Charity, who inspired Frederic and his companions and through their association with her they learned first hand the needs of persons oppressed by poverty. Committed to do more than talk about faith, Frederic, with a small group of friends, formed the first "Conference of Charity," which met weekly to contribute to a secret collection and then visit the poor in their homes. In 1834 the "Conference of Charity" was renamed the "Conference of St. Vincent de Paul". That was also the year Frederic passed the bar examination. In 1835 Frederic received his first degree in Literature from the Sorbonne. That was also the year he wrote his famous passage about the Good Samaritan. "Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil on the wounds of the traveller who has been attacked. It is justice's role to prevent the attack."

The prayers of the St.Vincent de Paul Society

Each time a 'conference' of the SVP meets, they end the meeting with these prayers:

Father, grant that Communion with Christ, present in the Holy Eucharist, may impel us to love you by serving him in our neighbour, and help us to respond with open hearts to the suffering of others aware of the depths of our own needs.

Grant us also the grace to persevere when disappointed or distressed, and never to claim that our work springs from ourselves alone, so that united in prayer and action we may be a visible sign of Christ and bear witness to his boundless love which reaches out to all and draws them to love one another in him.

We thank you, Lord for the many blessings we receive from those we visit. Help us to love and respect them, to understand their deeper needs and to share their burdens and joys as true friends.

Session 10 – Changing your life – the story of St.Francis of Assisi

As long ago as 1181, there was a modestly wealthy couple called Pietro and Pica who lived in a small Italian town called Assisi. When their first son was born, his mother wanted to call him John, but his father insisted he be called Francis. It was not a good time or place to be born. There was a lot of fighting going on in that part of Italy, people wanting to take land

and property from each other, and those that lived in the town itself were rich while those who lived outside were very poor. The Church of the time was a very powerful institution that forced its way on others – not the Church that Jesus wanted at all. Pietro was a cloth merchant and wanted the best for his son, and the six children that came after him. Francis was brought up to be proud and selfish, to enjoy himself and waste his father's money, which is not good, but that was the way of the time. He wasted much of his time on pleasure and silly things, on wearing expensive clothes, and not bothering to work, wasting his time and his money. He was rich, so he didn't even see the poor people at the bottom of the hill on which Assisi was built. But he was also a kind man to his friends and there was something very attractive about him. When he was 20 he joined the army, because the thought that was a noble thing to do, and wanted to become a knight, to fight against the neighbouring town of Perugia. He was captured and kept in prison for a year but it wasn't too hard for him as he was with knights and noble people. After his release he went again to fight and on his way to a place called Spoleto, he heard a voice telling him to "serve the master rather than men". He didn't know what this meant at first so went home and waited. He experienced a great change within himself and started to visit the sick and the poor. While praying one day at San Damiano, a neglected chapel near Assisi, he received a vision from the crucifix telling him: "go and repair my house which is falling down". His life changed dramatically from that moment and he sold all his father's possessions to repair the church. His father thought he had gone mad and in front of him Francis stripped off his clothes, gave them back to his father and said: "I have called you my father on earth, but now I say, 'Our Father, who art in heaven.'" He renounced his inheritance, took a vow of poverty and promised to preach the kingdom of heaven, to give freely what he had received and to possess nothing for himself. He dressed himself in an old tunic which had belonged to a farmhand. He set about rebuilding the church at San Damiano, begging stones from passers by and when he had completed that he moved on to another and then another. The townspeople were puzzled – here was this young man who used to dress in the finest of clothes now dressed in rags; here was the man who would be a knight stacking stones; here was the man who used to spend his nights in revelry now singing the praise of God. One day when he was walking outside the town, he met a leper, whom he embraced and kissed – nobody ever touched lepers and in fact kept well away from them. Francis discovered in the leper the person of Jesus – poor, crucified, and a beggar, and this is what made him want to live his life exactly in this way. He started to live among the poor and with lepers, his 'brothers in Christ'. His joyful and loving personality soon attracted other followers who wanted to live in the same way, preaching penance and conversion, and he wrote a rule, or way of life for them in 1210. They travelled around living very simply and preaching the Good News of Jesus to people. Two years later St. Clare joined him and formed a group of women with the same aims in mind – to serve God in poverty and simplicity. By 1219 five thousand people had become Franciscans. St. Francis himself even went as far as Syria and the Holy Land to see where Jesus was born and to try to convert Muslim people to Christianity but he failed and returned to Assisi in 1220. Four years later he woke one morning and found marks on his body – his hands, feet and side, the marks of the wounds of Jesus – which stayed with him till he died, very young (aged 45) in 1226. He was supposed to have had a wonderful relationship with animals and birds, to whom it was said he went to preach when the people of the town refused to listen to him and he loved the things that God had created. There is even a legend that he tamed a wild wolf in the town.

This is the saint who got the idea to put a Christmas crib scene in church every year! It started in 1223 in the town of Greccio, where he combined the Christmas Mass with an enactment of the stable scene at Bethlehem. He got the idea that he should try to help people feel like they were actually there when Jesus was born in a stable. So he got busy, building and arranging, and when people came in church that night for Midnight Mass, they saw a Christmas crib scene—with Baby Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. but Francis' crib was a little different from those of today because he even brought some of his real animal friends into church to stand by the crib! Francis transformed the feast of Christmas into a celebration of the humility of God. This humility, he saw in the Holy Eucharist in which Jesus comes to us under the appearance of bread and wine. And today most Catholic churches—and homes—copy Francis' idea each Christmas. Francis, the rich man's son, learned to love God and all his creatures. and, just like when he was young, he spent his life having a good time – just a different kind of good time

What can we learn about the Church to which we belong and the life we should have with Jesus by looking at the life of St.Francis? Pope Francis calls him : “the man of the poor. The man of peace. The man who loved and cared for creation. The man who gives us this spirit of peace, the poor man who wanted a poor Church”. At the time of St.Francis the Church was entirely different from what it is today. There was a Pope called Innocent 111, who presided over a Church of wealth, people dressing up and trying to look important, stealing others, money for themselves. St.Francis wanted to show them a Church that concerned itself above all else with those who are poor, weak and on the outside, a Church that does not want to make money for itself but gives away what it has to those who need it. The Church of Pope Innocent was a church of power, dominating people, telling them what to do and punishing them if they disobeyed its teaching. St.Francis wanted to show a humble church where everyone was regarded as equals, brothers and sisters, offering kindness and hospitality to each other, in which its leaders served and created a community of love. He wanted a Church of Good News and of joy, which listened to people rather than ordered them about, a Church that knew its failures and asked forgiveness for its mistakes.

Liturgy for Annual Mass – Hinckley – September 13 2014

Entry Hymn All things bright and beautiful (vv.1,3,5)

Introduction *Loughborough Group*

Reader 1 Good afternoon everyone and welcome to our Annual SPANNED Mass here in Hinckley

Reader 2 Of course, in past years we have had our bishop with us but as we all know, he has gone to be the archbishop of Liverpool now, so we pray for him that God will make him strong and help him to be happy there

- Reader 3 Father Frank met him in Lourdes recently and he said how much he loved all the times he met with his friends from SPANNED and to please send us all his thought and prayers
- Reader 4 This year, as you know, we've been thinking about 'saints in the making' and we've learned a lot about these special friends of Jesus
- Reader 1 Some had their names changed when God called them so that they could do different jobs for him
- Reader 2 Others made mistakes but Jesus forgave them and made them his followers
- Reader 3 Some were very poor, others priests, or monks, or sisters or plain ordinary people who loved God more than themselves
- Reader 4 And we've been thinking about how we can be like them too – that's why we are 'saints in the making'
- Reader 1 Last time in Scunthorpe we thought about three great saints – St.Peter, St.Paul and St.Augustine
- Reader 2 Today we're thinking about St.Francis of Assisi, whose life changed dramatically when God called him. His story is very interesting, so let's listen to it now:

The story of St.Francis *Hinckley Group*

- Reader 1 St.Francis was born as long ago as 1181, in a small Italian town called Assisi.
- Reader 2 His father, Pietro, was a cloth merchant and wanted the best for his son, and the six children that came after him. Francis was brought up to be proud and selfish, to enjoy himself and waste his father's money, which is not good, but that was the way of the time.

Enter Francis showing off with friends

- Reader 3 He wasted much of his time on pleasure and silly things, on wearing expensive clothes, and not bothering to work, wasting his time and his money. He was rich, so he didn't even see the poor people at the bottom of the hill on which Assisi was built. But he was also a kind man to his friends and there was something very attractive about him.
- Reader 1 He wanted to be a knight in shining armour so he joined the army but got captured and put in prison for a year.

- Reader 2 After his release on his way to a place called Spoleto, he heard a voice telling him to “serve the master rather than men”. He didn’t know what this meant at first so went home and waited.
- Reader 3 He experienced a great change within himself and started to visit the sick and the poor. While praying one day at San Damiano, a neglected chapel near Assisi, he received a vision from the crucifix telling him: “go and repair my house which is falling down”.
- Reader 1 His life changed dramatically from that moment and he sold all his father’s possessions to repair the church. His father thought he had gone mad and called him to speak for himself in front of the local bishop
- Reader 2 Francis stripped off his rich clothes, gave them back to his father and said:
- Francis “I have called you my father on earth, but now I say, ‘Our Father, who art in heaven.’”
- Reader 3 He gave up his inheritance, took a vow of poverty and promised to preach the kingdom of heaven, to give freely what he had received and to possess nothing for himself. He dressed himself in an old tunic which had belonged to a farmhand.
- Reader 1 He set about rebuilding the church at San Damiano, begging stones from passers by and when he had completed that he moved on to another and then another.
- Reader 2 The townspeople were puzzled – here was this young man who used to dress in the finest of clothes now dressed in rags; here was the man who would be a knight stacking stones; here was the man who used to spend his nights in revelry now singing the praise of God.
- Reader 1 One day when he was walking outside the town, he met a leper, whom he embraced and kissed – nobody ever touched lepers and in fact kept well away from them. Francis discovered in the leper the person of Jesus – poor, crucified, and a beggar, and this is what made him want to live his life exactly in this way. He started to live among the poor and with lepers, his ‘brothers in Christ’.
- Reader 2 His joyful and loving personality soon attracted other followers who wanted to live in the same way, preaching penance and conversion, and he wrote a rule, or way of life for them in 1210. They travelled around living very simply and preaching the Good News of Jesus to people.

- Reader 3 Two years later St. Clare joined him and formed a group of women with the same aims in mind – to serve God in poverty and simplicity. By 1219 five thousand people had become Franciscans.
- Reader 1 Four years later he woke one morning and found marks on his body – his hands, feet and side, the marks of the wounds of Jesus – which stayed with him till he died, very young (aged 45) in 1226.
- Reader 2 He was supposed to have had a wonderful relationship with animals and birds, to whom it was said he went to preach when the people of the town refused to listen to him and he loved the things that God had created.
- Reader 3 That is why we chose the hymn for the beginning of today's Mass; it tells us how we can feel God's presence in the world around us that he made. There is even a legend that he tamed a wild wolf in the town.
- Reader 1 This is the saint who got the idea to put a Christmas crib scene in church every year! It started in 1223 in the town of Greccio, where he combined the Christmas Mass with an enactment of the stable scene at Bethlehem.
- Reader 2 He got the idea that he should try to help people feel like they were actually there when Jesus was born in a stable. So he got busy, building and arranging, and when people came in church that night for Midnight Mass, they saw a Christmas crib scene—with Baby Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. but Francis' crib was a little different from those of today because he even brought some of his real animal friends into church to stand by the crib! And today most Catholic churches—and homes—copy Francis' idea each Christmas.
- Reader 3 Francis, the rich man's son, learned to love God and all his creatures. and, just like when he was young, he spent his life having a good time – just a different kind of good time

First Reading St. Paul to the Colossians *Leicester Group*

You are God's chosen people; he loves you and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you, now you must do the same. Over all these clothes to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts because this is how you were meant to live, not each by himself but together in company with all the friends of Jesus.

This is the Word of the Lord

Psalm Lord, make me a means of your peace (*The prayer of St. Francis*)

Gospel St.Mark – the story of the rich young man

When Jesus was out on the road a young man came up to him and knelt down before him. He asked: “Good sir, what must I do to live for ever?” Jesus replied, “You know the commandments of God, don’t you?” “Yes sir,” he said, “I have kept them ever since I was a boy”. Jesus looked at him and loved him. “There is one thing more you must do,” he said, “you must go and sell everything you have and give away all the money to the poor, then you will have treasure in heaven and then you can come and follow me.” The young man was shocked and went away very sad, because he was very rich and could not do what Jesus asked. This is the gospel of the Lord

Homily What would it mean to be like St.Francis today? *Derby Group*

Reader 1 So what would it mean for us, who are ‘saints in the making’ to try to live like St.Francis today? Well, it would mean giving away a lot of things that are important to us and that might be difficult

A group of people enter and one has a large sack. As the script proceeds each person looks a bit glum and places the item into the sack

Reader 2 You would have to give away your phone....
Your I-player.....
Your designer clothes and trainers....

They take off a fashion shirt and replace it with a plain T shirt, and go barefoot without the trainers

Your money...
Your books...
TV....
CD’ and DVD’s ...
Maybe even your car.... (*car keys in the sack*)
Or your house.....

All What??

Reader 3 To be like St.Francis, you would have to give away everything. That’s what Jesus told the rich young man in today’s gospel

Reader 1 Could we do that? Probably not, though some people have and still do

Reader 2 It’s not having all these things that matters, but how important there are to you and if they stop you from loving Jesus and others – then you have to give them away

- Reader 3 Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in Spirit” – that means we are to be poor in our hearts, that we are not afraid to give away our money and the things that we own so that we can be the people he wants us to be
- Reader 1 What does that mean?
- Reader 2 It means giving away your time to others when they need you, even if it’s not convenient
- Reader 3 It means regularly eating and drinking less so that people who are hungry can be fed (*Hold up CAFOD and Foodbank signs*)
- Reader 2 It means taking care of God’s earth and all his creation and not spoiling it (*Collect up waste litter and put it in a binbag*)
- Reader 3 It means putting others and their needs before what we want as Jesus did
- Reader 2 It means being willing to change our minds, our hearts, and our whole lives, and that’s a big ask
- Reader 3 Then we can be poor in spirit...then we can be saints in the making
- Reader 1 Very shortly in our groups, we are going to learn about a man called Francis who did just that only last year. In one single moment, he had to give up everything – his name, his little flat, his work, his friends and all that was precious to him – so that he could follow Jesus in a new way. This is what happened in March 2013, when in one moment, Jorge Mario Bergoglio became Pope Francis

Bidding Prayers and memorial *Scunthorpe Group*

- Priest Gathered together in this holy place, let us offer our prayers to our loving God through Jesus his son
- Reader 1 Dear Father, please help us to change our lives so that we can be the people you want us to be. Lord hear us
- Reader 2 Stop us from thinking too much about ourselves and help us to live more like St.Francis. Lord hear us
- Reader 3 Help us to be good and kind to all people as Jesus showed us. Lord hear us
- Reader 4 Show us how to love, how to truly live. Lord hear us
- Reader 5 Forgive us when we get things wrong. Lord hear us

- Reader 6 Open up our hearts so that we can see the suffering near to us and far away and help all those in need. Lord hear us.
- Reader 7 Look after us all in SPANNED especially our friends who are sick or unwell like Tim and Stuart. Lord hear us
- Reader 8 We pray for all who have died and in particular today for Sister Madeleine Campion, Sister Bernardine Bill, Roy Phillips, May Walsh, Chris Theobald, Bess Mills, Marje Lindsay, Wendy Rayner, Nettie Crowley and David Lawson who have died since we last gathered for this Mass. Help them to be happy with you for ever in heaven

Family members come and light candles as the names are read out

Reader 9 Now let us ask Mary, the servant of the Lord to pray with us and for us.
Hail Mary

Priest Now let us say the prayer of the servant church

Leicester Group to mime

Loving Father, fill us all with your presence in Jesus your Son. May we think with the mind of Christ, see with the eyes of Christ, speak with the words of Christ, serve with the hands of Christ, love with the heart of Christ and live with the life of Christ, who is Lord for ever and ever.

Offertory Hymn If you want to change the world, then change your life

If you want to change the world, then change your life (*repeat*)
Change your habits, change your thinking,
Change your eating, and your drinking,
If you want to change the world, then change your life

If you want to save the planet, start yourself (*repeat*)
Love the world and fairly use it,
Never damage or abuse it,
If you want to save the planet, start yourself
Don't blame anybody else but only you (*repeat*)
You're the one to make the start
In your head and in your heart
Don't blame anybody else but only you

If you want to show you care, then do it now (*repeat*)
All our habits we must break,
Our whole future is at stake,
If you want to show you care, then do it now

If you want to change the world, then change your life (*repeat*)
Come on make a start today,
And live simply every day
If you want to change the world, then change your life

Eucharistic Prayer No.2

Communion Hymn This is what Yahweh asks of you

After Communion Make me a channel of your peace

A funny Francis story *Nottingham Group*

Narrator This is a lovely story about a conversation between God and St.Francis,
when God was not a happy person

God is sitting on a high stool and Francis standing below him. The 'suburbanites' enter from the other side

God Frank, you know all about gardens and nature. Whatever is happening down there on my planet? What's happened to my dandelions, violets, daisies and all those things I planted ages and ages ago? I had a perfect no-maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any kind of soil, withstand drought and keep growing no matter what the weather is. The nectar from them attracts butterflies, honey bees and songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colours by now, but all I can see is green rectangles. What are they?

Francis Well, Lord, they're called lawns

God Lawns?

Francis Yes, Lord, lawns, grass. It's the people who have settled here, Lord. They're called suburbanites. They started calling your flowers weeds, and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass.

One or two people spread weed-killer

God Grass? But it's so boring. It's not colourful and it doesn't attract butterflies, birds and bees, only grubs and worms, and it's sensitive to different temperatures. Do these suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

Francis Apparently so, Lord. They go to great trouble to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by poisoning any other plants that crops up on the lawn

More people with the weed-killer

God The spring rains and warm weather will surely make the grass grow fast. That must keep the suburbanites happy then?

Francis Apparently not, Lord. As soon as it grows a little they cut it, sometimes twice a week

A person comes on with a lawn-mower

God Cut it? Then do they bale it like hay?

Francis Not exactly, Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it in bags

Full plastic bags of grass appear

God So that they can sell it for some good, I presume?

Francis No sir, just the opposite in fact. They pay to throw it away

A man is paid to take it away

God Now let me get this straight. They fertilize this grass so that it will grow, and when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away?

Francis Yes, sir

God These suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work?

Francis You aren't going to believe this, Lord. When the grass stops growing so fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it, so that they can continue to grow it and pay to get rid of it

Hosepipe appears

God What nonsense! Are these people completely mad?...No...don't answer that. I can work it out for myself. At least they kept some of the trees. That was a sheer stroke of genius on my part, even if I do so say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty, and clean air, and shade in the summer. In the autumn they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. Brilliant idea!

Francis I think you'd better sit down Lord...oh I see you are already. That's good. Well, actually, the suburbanites do something rather different from your plan. As soon as they see the leaves fall, they rake them up into big piles and burn them or pay to have them taken away.

A man appears with a rake and another with a bag of leaves

God No! So what do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in the winter to keep the soil moist and loose?

Francis After throwing away the leaves they go out and buy something called mulch. They haul it home and spread it in place of the leaves

God And where do they get this mulch?

Francis They cut down the trees and grind them up to make the mulch

Two men in hard hats and axes enter and pretend to chop down trees

God Enough! I don't want to think about this any more!

All the 'suburbanites' shrug their shoulders and look puzzled

Narrator So you see, God is not particularly pleased with what we are doing to his creation. Better listen to St. Francis so that we can properly look after everything he has made and hopefully make him happy again.

Blessing

Final Hymn Can you change your mind? (*from "Mother Mary"*)

Session 11 – Living in the way of St. Francis today

We begin the session by repeating the homily from our Hinckley Mass.
Now we want to tell a wonderful story of a modern-day 'Francis', our new pope:

The first Pope of the Americas Jorge Mario Bergoglio comes from Argentina. The 76-year-old Jesuit Archbishop of Buenos Aires was a prominent figure throughout the continent, yet remained a simple pastor who was deeply loved by his diocese, throughout which he has travelled extensively on the underground and by bus during the 15 years of his time as a bishop. "My people are poor and I am one of them", he has said more than once, explaining his decision to live in an apartment and cook his own supper. He has always advised his priests to show mercy and apostolic courage and to keep their doors open to everyone. The worst thing that could happen to the Church, he has said on various occasions, "is being self-centred". His project is simple: if you follow Christ, you understand that "trampling upon a person's dignity is a serious sin".

He was born in Buenos Aires on 17 December 1936, the son of Italian immigrants. His father Mario was an accountant employed by the railways and his mother Regina Sivori was a committed wife dedicated to raising their five children. He graduated as a chemical technician and then chose the path of the priesthood, entering the Diocesan Seminary of Villa Devoto. On 11 March 1958 he entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus. He completed his studies of the humanities in Chile and returned to Argentina in 1963 to graduate with a degree in philosophy from the Colegio de San José in San Miguel. From 1964 to 1965 he taught literature and psychology at Immaculate Conception College in Santa Fé and in 1966 he taught the same subject at the Colegio del Salvatore in Buenos Aires. From 1967-70 he studied theology and obtained a degree from the Colegio of San José.

On 13 December 1969 he was ordained and then continued his training between 1970 and 1971 at the University of Alcalá de Henares, Spain, before making his final profession with the Jesuits on 22 April 1973. He held several posts within the Jesuit order until, at a surprisingly young age, on 31 July 1973 he was appointed Provincial of the Jesuits in Argentina, an office he held for six years. It was said that he was quite severe and unbending in exercising his authority but something dramatic was to happen to him once he was made a bishop in a place called Cordoba in 1992. He saw the poverty all around him and realised that Jesus was calling him to do something very special to help people, to try to understand them and why they had such difficulties and not to be so demanding of them in their lives of faith. When he returned to Buenos Aires as auxiliary bishop, he was a changed man. On 28 February 1998, he became the Archbishop, and when three years later John Paul II created him Cardinal, he asked his people not to come to Rome to celebrate his creation as Cardinal but rather to donate to the poor what they would have spent on the journey, and his sister bought some material on the market to make his cardinal's robes.

In October 2001 he was appointed General Relator to the 10th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Episcopal Ministry. At the Synod he placed particular emphasis on "the prophetic mission of the bishop", his being a "prophet of justice", his duty to "preach ceaselessly" the social doctrine of the Church and also "to express an authentic judgement in matters of faith and morals". All the while Cardinal Bergoglio was becoming ever more popular in Latin America. Despite this, he never relaxed his sober approach or his strict lifestyle, which some have defined as almost "ascetic". In this spirit of poverty, he declined to be appointed as President of the Argentine Bishops' Conference in 2002, but three years later he was elected and then, in 2008, reconfirmed for a further three-year mandate. Meanwhile in April 2005 he took part in the Conclave in which Pope Benedict XVI was elected. It later turned out that he was the second choice of the cardinals, after Joseph Ratzinger.

As Archbishop of Buenos Aires — a diocese with more than three million people — he conceived of a missionary project based on communion and evangelization. He had four main goals: open and brotherly communities, an informed laity playing a lead role, evangelization efforts addressed to every inhabitant of the city, and assistance to the poor and the sick. He aimed to re-evangelize Buenos Aires, "taking into account those who live there, its structure and its history". He asked priests and lay people to work together. In September 2009 he launched a scheme whereby two hundred charitable agencies are to be set up by

2016. He also had a number of responsibilities in Rome, which brought him to the attention of the wider Church. He was elected Pope on 13 March 2013, and his first words to the priest who wanted to dress him in fine garments before he walked out on the balcony were, 'you put that on yourself; the carnival's over.' Pope Francis has a great smile which displays beautifully one of the major attributes he keeps talking about, which is joy. "Evangelizing" (or, spreading the good news of Jesus, he says, "is the Church's mission. It is not the mission of only a few, but it is mine, yours, and our mission." By his simple white cassock and silver cross, his simple Ford Focus car, his moving out of the Pope's palace into a guesthouse, Francis is showing the world what he's about: living his life in imitation of his namesake, St. Francis, whom he often quotes: "you must preach the gospel and, if necessary, use words."

Show the DVD of "A Pope for Everyone"

This is the lesson of St. Francis; this is the example given to us by Pope Francis. This is how we should be living today as 'saints in the making.'

Session 12 - For love of God alone (1)

We have heard of the many sacrifices the saints made for the love of God alone, how they changed their lives and some of them even gave away their lives as martyrs. We have seen the lives of the sisters in Bulwell and the monks of Mount St. Bernard Abbey which are dedicated exclusively to work and prayer in silence, which most of us would not be able to put up with! Here is a story of two great saints, who longed to love God in this way and died very young:

St. Teresa of Lisieux

Marie-Francoise Therese Martin as born in Alencon, France on January 2 1873, the youngest of nine children born to Louise and Azelie-Marie Martin. Her father was a successful watchmaker and her mother a seamstress, but her mother died when she was four years old and the child suffered a deep sadness and loss that affected her for the next eight years of her life. Her father moved the family to Lisieux and Therese was cared for by an aunt and her two older sisters Mary and Pauline. Not too long afterwards, Mary and Pauline entered the Carmelite convent in Lisieux to dedicate themselves to Jesus in a life of prayer. Therese very much want to follow them even though she was only nine at the time, and became very ill for a time the next year. In 1886, aged thirteen she had a deep religious experience, receiving as she later called it the 'gift of love and self-forgetfulness.' She wanted desperately to join her sisters in the convent but she was too young. After a personal appeal to the Pope, she was allowed to enter at the age of fifteen, when normally you could not do so unless you were over 21. Again she the youngest, now among twenty-six other nuns. At her profession in September 1890, she took the name Sister Therese of the Infant Jesus. Therese's holiness is found not in the convent's seven hours of daily prayer, nor in her domestic work, nor in her time in charge of the sacristy or as assistant to the mistress of novices. Her heroic sanctity is found in the way she performed her daily tasks even as she

carried personal crosses. Attitude was everything. Her "Little Way," which evolved over the years, was the practical expression of her loving spirit of self forgetfulness. Her emotional suffering centred upon her father who, soon after she entered the convent, suffered a mental illness which necessitated a three-year institutionalization, before he died in 1894. Therese considered his illness her greatest suffering. That suffering would be eclipsed on Good Friday, 1896, when she began exhibiting symptoms of tuberculosis. The twenty-three-year old experienced incredible pain and bouts of suffocation. A few days later she began experiencing a complete loss of faith. In the midst of all this, she continued to be faithful to the daily schedule, to give herself to community activities, and even to write devotional poems at the community's request. The attitude of self-forgetfulness consumed her. The Prioress of the convent (who was also her sister Pauline) asked her to write her story from her sick bed, and they were later published as "The Story of a Soul". She developed a 'little way' of serving God simply wherever you are and whatever you are doing, and when asked about her "Little Way" a few days before her death, Therese described it as the way of spiritual childhood, of confidence in and abandonment to God. Expressed in selfless deeds of love - a smile, a kind word, a simple act of charity—it was "to throw at Jesus' feet the flowers of little sacrifices, to win Him through our caresses." The "Little Flower," as she once referred to herself, cared to give the very best—flowers symbolized in practical little sacrifices of self-forgetful love – and she summed up her secret the day before her death: "It is love alone that counts."

In her own words she made the wonderful discovery that "If the church was a body composed of different members it couldn't lack the noblest of all; it must have a heart, and a heart burning with love. And she realised that this love was the true moving force which enabled the other members of the Church to act. She died of her illness on September 30 1897, aged just 30, and was created a saint just 28 years after her death. Lisieux has become since the second largest place of pilgrimage in France (after Lourdes) and each year 2 million people go there to drink in the spirit of St. Therese and learn how to live her simple way of life for Our Lord.

St. Catherine of Siena

St. Catherine was the youngest of a very large family and was born at Siena, in 1347 to a wealthy businessman, Gaicomo Benincasa and his wife, Lapa. As a young girl of six, she was walking home one day and had a remarkable vision of Jesus sitting with Ss. Peter, James and John and smiling at her. From that moment she wanted to give herself entirely to God, but her parents who wanted her to get married tried to dissuade her. She was very strong and determined and therefore got her way. At the age of sixteen she became a member of the Dominican order while still living at home. She began to nurse the sick in the hospitals of Siena, preferring cancer patients and lepers as the others found them too difficult to care for. In a vision, Jesus told her, "I desire to come closer to you, through the love you have for your neighbour". Gradually a number of companions were drawn to her to share her inspiration and work. When an epidemic of the plague broke out, she was always to be seen with its victims, preparing them for death and burying them with her own hands; she often went also to prisons to be with those condemned to die and help them to prepare for what was to come. Her reputation for holiness and wisdom spread not only throughout Siena but all through northern Italy. Families and rival political parties would call on her to mediate their disputes

and reconcile their differences. She wrote lots of letters to powerful people all over Italy telling them where they had gone wrong and showing them how to put it right, and she even became an advisor to the Pope and persuaded him to come back to Rome from France where he had been living in fear. She died in 1930 after a three month bout of a very painful illness but leaving behind a faithful group of devoted disciples and lots of spiritual writings.

(One of 'our own' – St. John Leonard(i))

St. John Leonardi was born in Lucca, Italy in 1541, the youngest of a family of seven. When he was young he spent a lot of time in a workshop making medicines and began training as what we now call a pharmacist, but after ten years he felt called to be a priest. He was ordained a priest in 1572 and founded a community of priests called the Clerks Regular of the Mother of God, to help teach our faith and what it meant to all people. He never lost his love of medicine and felt that it would help him to pass on to men and women by means of a holy life 'the medicine of God', which is the crucified and risen Christ. He recommended his disciples to keep 'before their eyes and minds only the honour, service and glory of Jesus Christ Crucified'. He heard the voice of the Spirit calling him to reform the Church after a very difficult time and worked very hard to 'build a holy Church', by claiming that we should 'shine out for the integrity of life and the excellence of our morals so that rather than holding people back, we can gently draw them to reform.' He died in Rome in 1609, a victim of the plague that had ravaged the city.

Session 13 For love of God alone (2)

Now here are two more saints who gave their lives to God through prayer and contemplation. They both lived at the same time – early 16th century – in Spain and came to work together:

St. Teresa of Avila

On March 28 1515 in the fortified Spanish city of Avila, a child was born who, through her life and writings, would help people discover a new inner world that can be found only by prayer and contemplation. Born into an aristocratic and influential family, Teresa showed signs of a precocious spiritual piety as a child, even playing at being a hermit on the family property. Lively and affectionate by nature she made friends easily and adapted readily to any circumstance. As a child she was drawn to religion. She and her small brother avidly read the lives of the saints and at the age of seven, she tried to persuade her brother, Rodrigo, to join her in journeying to northern Africa so they could become martyrs. Her plan was thwarted by her uncle, who met them as they were leaving the family home and summarily forced them to return.

It was not long, however, before Teresa's childish piety was displaced by a teenager's vanity. She was attractive and she knew it. She delighted in nice clothes and fine perfumes, in flirting with boys, in dancing. Her reading turned to books of chivalry and romance. But after a serious illness that grounded her for about a year and a half, she chose to become a nun and against her father's wishes, entered the Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation in Avila. She was twenty years of age. At the time, the Convent of the Incarnation had something of a

country club aura: The nuns had frequent visitors and felt free to leave the enclosure whenever they wished. Despite the laxity that prevailed, Teresa made some effort at a life of prayer. She was professed in 1538 and for a while was sick and found her life of prayer difficult, but later on she began to experience a deep personal love of Our Lord, and wrote about it. She decided to reform her own Carmelite community because she thought they had become too lax. With the help of St. John of the Cross, she set up monasteries in Spain of 'discalced' Carmelites, those who wore no shoes and followed a more austere way of life than that of the others. She was a very determined lady. The first convent she founded was St. Joseph of Avila in 1562. From then on, Teresa's life was an amazing combination of deep prayer and remarkable efficiency as she went founding seventeen additional convents of the reformed Carmelites. Teresa was a woman of ready wit and cheery disposition. We know about her thinking and her activities through her writings. Her most mature work on the life of prayer and contemplation is called "The Interior Castle." For Teresa, the interior castle is the very centre within a person where God dwells. The spiritual journey is an effort to reach that centre, to achieve the deepest possible awareness of that divine presence. This takes place gradually as a person moves through the different mansions (or rooms) of the castle to that centre where one attains union with God. As we move toward the centre, prayer becomes more and more God's action in us rather than something we simply do. God brings us into wondrous union with himself. We experience God's love and come to realize that the important thing in prayer is not to think much but to love much. Love brings joy. That is why Teresa could say: "God protect me from gloomy saints." As she lay dying, the Holy Eucharist was brought to her bedside and she said, "O my Lord, now it is time that we may see each other", and she died on *October 4 1582*.

So how can we learn from and imitate the example of St. Teresa?

Be an influence for good wherever you are. (Remember Cardinal Newman's prayer) Follow in the footsteps of St. Teresa of Avila, a person of joy, who invited others to a richer relationship with God through prayer. Try to pray ten minutes a day and discover the joy it brings. Here is an example from the prayers of St. Teresa:

"Strengthen and prepare my soul, good Jesus, and help me to do something for you. For no one could possibly receive as I have and give nothing in return. Whatever it takes, Lord, may I not come before you with empty hands, since we are rewarded according to our deeds. Here is my life, my honour, my will; I give all to you. Do with me what you will. I can do little but approaching you, I can do all things, if you do not leave me."

St. John of the Cross

St. John was born at Fontiveros in *Spain* in 1542. After school, he became an apprentice weaver. In 1559 he went to work for the governor of the hospital in Medina, where he eventually entered the Jesuit College and showed great talent as a student of theology and philosophy. He entered the Carmelite Order in 1563 and was ordained a priest in 1567. Shortly afterwards he met St. Teresa of Avila who told him of her plans to reform the Carmelite Order. He decided to assist her in her task of reform. In 1568 with four companions, John founded the Discalced Carmelites. He took the name of John of the Cross and founded four monasteries. Other religious people misunderstood him and were jealous of

him and he was put into prison for nine months in Toledo in 1577. He continued to write and preach on spiritual matters and guided many others in the spiritual life. He described the path to holiness as the 'Dark Night of the Soul', because it was a demanding journey that must be made in the dark night of faith. Prayer was not meant to be easy and you had to go a long way before you could feel really close to God, but once you did, it was the most special and intimate thing that could hardly be described. You want no more than to live your life for God completely. Cf. "I die because I do not die".

*I live, without inhabiting myself—
in such a wise that I
am dying because I do not die.*

*Within myself I do not dwell
since without God I cannot live.
Reft of myself, and God as well,
what serves this life (I cannot tell)
except a thousand deaths to give?
Since waiting here for life, I lie
and die because I do not die.*

*This life I live in vital strength
is loss of life unless I win you;
and thus to die I shall continue
until in you I live at length.
Listen (my God) me life is in you.
This life I do not want, for I
am dying that I do not die.*

*Thus in your absence and your lack
how can I in myself abide
nor suffer here a death more black
than ever was by mortal died.
For pity of myself I've cried
because in such a plight I lie
dying because I do not die.*

*If in the hope I should delight
Oh Lord, of seeing you appear,
the thought that I might lose your sight,
doubles my sorrow and my fear,
living as I do in such fright
and yearning as I yearn, poor I
must die because I do not die.*

*O rescue me from such a death
my God, and give me life, not fear;*

*nor keep me bound and struggling here
within the bounds of living breath.
Look how I long to see you near,
and how in such a plight I lie,
dying because I do not die.
I shall lament my death betimes
and mourn my life, that it must be
kept prisoner by sins and crimes
so long before I am set free:
Ah God, my God, when shall it be,
when I may say (and tell no lie)
I live because I've ceased to die?*

John died on December 13 1591, repeating the very same words as Jesus had done: "Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit."

"My God, you will not take away what you have given me in your only Son, Jesus Christ. In him you have given me all I could desire, and so I wait patiently for you."

Interview with a priest

We have already considered the life and vocation of married people and those who live in religious communities of men and women, as part of 'saints in the making'. The two couples then interviewed a priest, Fr. Frank, and asked him similar questions:

Question: When did you first think about becoming a priest?

As a young boy, our priest was a man called Fr. John Barry, a Welsh Rosminian in his 70's. He was a lovely man who always visited people and loved everyone. He never got cross about anything. He used to go round the parish on a bike and if you were sick he would bring you an orange. Years before 'dialogue sermons', he used to walk up and down the church asking the children questions during Mass. Their parents were mortified if they didn't know the answer, but he didn't mind. He taught me to serve Mass and all the Latin responses and was always kind when I made a mistake. I remember wanting to be like him. When I was 12 or 13 I used to sing in church and found it very engaging. Later I went on retreat to Tollerton and met Fr. Molyneux, the vocations director, who was a good and kindly old man. Each time he visited our family I had to go out and walk round the streets with him to find his car! I was intending to go to university but Bishop Ellis told me a little fib, he said I should go straight to seminary and then after a few years I could go to university. So I went to seminary and by the time you were in there it was difficult to leave, so I stayed. Some of us used to go on a minibus each Easter week to Lourdes to help with a group of children with disabilities and learning difficulties and their families. I had never seen anything like this before and was shocked that they had not been included and embraced by the whole church but were rather marginalized on the fringes of church and society as well. Some of them were very ill, and it was heartbreaking to see. This experience really connected with me. I would ask myself, who is there to care for these people, to help them be accepted for who they are,

to be good to them when they were sick or in hospital, and there didn't seem to be anybody. I sat in the square in Lourdes one afternoon, during the Blessed Sacrament procession with some of the our friends and listened to the Prayer of St. Martha "Lord, the man who you love is sick" – then it came to me and it just clicked – this is what I wanted to do with my life. I would have to give away my life for them.

uestion: What happened next?

In Birmingham, at seminary, I always ended up doing things I wasn't supposed to, like spending time with the sick and dying, and being with their families. I felt drawn to them and something inside me wanted to reach out to them to see if there was any way I could help them or make things better for them. I was ordained in 1975.

Question: Did you find what you were expecting or hoping for?

Initially yes and no. I was sent to a wonderful parish priest, who was patient and kind. We were entirely different – he was German and I was Irish – but he nurtured and encouraged me. I also discovered that not all priests treat each other like this. Some were very cruel to each other, insensitive and refusing to live as brothers. This came as a real shock to me, as their pre-occupation with dress and the externals of or ministry. I had a difficult experience myself for some years, but a few priests were very good to me. Some have died but some are happily still here and I value their continued friendship and inspiration enormously.

Question: What are the main difficulties for you as a priest?

The thing I find most difficult is putting up with selfish people. So many of them can't or won't change their life for Our Lord or for the good of others, and it seems to be getting worse. None of us are saints all the time, but some people just want more and more for themselves which is a sadness. It can be a lonely life, people confide in a priest and sometimes you suffer with others, but you have no one to share it with. And of course it hurts when people turn away from our Lord, or do horrible things to each other. It is also difficult when you find that you don't have the energy to do the things for people you did one time a few years ago!

Question: What are the joys of being a priest?

I have made the most amazing friends and met many great people, including of course your good selves. In 40 years I have made many great friends. Often you feel that what you are doing is good and right. There is a lovely buzz and it's very moving when communities come together to celebrate at Mass, or at other events like the Dance of the Light. I feel bad when I make mistakes and hurt people, and I need friends to tell me the truth. Sometimes you need to invite criticism and comment from others, but actually in Hinckley it is freely given without asking! What is important later in your life is not making people think you are special – the only really special person is Our Lord himself – but reassurance that all your efforts and hard work have not been for nothing.

Question: How do your family view your priesthood?

I'm not always sure what my twin brother thinks. He's probably a bit embarrassed but I hope he might be proud of me as I am of him. My mum was very proud, she felt the "vocation of the mother" which people used to talk about, and I used to hate all that stuff. My dad was brilliant and never made me feel pressurized to be a priest. He said "Why wouldn't I be proud of you? You're mine!" I believe no one person is more important than another, and I don't really like the hierarchy and fussing of clergy, which is why I never wear a black suit. Even though I founded SPANNED, I don't think things like "who was the founder" really matter. It's all of us who are involved that really matter, and what we have done and are still doing for so long – it's really wonderful.

Question: What do you think about orthodoxy, and people in 'irregular' situations?

The Pope has shown us the way: "who am I to judge?", he said. I believe we should never refuse anyone or turn them away. But you do need to keep an eye on some people, to make sure that they are really sincere about following Our Lord in the church, or that they do not fall through a 'net', when they have not been made welcome by others who may be somewhat too judgmental. None of us has the right to point a finger of blame at anyone – we need to look to ourselves first!

Question: Plays are important to you, what does drama mean to you?

Tony, Kathryn, Marina and I have been using drama for many years. Drama puts emotion in front of people but is also a great way of teaching. It can be hard work but is a good means of getting people together and is very enjoyable for a group. We have managed to do some remarkable things together in SPANNED over the years and I am very proud of this, especially when it helps people who take part to be confident about themselves and what they have to offer – and it's been great fun too! I'm currently working on a play based on the so-called "Christmas Truce" a hundred years ago this year, during World War 1, and this is the first time I've done a play just for men – a few of our Sunshine Club members will be taking part, as always.

Question: What do you think about Ecumenism?

Our groups are all ecumenical with members from different churches and even none, so we are being 'ecumenical' all the time, even though we are a Catholic agency. There will always need to be variety which caters to people's differing views and experiences. So we can't have a fully uniform church. To be the Servant Church of Jesus we will be like a jig-saw, where every different shaped piece is needed to be placed together for the whole to be seen and enjoyed, or a stained glass window, which has no real effect until the different pieces are joined up and the light, which is Our Lord, shines through them all together. The churches are already working together more closely – it's happening now and must happen more. We need a united front of witness in the present age. Our economy depends on us being selfish and consuming – it's a big problem. The churches have a role to say we value people first, and we must promote this in everything we do.

Question: Is the church changing for the better?

Yes, at last, after a very painful and inward-looking period which has left many of us ashamed and hurt. The Pope is a genius and is changing things carefully and slowly. But he can't do it all and it's down to the people. We can't carry on as we were and we do need to change hearts, and the ways we have always done things. The clergy need to recognize the authority and goodness of laypeople and involve them in all decision making so that whatever we do, we do together as a family. The days of priests deciding everything and telling people what to think and do are gone – and they should have gone long ago! – so we have no choice but to do things democratically, recognizing each other's gifts and talents. That is why our efforts in SPANNED are so important. We have so much to show others and contribute to their lives, and we will be thinking about this a more carefully next year.

Question: Do you think you'll be a priest in 30 years' time?

No, I'll be dead. I'll be a sod under the sod!

Session 14 Surrounded by saints

As we come towards the end of our project, we reflect on two saints who cared for others in a very special and loving way, and then we try to summarize what we have learned this year before our Mass in Leicester on the first Sunday of Advent:

St. John Bosco

Would you expect a saint to be an acrobat, a juggler, a magician? Well, John Bosco was all of those! His main work was to help poor boys—to teach them a trade so they could earn a living and to teach them about God so they could have a happy life. He himself knew what it was like to be poor. He was born in 1815 near Turin to a poor farming family. His father died when he was two years old and he was brought up by his mother, Margaret, who struggled hard to provide for her home. As a young man he felt called to work with poor boys such as himself, and he did this initially by using feats of magic and acrobatics to attract them and then lead them to a church to speak to them about God. When John Bosco entered the seminary to become a priest, he had to rely on charity for his priestly clothes. He got a cloak from the parish priest, a cassock from a parishioner, a pair of shoes from a friend, and his hat from the mayor! He was ordained in 1841 and appointed chaplain to a hospice for girls but resigned soon afterward and opened a house for poor neglected boys with his mother as the housekeeper. When he first started working with the boys, they were a rowdy lot, John tried to be strict, but they paid little attention—so then he decided to be fun. Each Sunday he would have a combination lesson-play time. He would mix his funny acrobatic stunts and magic tricks in with the lessons, and the boys would laugh and learn at the same time. As time went on he set up many residences and schools to teach poor boys and train them as shoemakers, tailors and printers. Within a few years, his followers had spread all across the world, opening homes to help poor boys get a good start in life. By 1856 he had 150 boys in residence and nearly 500 more in schools throughout Turin, and had acquired 10 priests to help him. In 1859 John Bosco formally

organised the Salesian Order, and its membership grew rapidly, soon spreading worldwide. In 1872 he founded a community of religious women to help poor girls and a third order to allow lay people to help in his ministry. He loved young people and was very kind and gentle with them – ‘we should see these boys as our own sons,’ he would say, ‘be at their service; don’t be overbearing with them. This is how Jesus was with his apostles. He put up with their roughness, their ignorance and even their unfaithfulness. He treated sinners with such kindness that some were shocked, others scandalized and others hoped for God’s mercy. So he wants us to be gentle and humble of heart.’ When he died on January 31 1888 almost the whole population of the town came to his funeral to show their gratitude to him, and the Salesian Order still exists today.

Do you think that to be a good Catholic, you have to be sombre and serious, always praying but never laughing? Well, think again! A Christian should be filled with the joy of God—so follow the example of John Bosco and put on a happy face!

St.Martin de Porres

Born at Lima, Peru on November 9 1579, Martin was a mixed race child of a prominent Spanish nobleman and a poor black woman, Anna Velasquez. For some years his father refused to recognise him as his son so Martin shared his mother’s poverty. Eventually his father did accept him and provided for his education. He developed skills as a pharmacist, doctor and surgeon and began to work for the poor people of his city. He asked to be admitted to the Dominican Order as a lay helper but because of the strict rules of the Order and because he was of mixed race he had to start as a servant and farm labourer, but eventually his community were so impressed by his life of prayer and service that they asked him to become a full member. He helped to establish a hospital and spent much of his time caring for the black slaves brought to Peru from Africa. One day, he stumbled on a beggar covered in sores and allowed him to stay in his own bed instead of rejecting him. Another brother complained but Martin said: “Compassion, my dear brother is preferable to cleanliness. Reflect that with a little soap I can easily clean my bed covers, but even with a torrent of tears I would never wash from my soul what my harshness towards the unfortunate would create.” As he went about collecting money for the poor he was ridiculed because of his mixed race but offered all the insults to God. He was very patient, compassionate and caring particularly with the dying, and people came from all around to him for counselling and prayer. For the rest of his life, Martin remained a devoted servant of the poor, caring for their sick, treating them with dignity, reminding them of God’s love for people of every race and colour. He knew lots of influential people as well but treated them all the same. Those who knew him called him a ‘loving father,’ a ‘father of the poor’. In January 1639 he became very ill and suffered great pain. He knew it would be his last illness. He died in Lima on November 3 1639.

All Saints

We are celebrating about this time the feast of All Saints, which gives us the opportunity to summarize the work we have been doing this year and to ask how we really can be ‘saints in the making’. We will make use here of the gospel of ‘the Beatitudes’, the prayer

of the Servant Church and the prayer of Cardinal Newman.

Saints are people who...

Feel they are **called** by God to 'do him some definite service'

Care aboutGod and his love

truth, justice, right and wrong

other people as their brothers and sisters

Often **make mistakes** but God forgives them

Change their lives to live simply

Makes sacrifices even of their own lives

Are **humble** so that God's radiance shines through them

Pray often and seek friendship with God

Are **happy** because they have given their lives away.

Do the will of God – cf.Mary: "I will do what the Lord says, because I am his servant"

In them the **poison of self interest** is killed

They **Inspire** us by their holy lives;

Instruct us by their preaching

Give us God's protection in answer to their prayers

They serve God as:

An angel of peace

A preacher of truth

In my own place

While not intending it

In sickness

In perplexity

Even though God may

Take away my friends,

throw me among strangers

Make me feel desolate

Hide my future from me

They **think** with the mind of Christ;

see with the eyes of Christ;
speak with the words of Christ;
serve with the hands of Christ;
love with the heart of Christ and
live with the life of Christ

Can we think of any of the saints we have heard about this year who fit into these categories?

The saints are important because they walked the way of love, forgiveness and compassion and not that of power, fame or wealth. They get their priorities right and put God first. They show us by their living what we have not been and might yet be.

At our Leicester Mass, we will use the gospel that is read on All Saints Day – “The Beatitudes” from St. Matthew’s gospel. There Jesus shows his friends what their be-attitude should be if they want to follow him. Do we think that we could be anything like this? If so, then we are truly saints in the making. A discussion followed in Nottingham and Hinckley on these matters and the outcome was quite revealing:

Reader 1 If you want to be a saint you must

Reader 2 Be gentle – it will get you further than you think (*Mary is holding Hilary’s hand to comfort her; giving hugs*)

Reader 3 Be humble – let God work through you (*Don’t show off or swear. We had a long discussion here about ‘celebrities’ and who had met somebody famous – Martin met Miranda Hart, Hannah met Earl, a famous rapper, Margaret and Alison met the singer Donald Pears and the whole of the 1960’s Wolverhampton Wanderers Football team! They also shook hands with Margaret Thatcher! Mary and Simon met Pope John Paul II, (so did Neil, who asked him what he did for a living before he became Pope!) Jane met Roy Hudd, Marina met Diana Dors and danced with Richard Branson, Fr. Frank met Brian Clough, Martin O’Neill, Princess Caroline of Monaco, and Cardinal Nichols, Sam met the bass guitarist from Kasabian, Jim Carrey the actor and went to school with England rugby players, Sam Vesty and Manu Tualaghi, Ann spoke to Harry Belafonte, Eddie met John Terry, Tony met Benjamin Britten and he and Fr. Frank met Tom Paxton, Daisy met Bill Tuurnbull, Bridget met Derek Randall, the Duchess of Kent, and with all the Loreto Group met Cardinal Hume, who walked on her foot, Simon met Princess Anne and Chris Evans, Stephen met John McGovern. Many ‘celebrities’ however, are only famous for being famous and don’t really do anything but get themselves in the public eye.)*

Reader 4 Be sorrowful – grieving is OK; it shows your love (*share sorrow –that’s a good thing*)

Reader 5 Be merciful – we all need forgiveness (*be kind and ready to forgive when people make mistakes*)

Reader 1 Be just – the truth sets people free (*this means being fair and telling the truth*)

- Reader 2 Be peaceful – everybody is a child of God (*be quiet and give others a good impression*)
- Reader 3 Be pure – open your heart and you will see God (*try not to have dirty or angry thoughts*)
- Reader 4 Be brave – dare to do good so God can work in you (*sometimes you need to be on the school bus or at work when people making fun of you for being a Christian*)
- Reader 5 Be happy- so everyone can see what loving God is like (*you can't buy happiness – it's a gift*)

Liturgy for the Advent Mass at St.John Bosco Parish Centre, Leicester – 30.11.14

Preparation:

Hinckley group :make flash cards for the be-attitudes

Be gentle	Be humble	Be sorrowful	Be merciful
Be just	Be peaceful	Be pure	Be brave

Derby group: make tree decorations in the shape of circles of coloured card attached to a piece of coloured ribbon (about 120). We will write the names of the saints used in the liturgy beforehand, with their 'quality' on the other side, and before Mass in Leicester, each person is then asked to write their name on a card and bring it up to the tree at the offertory.

Leicester group: provide a tree (about 4 feet tall) on a stand) with lights attached to it but not turned on; prepare introduction to Mass, first reading and end piece

Nottingham group: mime the introduction; bring framed photo of David MacCready and candle to go in front of it

Hinckley group: mime the gospel

Loughborough / Derby groups: prepare homily

Scunthorpe group: prepare bidding prayers

Derby group: prepare meditation after communion

Hymn Follow me

Introduction *Leicester Group*

- Reader 1 Good afternoon everyone and a very warm welcome to Leicester
- Reader 2 It's lovely to see you all again and there's no better way to begin this holy season of Advent than being with our friends from SPANNED
- Reader 3 This year, as you know, we have been thinking about how we are 'saints in the making'
- Reader 4 And we have looked at the lives of many saints to help us understand what that might mean
- Reader 5 So what can we say about them? What have we found out about them?

Nottingham group

- Reader 1 Saints are people who...
- Reader 2 Feel they are **called** by God to 'do him some definite service'
- Reader 1 **Who Care** aboutGod and his love
About truth, justice, right and wrong
And about other people as their brothers and sisters
- Reader 2 Who often **make mistakes** but God forgives them
- Reader 1 Who **change their lives to live simply**
- Reader 2 Who **make sacrifices** even of their own lives
- Reader 1 Who are **humble** so that God's radiance shines through them
- Reader 2 Who **pray often** and seek friendship with God
- Reader 1 Who are **happy** because they have given their lives away.
- Reader 2 Who **do the will of God** like Mary who said, "I will do what the Lord says, because I am his servant"
- Reader 1 From our prayer at Mass today we learn that they:
- Reader 2 **Inspire** us by their holy lives;
- Reader 1 **Instruct** us by their preaching
- Reader 2 **Ask God's protection of us** in their prayers

Reader 1 In the words of Cardinal Newman's prayer, they serve God as:

Reader 2 **An angel of peace**

Reader 1 **A preacher of truth**

Reader 2 **In my own place**

Reader 1 **While not intending it**

Reader 2 **In sickness**

Reader 1 **In perplexity**

Reader 2 **In every situation**

Reader 1 Even though God may

Reader 2 **Take away my friends,**

Reader 1 **Throw me among strangers**

Reader 2 **Make me feel desolate**

Reader 1 **Hide my future from me**

Both But he knows what he is doing

Reader 2 Saints... **think** with the mind of Christ;

Reader 1 **see** with the eyes of Christ;

Reader 2 **speak** with the words of Christ;

Reader 1 **serve** with the hands of Christ;

Reader 2 **love** with the heart of Christ and

Both live with the life of Christ, today and always

Rite of Penance

Priest We are all saints in the making, but we haven't quite got there yet. This is sometimes because we don't want to be Jesus' friends in the way the saints are because it is too difficult or demanding for us and so we now tell him we are sorry:

Lord Jesus Christ, you have called us to be saints and belong to you,
Lord have mercy
Lord Jesus Christ, sometime we fail you because we are selfish and proud,
Christ have mercy
Lord Jesus Christ, but you always forgive us when we turn to you,
Lord have mercy.

Prayer Dear Father in heaven, in Jesus your Son, you have shown us how to live splendidly and in your way; in the saints, his friends, you have given us an example of how we might do so. Help us always to be the people you want us to be and to love and serve you with all our hearts.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

First Reading St.Paul to the Colossians *Leicester Group*

You are God's chosen race, his saints, he loves you and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another, forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts. Always be thankful. This is the word of the Lord

Psalm Come, Lord Jesus come

Gospel St.Matthew *Hinckley Group*

This may be mimed to "Nimrod" from Elgar's "Enigma Variations"

0.10 Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill (*Jesus walks up the aisle, followed by the disciples who arrange themselves in three groups on the sanctuary*). There he was joined by his disciples. Then he began to speak; this is what he taught them.

0.40 How happy are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (*a group together with their heads down; Jesus points upwards and they lift up their heads*).

1.15 Happy the gentle; they shall have the earth for their heritage. (*A group with their arms around each other. Jesus points to them and makes a sweeping gesture outwards*).

1.45 Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right; they shall be satisfied (*Group with hands outstretched in supplication; Jesus puts something into each of their hands*).

- 2.00 Happy the merciful; they shall have mercy shown them (*figures kneeling to each other; Jesus lifts them up*).
- 2.20 Happy the pure in heart; they shall see God (*A group with their hands across their hearts; Jesus points to heaven*).
- 2.40 Happy the peacemakers; they shall be called sons of God (*People standing back to back; Jesus turns them to face each other and puts their hands in each others's*).
- 3.10 Happy those who mourn; they shall be comforted (*Group with hands over their faces; Jesus consoles them*).
- 3.30 Happy are you when people abuse you, and persecute you, and speak all kinds of wickedness against you; rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. (*Everyone groups together and holds hands; Jesus stands in the middle and slowly raises his hands to heaven. Everyone else follows suit*).
- 4.0 This is the gospel of the Lord

Homily *Loughborough Group*

- Reader 1 Here is our Christmas tree, like any other, with lights and decorations to cheer us and make us happy at this time of the year
- Reader 2 It is ever-green; that means that it doesn't die in the summer. You can see so many of them in the forests of England and Europe as you're driving around
- Reader 3 The ever-green represents Jesus' love, that never dies away and lasts for ever
- Reader 1 On this tree today we will place decorations which represent the gifts of the many saints we have been thinking about this year
- Reader 5 So what have we learned from them, and what is there about them that we might give to others in the Lord's service?

Group members hang up the appropriate decoration on the tree as the name is read out

- Reader 1 There is the humility of Mary, the mother of Jesus
- Reader 2 The trust of her husband, Joseph and his willingness to change everything for Jesus and Mary
- Reader 3 The determination of St. Clare to be poor for the poor so that she could share a life of prayer and work with others

- Reader 4 The vision of St.Patrick, who showed the Irish people what God is like by holding up a shamrock
- Reader 5 The generosity of St.Maximilian Kolbe, who chose to give up his life to save another prisoner in the concentration camp
- Reader 1 The apostles of Jesus – Peter, Paul, Andrew, James and John – who answered his call and gave away their lives for him
- Reader 2 The spirit of Ignatius – a wounded soldier who became a priest and founded the Jesuit order
- Reader 3 St.Augustine, who recognised his own mistakes and asked forgiveness
- Reader 4 The patience of St.Francis de Sales and his friend, St.Jane Frances de Chantal, in preaching God’s word to those who did not want to hear it
- Reader 5 The love of St.Vincent de Paul and St.Louise de Marillac for the poor
- Reader 1 The joy of St.Francis of Assisi when he abandoned his riches and wealth to serve Our Lord
- Reader 2 The love of a young, sick woman, St.Therese of Lisieux, who wrote a ‘Little Way’ for Jesus’ friends to follow
- Reader 3 The strength and bravery of St.Catherine of Siena
- Reader 4 The love of prayer of St.Teresa of Avila and St.John of the Cross
- Reader 5 The care of young people shown by St.John Bosco
- Reader 1 The simple love of the sick of St.Martin

Derby Group

- Reader 1 Now we place decorations with our own names on the tree as well
- Reader 2 They represent the gift of ourselves to Jesus – the gift of our love and the gift of our service
- Reader 3 So that we can serve him whatever, whoever we are and wherever we are
- Reader 4 So that we can serve him in sickness, sadness, worry or joy
- Reader 5 So that in our service, we can truly be saints in the making

Reader 1 What can I give him, poor as I am?

Reader 2 If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb

Reader 3 If I were a wise man, I would do my part

All Yet, what can I give him: give my heart

Everyone comes up with their decoration and places it on the tree

Music *In the bleak mid-winter (CD)*

Reader 4 In the beginning, God said, let there be light, and there was

Reader 5 The Word was the true light, who was coming into the world

All And the Word became flesh and lives among us

The tree lights are lit

Hymn O Christmas Tree *(to the tune of "The Red Flag")*

O Christmas tree, your leaves are green, with beauty fading never;
a symbol of dear Jesus' love which cares and lasts for ever.
The seasons of the year pass by but you will never change or die.
O Christmas tree, your leaves are green, with beauty fading never

O Christmas tree adorned in love with lights and decoration;
O Christmas tree, the reason for our joy and celebration...
on Christmas day when Jesus came to take away our sin and shame.
O Christmas tree adorned in love with lights and decoration

O Christmas tree, you're always there to help us share in Christmas;
we look to you this time of year to comfort and to cheer us.
Outside the place where Jesus lay, in church or home again today,
O Christmas tree, you're always there to help us share in Christmas

Prayer of the Faithful *Scunthorpe group*

Priest Gathered together in this holy place, let us offer our prayers to our loving
God through Jesus his son

Reader 1 Dear Father, please help us to change our lives so that we can be the
people you want us to be. Lord hear us

Reader 2 Stop us from living in our own heads and help us to live in yours instead.
Lord hear us

- Reader 3 Help us to be good and kind to all people as Jesus showed us. Lord hear us
- Reader 4 Show us how to love, how to truly live. Lord hear us
- Reader 5 Forgive us when we get things wrong. Lord hear us
- Reader 6 Open up our hearts so that we can see the suffering near to us and far away and help all those in need. Lord hear us.
- Reader 7 Look after us all in SPANNED especially our friends who are sick or unwell. Lord hear us
- Reader 8 We pray for all who have died and in particular today for David McCreedy, a member of the Tuesday Club and Thursday Club and much loved friend to all of us, who died recently. Help him to be happy with you for ever in heaven, where there are definitely no daleks! Lord hear us

A member of the Loreto Cottage community brings up a lighted candle and places it in front of David's photo on the altar.

- Reader 9 Now let us ask Mary, the servant of the Lord to pray with us and for us.
Hail Mary

Priest Now let us say the prayer of the servant church

Loving Father, fill us all with your presence in Jesus your Son. May we think with the mind of Christ, see with the eyes of Christ, speak with the words of Christ, serve with the hands of Christ, love with the heart of Christ and live with the life of Christ, who is Lord for ever and ever.

Offertory Hymn I give my hands

Prayer over the gifts Loving Father, with these gifts of bread and wine, we bring to you the work we have done this year, all that we are now and all that we can be, in Jesus Christ our Lord

Preface God our Father, you are powerful and live for ever. Always and everywhere we want to thank you for your great goodness to us. You have called us all to belong to you, to be holy, to be saints and you have given us saints to show us what this means. You inspire us by their holy lives, instruct us by their teaching and give us your protection in answer to their prayers. And so we praise you with all the angels and saints as we say: Holy Holy

Eucharistic Prayer No.2

Communion Music In the Lord is my joy (*Rizza – CD*)

After Communion *Derby Group – the placards are held up in sequence*

Reader 1 If you want to be a saint you must

Reader 2 Be gentle

Reader 1 it will get you further than you think

Reader 2 Be humble

Reader 1 let God work through you

Reader 2 Be sorrowful

Reader 1 grieving is OK; it shows your love

Reader 2 Be merciful

Reader 1 we all need forgiveness

Reader 2 Be just

Reader 1 the truth sets people free

Reader 2 Be peaceful

Reader 1 everybody is a child of God

Reader 2 Be pure

Reader 1 open your heart and you will see God

Reader 2 Be brave

Reader 1 dare to do good so God can work in you

Reader 2 Be happy

Reader 1 so everyone can see what loving God is like

Song “Saints in the making”

Jesus, he calls us to live in his way, so now we are saints in the making;
to serve him in all that we think, do or say, self-interest and selfishness breaking.

To think with his mind, to see with his eyes,
to speak with his word to all others;
to serve with his hands, to love with his heart,
and make everyone sisters and brothers.

We seek what is just, to regain lost trust
and practice the art of forgiving;
so the hungry are fed, the wayward are led
to a new way of loving and living.
Look after the poor, they'll make sure that you're
remembered for each act of kindness.
They'll open our eyes, with one big surprise
and chase away all of our blindness.

So do what is right, and maybe we might
be actually changed for the better,
and see if we dare, to share and to care,
for the love of the law, not the letter.
In sickness and health, in poverty, wealth,
in despair, desolation and sorrow,
he'll help find the way, to serve him each day
and not care a bit for tomorrow.

There are those gone before, so we know what's in store
on the day when we march into glory;
we can look at his face, with no shame or disgrace
not frightened in telling our story.
So be salt to the earth, to show its true worth,
to the world be the light and the leaven,
we'll meet up with old friends, in a life that can't end,
rejoicing for ever in heaven.

Final prayer Father in heaven, we thank you for all that we have learned this year
about you, your friends, the saints, and the calling you have given to
each of us to be like them. Help us always to be your friends and to show
others what living with you is really like. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

End piece *Leicester group*

And we are called to be messengers of joy – the joy of knowing that in Jesus, God is with us
always, no matter who we are or what we do. This is the message we will be thinking about
next year and how we can tell it to everyone. This is the message of the angel to the
shepherds at Christmas, and through them to all of us: “Listen, I bring you news of great joy;
a Saviour has been born for us. He is Christ the Lord.” A very Happy Christmas to all of you.

Final hymn O Come all ye faithful (leave out last verse)

Session 15 Heralds of Happiness

The following would be simplified with Vanier's words at the beginning, followed by a little discussion, then group making cards, decorations and greetings, with a summary of the words of Ellsberg and Pope Francis at the end, followed by the be-attitude prayers and the last word from Archbishop Malcolm.

At the end of our project of work for this year, we think a little more carefully about happiness and joy, as clearly this is what the saints had to offer us and still do, and what we should be offering others in proclaiming the gospel of Our Saviour. Here are a few thoughts to underpin our last session, preparing us hopefully for the celebration of Christmas and the project of work for 2015 – “Messengers of Joy”.

Up to now, Pope Francis' most significant piece of writing is what he called an 'Exhortation' or encouragement, “The Joy of the Gospel”, and we shall be using it very often in our project of work next year. The founder of 'Faith and Light', Jean Vanier, also brought out a book last year, called 'The Signs of the Times', in which he says the following:

“What can be done to help people accept and love each other? That is today's major challenge!” (p.101) “What are most people really seeking? It is joy, and joy is what is so terribly missing. It is buried under the understandable preoccupation with staying in work and holding together the fragments of life. But it is tarnished even more by the frustrations built up by the images of an unattainable consumer culture which dominate commercial centres, television and the internet. There is not joy in any of this yet it is joy for which most people thirst. Joy springs up when people work together for unity and peace” (p.103) “Even in our time, it is still joy which attracts us. Jesus says, 'I give you my joy so that your joy may become complete.' The new evangelisation, it seems to me, doesn't consist only in seeking personal conversion through announcing Jesus; it must invite people to enter into a community where people love each other. This means offering places where people celebrate together and experience a feeling of belonging. Joy comes from this sense of belonging to a community, of feeling good together despite our differences, of feeling that we are no longer alone with our problems and our griefs.” (p.105) “There is a danger in the sense of isolation which is so widespread today: the growth of sectarian movements is also a response to the huge need for belonging. A sect is a community which is closed in around the figure of a guru and built on fear. People join because they are afraid – of loneliness, of feeling lost, of going to hell – and they stay there for the same reasons, for fear of the consequences if they leave. These groups are shut off behind concrete walls. A healthy community must be open and help each of its members to grow in a real inner freedom. Hospitality is vital for any Christian community, because it teaches us to welcome each person as they are, humbly and with respect.” (p.106) “At the heart of society's ills is a call to create more community. And Christians are surely invited to dare take the initiatives which will shine a new love into our troubled world.” (p.112) “At the end of this book, I dare to suggest that the mystery to which we are all called is to live like Jesus, who became small and weak. He is hidden in those who are humiliated, in the poorest the foolish and the weak of our societies, all those whom God

has chosen to confound the intellectual and the powerful of the earth – and so, it has to be said, of the Church itself.” (p.145)

In a wonderful article in “The Tablet” over 10 years ago, the American writer, Robert Ellsberg, told us that ‘happiness’ is not a feeling but a condition. Its opposite is not sadness but deadness, and that these are lessons which are often misunderstood from the lives of holy people:

“Deep in the heart of every person there is a longing for happiness. We may seek it through various routes and under many guises, but it is the same goal.”

Sometimes it is associated with success –achieving things –or wealth, - having things- and there are copious books telling us how to find true happiness, and the advertising industry, particularly at this time of the year, thrives on trying to present us with the perfect must-buy product to get it. But ‘feeling happy’ or ‘feeling good’ is not the same as ‘being happy’. To find happiness we need to broaden our definition so that feeling good is put into the wider context of doing good and knowing good. Sometimes Christian people and even church leaders make us think that pursuing happiness can be a selfish thing, which of course is true, but as Ellsberg comments,

“the theme of happiness runs like a silver thread throughout Christian tradition, especially in the wisdom of those holy men and women known as saints.... As we learn more about the saints we find that they pursued questions not unlike our own: what is the meaning and purpose of life? Why do so many of our hopes and plans end in sadness and disappointment? Where can we find true peace? How can we feel more truly alive?. It is here that the saints speak to our yearning for happiness. For they steer us away from the popular notion that happiness is either a matter of subjective feelings or a case of blind luck –something that simply ‘happens’... The happiness of the saints is a certain habit of being or health of the soul, the ‘life in abundance’ to which Christ pointed the way. St. Augustine wrote, ‘happiness is to rejoice in you, and for you and because of you. This is true happiness and there is no other.’”

This year we have tried to bring the stories of some of these men and women to life, to depict holiness not as some kind of ‘ready-to-wear garment that they slipped on’, as Ellsberg calls it, but as something that “*emerged in the way they lived their lives, through the challenges they faced, the questions posed by their moment in history and by their own personal gifts and idiosyncrasies.*” No saint, of course, wrote a guide to happiness as we see so often these days, but there is undoubtedly a connection for the happiness we all desire and the holiness to which we are all called. We will not find happiness in a consumer culture which overstimulates our sense and bombards us with meaningless choices, while leaving us starved for some deeper purpose. The haunting words of the opening song of “Mother Mary” come back to us each time we think of this. There has to be another way, and of course, there is. Often we only find happiness when we have stopped seeking it for ourselves - this is the message of the gospel and also of the lives of the saints we have been thinking about this year. Look again at the ‘Be-attitudes’ of Session14 to see what we mean. What made the saints attractive to others, Ellsberg claims, is *not* “*the heaviness of their burdens but the*

soul's joy that shines through their actions and attitudes” and this is discovered for us not only in the extraordinary challenges we confront but in the everyday activities and circumstances of our lives – whether in work, in solitude or in community, in how we face the petty frustrations as well as the serious pains of our existence.”- an echo of Cardinal Newman's prayer once again. Ellsberg concludes:

“The saints do not teach us how to avoid suffering. Nor do they teach us that suffering makes us happy. What they do show is that it is only along the path of holiness that we can comprehend a type of happiness for which suffering is no necessary obstacle....There no place that is literally ‘godforsaken’, but in every situation there is a door that leads to love, to fullness of life, to happiness. This is the deepest mystery of the gospel. Our task, if we would learn from the saints, is to find that door and enter in....St.Catherine of Siena used to say, ‘all the way to heaven is heaven’. All the way to heaven is heaven if we have eyes to see. It is a way of lightness and balance, a way that awakens us to each moment. On this path we are never finished; we are only and always on the way. When we think of holiness in these terms –as a kind of direction rather than a destination – we have a sense that what unites us with the saints, our fellow travellers, is much deeper than all that sets us apart.” (from ‘The Tablet’, May 1 2004)

There is also much to consider from the material produced by the organisers of National Youth Sunday for 2014.They are a reflection on the Beatitudes as well and might also be used for the session next year on what makes us happy- re-inforcement is never a bad thing! The straplines used in Session 14 and during the Leicester Mass come from this material, and it also includes quotations from the words of Pope Francis from the World Youth Day event in Brazil this year:

Is Christ your king?

“Jesus is the kingdom of God in person; he is Immanuel, God-with-us. And it is in the human heart that the kingdom, God's sovereignty, takes root and grows.”

“The kingdom is at once both gift and promise. It has already been given to us in Jesus, but has yet to be fully realized in its fullness.”

Happiness

“With the example and words of Jesus before us, we realise how much we need to be converted, so that the logic of being more will prevail over that of having more!”

“Do you really want to be happy? In an age when we are constantly being enticed by vain and empty illusions of happiness, we risk settling for less and ‘thinking small’ when it comes to the meaning of life. Think big instead! Open your hearts!”

“What does it mean to be ‘blessed’? To be blessed means to be happy.”

“Jesus challenges us, young friends, to take seriously his approach to life and to decide which path is right for us and leads to true joy”

Serving those in need

“In a very real way, the poor are our teachers. They show us that people’s value is not measured by their possessions or how much money they have in the bank. A poor person, a person lacking material possessions, always maintains his or her dignity.”

“Just as we need the courage to be happy, we also need the courage to live simply”

“We have to remember all those who feel unloved, who have no hope for the future and who have given upon life out of discouragement, disappointment or fear.”

The prayer of the Beatitudes:

Be humble - Jesus, humble Lord, help us to be honest and admit that we need your love. You have given us gifts, talents and the ability to do great things, but we need you to show us how.

Be sorrowful - God our Father, we bring to you those we have loved and lost, through death or separation of any kind. Comfort us through those who will support us in our grief.

Be gentle - Lord of all gentleness, help us to look always for ways in which to treat people with respect, warmth and friendship

Be just - Lord of justice, in our dealings with others, help us always to be just and to rely on the truth that sets us free.

Be merciful - Father of mercy, it is too easy to judge those who offend us. Help us to show them mercy and offer them the forgiveness we hope to receive ourselves.

Be pure - Lord Jesus, you created us with a dignity that no one can take from us. Please remove anything that stops us from opening our hearts to you.

Be peaceful - Prince of peace, you became human so that everyone could become children of God. Help us to find peaceful solutions to the difficulties we have with those around us.

Be brave - Lord Jesus Christ, give us the courage to walk with you throughout our lives, knowing that you want to do amazing things in and through us.

“Saints in the making”

Let us look again at our specially written song for this year, which gathers together all the themes we have been exploring:

Jesus, he calls us to live in his way,

so now we are saints in the making;
to serve him in all that we think, do or say,
self-interest and selfishness breaking.
To think with his mind,
to see with his eyes,
to speak with his word to all others;
to serve with his hands
to love with his heart,
and make everyone sisters and brothers.

We seek what is just
to regain lost trust
and practice the art of forgiving;
so the hungry are fed,
the wayward are led
to a new way of loving and living.
Look after the poor,
they'll make sure that you're
remembered for each act of kindness.
They'll open our eyes
with one big surprise
and chase away all of our blindness.

So do what is right
and maybe we might
be actually changed for the better,
and see if we dare
to share and to care,
for the love of the law, not the letter.
In sickness and health,
in poverty, wealth,
in despair, desolation and sorrow,
he'll help find the way
to serve him each day
and not care a bit for tomorrow.

There are those gone before
so we know what's in store
on the day when we march into glory;
we can look at his face
with no shame or disgrace
not frightened in telling our story.
So be salt to the earth,
to show its true worth,
to the world be the light and the leaven,

we'll meet up with old friends,
in a life that can't end,
rejoicing for ever in heaven.

The last word

We leave the last word on our project this year to our beloved Bishop Malcolm, now gone from us to Liverpool, but always with us in spirit and brotherhood. This is an extract from his pastoral letter to his new diocese in July 2014 and it sums up beautifully what we have tried to do this year and hope to continue doing next year:

“When he visited our country in 2010, Pope Benedict stressed that we are all called to be saints. But Pope Francis goes even further; by describing Christians as ‘missionary disciples’, he is teaching us that we are also called to be apostles, to hand on the Good News of Jesus Christ. We are not just called to be holy by following Jesus Christ in our own lives, but we are called to share that holiness with others, by word, action and example.... One of the most important insights of the Second Vatican Council was that holiness is for everyone...not just for the few. How could it be any other way when Jesus became human so that we may become divine? Holiness is not something which is out of our reach – it is practical. We find holiness in the world which is filled with the glory of God; in each other, since we are all made in God’s image and likeness; in the Church...in the Scriptures, in which God speaks to us and challenges us...and in the Eucharist, where Christ himself is dwelling at the heart of his Church... So our call to be holy is not an optional extra for the Christian; it is radical, since the Church is rooted in Christ and as Christians we must place Christ at the heart of our daily lives and never be afraid to share the gifts we have been given with all whom we meet...in our gathering in church and praying at home, at work and in school, we share in his priestly mission, and in the good things we do to help and support one another, we share in his kingly mission. I hope and pray that we will continue to carry the Lord and be carried by him, so that we do his will and make his love for us known in all that we say or do.”

THANKS BE TO GOD