

Impact Theatre Company

# *Who Cares about Australia...?*

*by*

*Frank Daly*

*with*

*Katie Hughes*

*Joshua von Fragstein*

*Matthew Bell*

*Sean Hopkins*

*Laura Harcula*

*Philip Noonan*

*Leah von Fragstein*

*Helen Bell*

with acknowledgement to:

Fr.Paul Newman

The Briars Team 2003-2004

Parishioners of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Mickleover, Derby

Copyright: Frank Daly / Impact Theatre Company December 25 2003

Dedicated to the memory of Susan Rowe

# “Who Cares about Australia?”

1)

## Act One

### Scene 1

*A Church. The priest, vested, comes to address the people from the lectern*

#### **Priest**

My dear people. It is with great regret that I have to tell you today that the bishop has asked me to take on a prestigious responsibility in the diocese as head of the Diocesan Schools Commission. This will mean that I have to leave you shortly and I will be residing in Cathedral House. I know that many of you will be very disappointed at my leaving, as indeed I am myself, but we have to do what the bishop asks of us whether we like it or not. In giving me this promotion, he has recognised my administrative abilities, and entrusted me with the awesome task of taking the lead in the development and fostering of our schools throughout the diocese. I have accepted it with obedience but not without a little trepidation. I only hope that I will be able to fulfil our bishop's trust in me. The post normally involves being given the rank and title of Monsignor, so I hope that I will be worthy of that elevation too when it comes. Painful though my leaving may be for you, sadly it will not be as painful as the situation which will now ensue, namely that because of the shortage of priests in pastoral work, the bishop has no one to replace me and so this parish will for a little while at least, have to do without a resident priest of its own. There simply are not enough of us to go round any more, and so parishes will have to share priests, with some having a priest in its midst only on Sundays. This is to be the case here. There will be no regular priest here and the priests in the neighbouring parishes will work out between them how to come and celebrate Sunday Masses. Inevitably, you will have to lose at least one Mass here, and have to manage with Eucharistic Services in the week, which is nothing like the service you have been receiving, but sadly this is a sign of the times. It may be that after the two expected ordinations next year, the bishop will be able to send you a priest of your own once again, but I wouldn't count on it if I were you. Several priests have expressed a wish to retire and some are in very poor health. Furthermore, there are no projected ordinations after next summer for a few years to come. Because hardly any young men are offering themselves for the priesthood, we now find ourselves in this regrettable position. Perhaps this is something that the young men present here this morning might care to contemplate: are you generous enough to give your whole life to Christ as a priest as I have done? Do you have enough love and goodness in you to make this great sacrifice? I sincerely hope so; otherwise, there will be no future for the Church.

There remains the question of how the parish is going to be run on a daily basis. Well, it's over to you, my dear people; now is the time for you to look after yourselves and I'm sure that you are more than capable of doing so. I have done my best to show you the way, and if you adhere to that, I am certain you will manage, somehow. The bishop is inviting applications from the parishioners to take on this responsibility in the short or long term. It may involve moving into the presbytery and looking after the parish property as well as conducting

the day to day business of our community – fund-raising, ensuring that the faith is properly taught, taking care of our sick parishioners, preparing people

2)

for the baptism of their babies, their first communion and confirmation and marriage, and helping to organise funerals when necessary. I feel that I have left you in a very healthy position since I first arrived here five years ago. The planned giving scheme has been introduced and great inroads have been made into paying off the parish debt, which had previously been allowed to escalate in a most irresponsible manner. That, and the many other ‘difficulties’ I inherited then have now thankfully been put right, and I am confident that you have sufficient resources to survive on your own. If anyone feels that they might be willing to take on the responsibility of running the parish, please write to the bishop and seek an interview with him. If you can provide suitable references, I am sure that he will look favourably on your offer. It only remains for me now to thank you for your co-operation and support in the time that I have been with you, and to wish you all the best for the future. May God bless and keep us all.

**Scene 2** *The parish centre. Five young people are having coffee and biscuits. Josh is frequently going for the biscuits; the others reprimand him.*

**Laura** Well, what about that? Father’s leaving. That was a bit of a shock

**Katie** Thank God!

**Laura** What?

**Katie** I said, thank God. I’ll be glad to see the back of him

**Laura** Oh....don’t say that...he was all right

**Katie** What do you mean he was all right? When did he ever talk to you except when he wanted something? When did he ever make you feel that you were important, that you mattered to him? He didn’t like us. He didn’t like anybody.

**Laura** That’s a bit harsh, isn’t it?

**Katie** Yeah...but it’s true, isn’t it..... (she turns to the others) Isn’t it?

**Sean** Well, he certainly didn’t seem to want much to do with us

**Josh** Except when he wanted someone to tidy up the church grounds and cart tables round for jumble sales, I suppose

**Leah** But, to be fair, we didn’t want much to do with him either

**Katie** Look, the Church isn’t just about priests you know; it’s for everybody. But he didn’t think like that, did he? He scrapped the parish council and the finance committee – he

said it was none of their business...it was his place to sign the cheques and decide where the money was spent. He told the folk choir they weren't needed any more and

3)

abandoned the youth group... it used to be so nice with old Fr.Joe, sitting in the lounge with his dog and listening to him telling us stories about when he was young. He loved us...he'd known most of us since we were born, baptised us and sat us on his knee when we were toddlers. He was so nice, so fatherly. So what if he got a bit forgetful and confused...nobody minded that, did they? He was shunted off to some retirement place all on his own, and we got Fr.Anthony Smith.... Who has done nothing but alienate countless people in the past five years: "and I have put right the many other difficulties I inherited when I came". Pompous ass. I say: good riddance. We'll be better off on our own.

**Laura** Look, we don't know the whole story, do we? Perhaps he was lonely... perhaps he thought it was his responsibility to do everything...perhaps no one had ever stood up to him before, so he wasn't used to it, he didn't expect it

**Katie** You're too kind; you're always giving people the benefit of the doubt. Why couldn't he have been like Fr.Joe? He loved us and trusted us...it was great when we were young and with him. And now he gets slagged off by someone who thinks he knows better. Like hell he does. He's never had any time for us. It was like we didn't exist.

**Josh** I wonder what'll happen now....we'll have no one now

**Sean** Well, we won't be here, will we? We'll all be off on our gap years, and then we'll probably be leaving home, so why should we worry?

**Leah** I expect they'll find somebody. There's lots of good people around here. Someone'll probably volunteer.

**Laura** But what if it's the wrong person....you know what if it's someone crap?

**Josh** Yeah... things could get a lot worse, I suppose

*There is a very obvious pause*

**Katie** I know....why don't we do it?

**All** Do what?

**Katie** Why don't we do it....why don't we volunteer to run the parish for a year?

**Sean** Er...no

**Leah** Besides, who'd listen to us...whoever would take any notice of what we had to say?

**Katie** Look, we're still here, aren't we? We haven't cleared off and left the Church like most of the others. 'Course we have something to say

**Laura** And how could we do it anyway? We're all leaving

4)

**Katie** Look, it's May now, right, the exams are nearly finished and we're all planning on doing something for our gap year, yeah?

**All** Yeah

**Katie** So we're not leaving yet, are we? Are we?

**Josh** Well, not yet...but

**Katie** *(to Josh)* So what have you got lined up for the next year

**Josh** Well, nothing just yet.... I am going to do something, but I thought I'd wait until the exams are over

**Katie** So you've actually got nothing planned yet, have you...have you?

**Josh** Well....no

**Katie** *to Leah*) And what about you?

**Leah** Well, nothing definite as yet....

**Katie** So?

**Leah** Well, I was thinking of going to work in one of those L'Arche places in Chicago, you know. Someone who knows someone who knows my Mum...her daughter went there for six months and had a great time, so I thought that maybe I would too

**Katie** But you've done nothing about it yet, have you?

**Leah** Well, not yet...

**Katie** And you're not that committed to it, are you...otherwise you would have done something about it already, wouldn't you?

**Leah** OK...OK

**Katie** So if somebody else came up with an idea that was equally challenging and a good deal, you might go for that instead, mightn't you?

**Leah** Well, I might

**Katie** 'Course you might... *(to Laura)* Any idea about your year?

**Laura** Well, I hadn't really thought too much about it, I suppose. Originally I was going to get a job then take off round Europe with my boyfriend for the summer next year, but well...we're not together any more...he just cleared off, said I wasn't very interesting...and I was so upset that I couldn't even think about what I might do.

**Katie** Look, we're really sorry, you know, about you and Rob....

**Leah** I always thought he was a bit of a prat anyway, if you ask me

**Katie** Leah! We are sorry, really, but it means that you have no definite plans either.... *(to Sean)*...And what about you? What have you got planned?

**Sean** Well, I have made some plans. I've got a job in Pizza Hut starting in August and I'm going to work every shift I can and earn as much as I can, so that I can go back-packing round Australia for a few months next year

**Katie** Look, who cares about Australia?

**Sean** I do; I've always wanted to go

**Katie** For God's sake, you'll have all your life to go round Australia....you could even go and live there if you wanted, but this is a chance to do something worthwhile now. Australia can wait....this can't. This is our chance to do something really good, to repair some of the damage that our much respected Fr.Anthony Smith has done. Come on, let's give it a go.

**Josh** What about you? What were you going to do?

**Katie** I was looking for inspiration, I suppose. I didn't want to go straight to university or college. I've had enough of studying for the moment. I hadn't actually planned anything and my Mum and Dad were getting on to me...don't waste your year...do something useful...don't doss about home...go and earn some money....it was doing my head in

**Laura** Well, if you were waiting for inspiration, do you think this is it?

**Katie** Could be...let's give it a try...what do you say? It's not right our complaining about the state the parish has got into if we're not prepared to do anything about it ourselves. Look, we can make a difference here, if we get the chance. What's this Church about anyway, if it's not about us. We're the Church, not just all those bishops and priests....it's us, isn't it, so what are we going to do about it?

**Josh** I'm game

**Leah** Me too

**Laura** OK, let's go for it

**Katie** *(to Sean)* What about you? Can Australia possibly wait?

6)

**Sean** Oh, all right, then. Australia can wait a bit longer...but if he says 'no', then we accept it, OK?

**Katie** OK, then you can go to Australia, or wherever

**Josh** So what do we do now? Ask Father?

**Katie** Er no.... you can just imagine what he'd say. No, we do as he said...we write to the bishop

**Leah** What's he going to think? Five young people offering to run the parish, and our parish at that? He'll probably think we're all mad

**Sean** We don't know what he'll think till we try, do we?

**Leah** No, I suppose not...*(to Katie)*...well, since it was your idea in the first place, you can write the letter

**Katie** OK, I'll write the letter

**Josh** And if he wants to...you know, interview us, you have to go too. I'm not going...I wouldn't know what to say to a bishop

**Leah** Me neither...I'd be scared stiff

**Katie** *(getting up from the table)* Well, let's see shall we? I'll let you know if he replies...now, then, back to the studying, for just a bit longer. See you....

*They begin to disperse. As Katie exits, she turns to Laura*

Why Australia, anyway? It's on the other side of the world? Why would anyone want to go there?

**Laura** It's got some beautiful cities, rugged outback, and all that space....

**Katie** Yeah, that's true ....I can just imagine Sean like Crocodile Dundee

*They laugh and exit*

**Scene 3** *Outside Bishop's House. Katie and Sean are dressed in suits, looking a bit awkward. The others are admiring them.*

**Laura** You two look real smart. We're proud of you

**Sean** You know what, I'm beginning to think that this was not such a good idea, .....Do you really think we should do this?

7)

**Katie** 'Course we should do it. Hey, I'm as nervous as you. I've never met a bishop before, except at Confirmation, and he's retired now. This one's new

**Sean** What do we say to him? What do we call him, bishop, your lordship or what?

**Josh** I've got a friend who's met him; he said he doesn't like to be called 'my lord' and that. He almost went ballistic when some woman tried it; bit her head off, he did. He said he was nobody's lord, and likes to be called 'father'.

**Sean** Do we kiss his ring or what?

**Katie** What?

**Sean** My Mum said you have to kiss his ring as a sign of respect. She said they all sort of put their hands out to you like that (*demonstrates*) so that you can't avoid doing it

**Josh** I wouldn't try that either; apparently he doesn't wear it most of the time.

**Laura** Just be yourselves, that's all you need to do. Don't try to be anybody else or he won't get the point.

**Katie** OK ..... we'll just be ourselves....we won't be intimidated or scared; just go for it.

**Leah** Yeah, go for it...if it's the right thing, he'll say 'yes', won't he, and if it isn't he won't. Just be philosophical about it

**Katie** Philosophical..... yeah...you and your big words

**Josh** Look, if it's to be, it'll be, and that's it

**Sean** OK

**Laura** Just do it and the best of luck. We'll be in the pub garden, with a drink ready

**Katie** Thanks....we'll need that whatever happens...Ready then, ....?

**Sean** Ready. Let's go

**Leah** Good luck...don't forget we're proud of you

*Katie and Sean exit SL and the others SR, where a pub garden scene is in place*

**Scene 4** *The pub garden. Katie and Sean enter as the others are seated drinking. They come on looking serious so that the others are puzzled. They sit down and take a drink. The others are impatient*



**Leah** Well?

**Katie** Well, what?

**Laura** Well, what did he say?

**Katie** Well, I felt he gave us a good hearing, and listened very carefully to our arguments, didn't you ....?

**Sean** Yes, I thought he was very fair

**Josh** And...?

**Katie** He was really rather taken aback by what we said and the fact that five young people would want to run a parish, even for a year...

**Leah** So...?

**Katie** So he listened, and outlined a few pitfalls we might have to encounter....

**Laura** Get to the point

**Katie** Then he said it wouldn't be easy for us as we were young and people might think we weren't mature enough to be doing this sort of thing...

**Josh** And...?

**Katie** And that they might not be able to cope with us, so we would need to be very strong and patient...

**Leah** Yes....

**Katie** And that we'd have to be disciplined in getting up in the mornings, attending to our duties and perhaps being willing to do things we didn't particularly like and deal with people who might not be very nice to us..

**Laura** Katie.....

**Other 3** What did he say?

**Katie** Well, he said, 'yes'

**Other 3** What?

**Sean** He said, 'yes', we could do it

She was brilliant, absolutely brilliant, the poor guy never got a chance to say 'no'. I think you frightened him you know

**Katie** I did not

**Josh** You scare me sometimes

**Katie** Oh..... *(gives him a big hug)* I don't, do I?

**Josh** No.....well sometimes maybe

**Sean** There were a few conditions of course, and he asked us a favour

**Leah** Conditions?

**Laura** A favour?

**Sean** Yeah, he said, that the parish couldn't really afford to pay us much, but would provide us with food and £20 each to spend. We'd have to have some form of supervision, and Fr. Paul from St.Mark's would meet up with us once a week for a chat and to iron out any difficulties when he came to say Mass. We'll have to look after ourselves and do our own washing and cooking, and learn how to take care of the property. Someone will show us round the house once Fr.Smith has moved out, and then, well we're on our own.

**Katie** You know, he wasn't wearing any of that bishop gear, just jeans and a T shirt. Nearly freaked me out; I felt positively overdressed. He made us some tea himself and there were no nuns hanging around like you might expect, you know, doing his cooking and that, and no secretary either. He just answered the door to us himself and welcomed us in.

**Sean** He's no fool, either. When we asked him why Fr.Smith was given an administrative job when we were so short of priests in parishes, he just said that Fr.Smith had some very good administrative skills and he was sure that his talents could be put to good use in the Schools' Commission.

**Katie** What he really meant was that Fr.Smith isn't a very good parish priest and the parish will be better off without him, but he couldn't say that of course. Canny bloke. He knew we'd seen through it too, but he didn't say that either.

**Sean** He was an amazing guy – You know for a bishop. I felt you could tell him anything and he wouldn't mind.

**Katie** We were talking about having no priests, you know and I said that maybe God has a plan for us all and that maybe priests weren't in it; maybe he's just being a bit more

selective with his callings. Didn't phase him a bit. In fact I think he secretly agreed with me but couldn't say.

10)

**Laura** So what was the favour? You know, you said he asked us a favour?

**Sean** Oh yeah...he said would we mind having someone else with us. Apparently, there is a young lad who wants to be a priest, and he's a bit, you know, keen, so the bishop wants him to get some experience in a parish before sending him to the seminary for studies. We said, sure, the more the merrier

**Katie** I think the bishop's really quite worried about him, reading between the lines. I got the impression that he wanted us to, well sort him out a bit.

**Laura** We can do that all right, no problem. So when do we start?

**Sean** September 6 in the evening.

**Leah** Wow

**Josh** Cool

**Katie** I'm scared now;; I thought I was scared before, but I am scared now.

**Laura** Scared of what?

**Katie** You know, of the responsibility and what it might mean for us; he has put a lot of trust in us. We don't want to let him down

**Sean** We won't let him down; we'll be OK. Come on, let's have another drink to celebrate.

*Lights fade and they exit*

**Scene 5**     *Outside the presbytery. A parishioner, Joe, is showing Josh and Sean round the property*

**Joe** So those are the boilers for the church, so now we need to check the one for the hall – that's a bit dicky, plays up quite often so you'll have to keep an eye on that. Then there's the electrics and the fire alarm in the hall – it always goes off when there's a power cut and we've had a lot of them just lately. You need to remember the code and re-set it. Talking of alarms, don't forget to put the one on in church every time you leave – to keep out unwanted visitors if you know what I mean. Now then, what else? Oh yes, the boiler for the house, the gutters and drains...

**Sean** Gutters?

**Josh** Drains?

**Joe** Yes, gutters and drains, the most important part of any property and often sorely neglected...but that musn't happen here

**Sean** Really? Why not?

**Joe** 'Cos if you do you will have one almighty problem on your hands, young man

**Josh** What almighty problem?

**Joe** Well, your gutters get blocked with leaves, see, and when they're blocked, the water's got nowhere to escape so it backs up and usually penetrates the brickwork or wood fascia, then you have a leak inside....can be very nasty that. Funny thing, water...it always finds its way to places you wouldn't imagine. We had a leak in the roof at the back of church once and it found its way on to the sanctuary and started dripping on father's head just as he was about to read the gospel. I thought it was really funny but he didn't seem to be too amused

**Sean** Well, he wasn't exactly a sort of 'amused' guy, was he?

**Joe** Ah, no....then there's the drains, of course

**Josh** Drains?

**Joe** Oh yes, drains...we have a big problem with them here. It's quite an old property, and there's been lots of drains added on. You must not allow them to get blocked because they'll back up and you'll have an awful lot of you know what coming up through the manholes – very smelly and unpleasant

**Sean** So...er..what do we have to do?

**Joe** Well, it's quite simple but can be a bit messy. Every three months you take off all these manhole covers with a screwdriver and look inside to see if they are...ehem blocked

**Josh** And...?

**Joe** Well, if they are blocked, you attack them with a high pressure hose, and oh, make sure you're wearing your wellies at the time not those fancy trainer things. You usually find that does the trick, loosens everything up and moves it away. You're not squeamish are you?

**Sean** Us? Nah.... (they are not convincing)

**Joe** Good, 'cos sometimes it makes you want to throw up

**Josh** Er..great!

**Joe** Oh, you'll get used to it; it's all part of life's rich tapestry, more to the point it's all part of running a parish. One more thing, the sinks...

**Sean** The sinks?

12)

**Joe** Yes, make sure you don't block them up with a load of gunge, because that is not pleasant....comes straight back at you up the plughole, and then it's rubber glove time

**Josh** Rubber glove time?

**Joe** Yes, you will need a large rubber glove, the longest you can find and you have to put your hand down the drain and fetch up the gunge yourself...not very pleasant but it does the trick. I'd avoid it, though if I were you. Anything else you want to know?

**Sean** Eh, no...that's quite enough for one day,..... Thanks, thanks for everything

**Joe** No problem...if you're stuck, you can always give me a call, but it's better if you sort it out for yourselves, then people will think that you really are running the parish. Cheerio

*He exits. They look aghast and exit after him*

**Scene 6**     *The presbytery sitting room. The girls are tidying up as the boys enter*

**Katie** What's the matter with you? You look as if you've seen a ghost

**Josh** A ghost might be better; we've just had our lesson on gutters and drains

**Leah** Ugh!

**Sean** Ugh, is absolutely right. I dread to think what might happen if we have to...you know

**Laura** Unblock them? Well, it's something you'll just have to get used to, like cooking

**Josh** Cooking?

**Katie** Yes, cooking! We're a team here, you know, we work together and take it in turns to cook.....You can cook, can't you?

**Josh** Well....

**Sean** I can cook...I learned it at school

**Leah** And what, pray is your speciality?

**Sean** Beans on toast

**Leah** Wonderful! Anything else in your repertoire?

**Sean** Oh, yeah....cheese on toast, toasted sandwich...

**Leah** Anything not on toast?

13)

**Sean** I could manage a boiled egg, I suppose, but I'm not sure about how long to leave it in....if you know what I mean

**Leah** Well, girls, we're in for some very interesting menus, aren't we? I can't wait.....I don't think!

**Laura** Don't forget the washing and ironing

**Josh** Can't do ironing

**Laura** Yes, washing and ironing...what are you going to do about that?

**Josh** Take it home to Mum

**Laura** What? May I remind you that you have left home now and will have to start to fend for yourself...so there'll be no sneaking home for a quick meal or to drop off your washing. You'll have to learn to do it yourself...and the ironing. By the time we've finished with you, you'll be new men

**Josh** I don't think I want to be a 'new man' just yet

**Katie** Look, sit down (*they all sit on the sofas*). We've just moved in together, right, and there are five of us, six when the other chap comes. So we'll have to look after each other and take it in turns to do the jobs. We'll have a rota that we will keep to, agreed? Agreed?

**Josh & Sean** (*reluctantly*) OK

**Katie** So you two can share the twin bedded room at the top of the house and the other chap can have the single next to you. There's a toilet and shower up there for you as well. We'll put three singles into the big bedroom just above and use the main bathroom. OK?

**Josh** How can we argue?

**Katie** You can't...it's been decided. So you must learn to do washing and ironing

**Leah** Hey, I don't want them washing my knickers

**Katie** No, I suppose not. Well, I'll tell you what, we'll each be responsible for our own washing and ironing

**Sean** Ironing?

**Katie** Yes, ironing...you have to learn sometime. We will share all the jobs

**Josh** So, if it's your day on the rota and a job needs to be done, you have to do it?

14)

**Katie** Absolutely...we're a team here, a partnership

**Josh** (*smiling*) So if it's your turn and someone has to climb up a ladder to empty the gutters of leaves?

**Katie** Climb up a ladder?

**Josh** Yes, climb up a ladder...it's about 25 feet there

**Leah** I don't do heights

**Sean** And the drains, of course, let's not forget the drains

**Laura** Drains?

**Sean** Yes, if it's your turn on the eh....rota, and the drains are blocked, you will of course....unblock them

**Josh** With a large rubber glove...up to your elbow in gunge

**Katie** Well....

**Sean** Because we're a team here

**Josh** A partnership....we do things together...don't we?

**Katie** Yes, but..... look here's the deal – we show you how to use the washing machine, you do your own washing and we do your ironing as long as you...you know...

**Sean** Do the dangerous and unpleasant jobs like climbing up ladders and emptying the gutters

**Josh** And unblocking the drains ..... deal!

**Laura** What about all the other things, you know; what do we do every day?

**Katie** We'll probably have to play it by ear and just see what happens. If one of us answers the phone and the door each day, and deal with whatever comes on that day to start with, and then...well, we'll just see, won't we?

*The doorbell rings*

**Sean** There you go, right on queue...so which one of us is going to answer it?

**Laura** I'll go; I'm nearest the door

*She exits and returns with a very pleasant lady carrying food*

15)

**Leah** Hi, Mary! How are you?

**Mary** Well, I hope you don't mind, but I thought as it was your first night here, you probably won't have got round to sorting out any food yet, so I've brought you some to be going on with. There some soup, a bit of cooked meat, bread, cheese, a trifle and a fruit cake

**Sean** Mary, you're a star! This is fantastic. *(he hugs her and she is quite surprised)* Well, I believe I'm on the rota for cooking tonight. That takes care of it nicely. I think I've done rather well

**Laura** *(hits him with a cushion)* Ignore him, Mary, he's just showing off 'cos he got us to agree to do the ironing

**Sean** But not the drains....remember that

**Josh** Or the gutters!

**Katie** Mary, this is brilliant; it's great of you, really

**Mary** Well, it'll be a bit of a start for you anyway

**Sean** You wouldn't like to move in with us, Mary, would you? We've got plenty of room

**Mary** Ehem...maybe not...I'd be too tempted to mother you

**Laura** I'm sure they wouldn't mind

**Mary** I just wanted to say that we're all so glad that you've volunteered to do this, and we're all right behind you. It would be awful if there wasn't a sort of 'presence' here, you know, to keep an eye on us. It's great. I hope you bring a bit of life and fun to us all. We're really looking forward to it

**Laura** Oh, Mary, that's so kind really...

**Josh** I hope we're up to it Mary, you know, that we don't let you down

**Mary** You'll be fine, and everyone's here to help you. Well, I'll let you get on now. I'm sure there's lots to do. Just remember, if you need anything, pick up the phone and don't worry about what time it is. If we can help you at all, we will

**Leah** Thanks a million, Mary...we really appreciate it

**Mary** Not at all...I'm so delighted you're here....well, goodnight then, and I hope you have a peaceful night



*Laura shows her out*

16)

**Sean** What a lovely lady. She's always been nice, hasn't she? Hope they're all like that

**Josh** *(looking at the food)* Hey, look at this..it's brill

**Sean** Yes, I think I've done really well, for my first outing as a chef

**Katie** Hey...you watch it...you're on tomorrow now; you've not had your turn yet

**Sean** What...that's not fair

*Katie gives him a very serious look*

**Katie** Come, get this stuff into the kitchen and lay the table for supper

*Laura re-enters looking puzzled*

**Laura** There's a chap outside...looks a bit serious...I think I recognise him from church...says he wants to talk to us

**Katie** Better, show him in, then...Our first 'customer' maybe

*The others look apprehensive as Laura shows in a man in his 50's soberly dressed*

**Josh** Good evening...do come in...I know you, don't I?

**Burton** I know your mother... *(to Leah)* ..and yours

**Leah** Oh yes

**Burton** In case you don't know who I am, I'm John Burton, a concerned parishioner, and I represent many more 'concerned' parishioners. Before you begin this eh..enterprise..I have come to tell you that I, we, are not one bit in favour of it. It's a preposterous idea...young people who know nothing about life being given responsibility for a parish. I don't know what this new bishop must have been thinking about...if indeed he is thinking at all.

**Leah** Well, actually, there was no one else...no one volunteered....If it's not us, it's no one

**Burton** I'm sure some of the parishioners could have been persuaded to take it on.. a retired couple for instance with some experience and standing in the community

**Laura** They might have been, but no one volunteered...only us

**Burton** This is quite absurd. How can we entrust the spiritual development of our children to people who are hardly older than children themselves. You've no training...no knowledge...no maturity

17)

**Katie** Hey, we're here, aren't we? We've volunteered and nobody else has. We're not too young to care are we? We're not so immature and inexperienced that we have no feelings for others or concerns about what happens to them. We could all have done lots of things with this year, like earning decent money, travelling round the world, whatever....but we haven't have we? We've chosen not to do those things because we care about this parish and what happens to it...we've chosen to live on a pittance here and try to do something worthwhile because we do care...that's got to mean something, hasn't it?

**Sean** The thing is, we've done nothing yet, not had the chance to because we've only just arrived. So why don't you go home and tell your friends to give us a chance. If, after a year, you are not satisfied, then you can come and complain, but don't be coming here and complaining before we've even started

**Burton** Young man, I'm not used to being spoken to in this way

**Sean** And we're not used to being spoken to in this way either...so goodnight to you

**Burton** Is that all?

**Sean** Yes, that's all...Good night

**Burton** I shall write to the bishop and have you all removed. This is a completely ridiculous situation

**Sean** You can write to who you like. The fact is he sent us here, so he trusts us even if you don't, and that's all that matters

*The man exits in a huff*

**Laura** Ookay!

**Leah** "A prophet is not honoured in his own country.."

**Katie** Huh?

**Leah** That's what Our Lord said, didn't he?

**Josh** Doesn't bode well for us, does it? What were you saying about hoping they were all like Mary?

*The bell rings and Laura goes out again*

**Katie** Aren't we busy tonight? Seems like everyone wants to come

*Laura enters*

18)

**Laura** There's a priest out here with a big bag. He's very young. I said we weren't expecting him but he seemed to think we were

**Sean** I'll go. We better let him in. It might be Fr. Paul from the next parish

*He goes out and brings the 'priest' in with him*

This is Father...sorry, what did you say your name was?

**Andrew** Andrew

**Sean** This is Fr. Andrew

**Andrew** Well, actually I'm not 'Father', well not yet anyway, maybe not for a while. I'm studying for the priesthood..well I will be next year. The bishop asked me to come and work with you here

**Katie** So, you're the guy...what are you doing dressed up in all that gear?

**Andrew** Well, I thought, you know, its what the people expect...if we were doing priests' work here, that we should look like them

**Josh** But we're not working like priests here...we're working as us, young people, and none of us have any intention of being priests

**Andrew** Well, I have

**Leah** So we can see...Look, all that stuff's a bit heavy you know..you ought to lighten up a bit and be yourself

**Andrew** It's what the people expect

**Josh** No, it's not..they expect you to be yourself, not a caricature

**Katie** Let's not argue about it as soon as you've arrived. Your room's at the top of the stairs on the left...go and put your jeans on and come down and relax with us. A kind lady's just brought us some grub and I'm starving

**Andrew** OK, only I don't have any jeans

**Sean** Well, just dress casual, then...as casual as you can

*He exits*

Bloody Hell! Its no wonder the bishop wanted a 'favour'. Whatever are we going to do with him?

19)

**Katie** Sort him out...given a bit of time

**Leah** That might be a bit more difficult than you think

**Katie** Maybe.....well, welcome to the parish!

*The lights slowly fade on them*

## **End of Act One**

### **ACT 2**

**Scene 1** *The young people are sitting down with cups of coffee with Fr.Paul, after a meal which Andrew has clearly cooked. He is still wearing black but also an apron*

**Sean** Tell you what, Andy, you may dress like a plonker but you sure can cook. That was a mean curry

**Josh** Yeah

**Katie** Have you ever noticed, father, how boys are so preoccupied with their stomachs?

**Fr.Paul** I was a boy once and well...now you come to mention it...but it was great, Philip, well done! So how's it going guys?

**Leah** It's been a real shock, Father, you know...moving in here

**Katie** Yeah...we thought it would be, you know, exciting but we feel a bit scared. There's a real burden of expectation that seems to have dropped right on us

**Josh** That guy the other night, you know, Mr.Burton....

**Sean** Oh him! (*mimics*) I know your mother..

**Josh** He was really unnerving...told us he didn't think we should be here...said we were too young...too immature

**Fr.Paul** Lots of people will say that at first...it's hard for them too, you know, to adjust to a new situation. Once they've got used to you, you'll be fine

**Laura** I hope so, but I'm not so sure

**Katie** He made us feel that our opinions were just naivety; just because we're young doesn't mean we can't see

**Fr.Paul** Look, there's a huge generosity that's brought you here. You could have been doing so many other things, travelling, working, whatever, but you're here. People will respect you for that

20)

**Leah** Do you really think so?

**Fr.Paul** Of course they will. In time they will see what you've got to offer and realise that it's quite different. They'll be pleased and proud, believe me

**Laura** But we are young..there's no escaping that

**Fr.Paul** So were lots of people in the Bible and God called them because they were young... I love that bit from the prophet Jeremiah, when God called him..."Ah, Lord, I do not know how to speak, I am a child"...and God said "Do not say, I am a child; go now to those to whom I send you, and know that I am with you to protect you.."

**Laura** And did he?

**Fr.Paul** What?

**Laura** You know, go?

**Fr.Paul** He certainly did...wasn't frightened any more even when it got difficult. So there's no need for you guys to be either.

**Sean** There you go...you heard it from the voice of authority, so don't worry

**Fr.Paul** Tell you what we could do....do any of you play musical instruments?

**Katie** I play the guitar, a bit

**Josh** And me

**Leah** I play the flute

**Laura** I can sing

**Sean** I can't...I'm not one bit musical...I can turn the pages

**Andrew** I'm able to read music...I love plainchant

**Sean** Excuse me?

**Katie** Don't worry about it..it's not the sort of music that goes with guitars

**Fr.Paul** Well why don't we have a go at some music for Mass one weekend. There's some good stuff about now.. I could get the books for you and maybe we could print a few sheets for everyone...might make a difference.

**Laura** Good idea!

**Josh** Yeah...good idea

21)

**Andrew** I don't think so

**Fr.Paul** Why not?

**Andrew** The people don't want 'pop' music and we're not in the entertainment business

**Katie** It's not pop music...it's holy music with a bit of a swing to it

**Leah** Sometimes it's quiet and slow and very moving...not 'pop' at all

**Andrew** The people like traditional hymns properly sung

**Sean** Dirges you mean...God, we've had enough of them

**Katie** Some of those hymns strain my voice...I can't get up to the high notes...and I don't understand some of the words

*They all laugh except Andrew*

**Fr.Paul** Andrew, I think you're being a bit negative

**Andrew** Look, Father, these people want the one truth faith, the Eucharist and the sacraments. When they come to church they want to feel they've been to church and not a concert

**Katie** This isn't a concert and we're not entertainers

**Leah** When I go to church, I want to feel, you know, uplifted, encouraged, stronger..to face the rest of my life..I don't want to listen..to turgid hymns and depressing sermons

**Andrew** That is not the point..if you want to feel uplifted, read the Pope's encyclicals

**Sean** The Pope's what?

**Fr.Paul** Letters of teaching the Pope writes from time to time

**Sean** Never heard of them

**Andrew** That's just the problem, isn't it? How can you claim to be looking after the parish here if you don't know what the Pope says?

**Katie** No disrespect to the Pope, but what he's got to say isn't really what comes into my mind first thing in the morning.....more like, how am I going to get through the day?

**Philip** Look, we come to church to reflect and to pray

22)

**Katie** You don't have to be in church to reflect...I can't do this random reflecting. I find it difficult, I feel a bit, you know, confined. I reflect on the bus..in the bath...when I'm eating a bit of toast...or walking about. You don't just do it - reflect - on demand. You know sometimes I sit there with all the others, looking at them, reflecting, and I think to myself, I wonder what they're really doing here; they're probably not listening or praying at all - probably making up a shopping list to go and get stuff after Mass or wondering whether they locked the back door.

**Andrew** I think that's disgraceful; they come here to give glory to God, to listen to the readings, to be inspired and to offer themselves up with the priest of the altar of sacrifice

**Sean** I think you don't live in the real world, Andy; that is not how it is for most people

**Laura** Andrew, you've been reading too many of the Pope's bicycles

**Andrew** Encyclicals

**Laura** Oh, hell, whatever they're called

**Fr.Paul** Well, young friends, this isn't the time for an in-depth discussion on prayer and the Mass. The question is, are we going to try and learn some new hymns?

**Josh** 'Course we are, father; it's a great idea

**Andrew** Well, I think it's a very bad idea

**Sean** You're entitled to your opinion, Andy, but you're outvoted

**Fr.Paul** OK, then, we'll give it a go. Well, I must leave you in peace - it is peace isn't it? - to get to bed. I'll pop over and see you on Friday afternoon to see what you've come up with. OK?

*He gets up and makes for the door*

Thanks again for the meal; much appreciated by a self-caterer!

**Sean** You're very welcome, Father. Come again when I'm cooking

**Katie** If you like beans on toast

**Leah** Or anything on toast

**Sean** I might surprise you

**Laura** You might...but then again..Goodnight, father

*Andrew shows the priest out*

23)

**Josh** Andrew really does need to lighten up

**Katie** Yeah...I wonder how we can help him

**Laura** I wish he'd get out of that black and dress like a real person

**Leah** Well, it won't get sorted out tonight. I'm jiggered. We'll need a good sleep if we're going to the school tomorrow.

**Katie** Yeah...back to my old school...it'll be strange. I hope they don't laugh at us

*The lights fade*

**Scene 2** *Outside the school. Katie, Leah and Sean meet the Head Teacher*

**Head** Well, hello everyone. This is a nice surprise. You've hardly left and now you've come back to us....I'm quite delighted...and you all did reasonably well in your 'A' levels too

**Sean** Sorry about my maths, sir...something went quite dramatically wrong there

**Head** Never mind; you'll still have enough to get in somewhere next year. Anyway, I'm very proud of you. I think you're doing a very brave and noble thing

**Katie** Thank you, sir

**Leah** Thank you, sir

**Head** I think we can dispense with the 'sir' now; you've left school. My name is David

**Sean** We couldn't possibly call you, 'David'

**Head** 'Course you can. You'll get used to it. Now, Leah, you're going to take an RE 6th form class, Josh, you're going walkabout to chat to a few people and you Katie, you're coming to do the assembly with me, aren't you?

**Katie** Yes. I'm absolutely petrified.

**Head** You'll be fine..just be yourself and you'll be fine

**Katie** I wish I could believe you

*Lights fade and come up again on the assembly hall. There is a lectern in the middle of the stage. The Head walks up to it.*



**Head** Good morning, everyone. Today we are very lucky to have three of last year's Year 13, who have come to spend the day with us in school. They have done a very courageous thing, and offered their gap year to look after the people of Our Lady's parish, something quite unheard of before. I applaud their generosity and want to tell them that

24)

our school is very proud of them. I hope you will make them very welcome and that they will feel able and willing to come back to school on a regular basis while they are at Our Lady's. Now I'm going to hand you over to Katie who will lead the assembly for us.

**Katie** Hi....eh hi. It feels very strange...you know, being up here instead of down there... I think I'd rather be down there right now with you..than being up here. It feels kinda lonely. But I know that when I was down there, all those years I was here in school, that I didn't really appreciate what people up here were trying to say to me....In fact often I didn't even listen...I was too busy thinking about what lessons I'd got, how I was going to get my homework finished, and catching up with the news from my friends. *(She turns to the Head)*. I'm really sorry, sir, but that's the truth, and now I'm up here I feel a bit..you know...ashamed.

*(The Head smiles, and she pauses, taking a deep breath)*. Well, you will have heard now what five of us who left last year have volunteered to do. I don't know what you think of us...you probably think we're mad...sometimes we think we're mad..but we're not. And we haven't suddenly you know, got 'religion' over the summer. We're not different people..we're just the same as we were when we were here...but what's happened to us has made us think differently about things. There was going to be no priest in our parish any more after this summer and the bishop was looking for volunteers to look after the parish, so we volunteered...simple as that. We were shocked when he said 'yes', and we've been a bit shocked by people's attitude since we moved in. Some of them are very nice to us, but others are condescending, telling us we don't know what we're doing, and what right have we got to run a parish? It's tough some days, but you know for all that I feel I belong. I like doing it...helping people and visiting them..chatting to them, getting to know them and listening to them..that's really important. There must have been something inside drawing me towards it..you know making me want to do something really worthwhile this year..to contribute, to give something back. The truth is, I often complained, you know about the parish and that..I felt we young people were being ignored and no one listened to us...so this is our way of trying to do something about it...and we're not trying to be someone else, just ourselves. I've learned a lot about myself and my faith since we started, and I'll certainly learn more. I'm not a 'goody-goody' person. I'm just me and sometimes I make a mess of things, sometimes I'm selfish and uncaring, but I'm learning and it's good...it's hard but it's good. So if you want to come and see us at Mass or call in to the house any day, you're welcome. We'll be really glad to see you and have a chat. And thanks..thanks for listening.

**Head** Thank you very much, Katie, for that interesting insight. Now, let us all pray in the words Our Lord taught us. Our Father....

*The lights fade*

**Scene 3** *A bench in the school playground. A girl, Helen, is sitting on the bench. Sean enters and sees her. She is obviously upset*

**Sean** Hey, you OK?

25)

**Helen** Yes, I'm OK...I'm fine, don't worry

**Sean** You sure?

**Helen** I'm OK, really

**Sean** I don't know you, do I? I left here last year, but I don't remember you. I'm Sean

**Helen** No, I've only just come recently. My family moved up here, so I've had to come to finish off my 'A' levels. I'm Helen

*They shake hands*

**Sean** Well, how are you getting on?

**Helen** I think you can see; I'm sitting here on my own aren't I?

**Sean** Want to talk about it?

**Helen** Well, have you? - no you won't - never mind

**Sean** No, tell me

**Helen** OK. Have you ever had the feeling, you know when you're in a group with friends, the feeling that you're being ignored, or they're acting as if you don't exist?

**Sean** Oh yeah, often

**Helen** Really? When?

**Sean** Well, it was a while ago...something to do with us all arranging to go bowling or something at the weekend, and I had invited this girl I was interested in at the time, and she was quite shy. She asked if she could bring a friend and I didn't happen to like her friend, so they got scared, I suppose and kind of blanked me out for a while.

**Helen** Oh...I'm so sorry

**Sean** It's all right, thanks...that was ages ago and we're OK now. So what's happened to you?

**Helen** Well, they are basically doing the same thing as your friends did, only I don't know why. They were on about a trip to Alton Towers, planning it, fixing the day and just didn't include me. I've come here, don't know anybody and it's hard, you know to

break into friendship groups, especially if they've been together for a while and you're new. But they didn't even give me a chance. I tried to be nice, but it didn't work. What do you think I should do?

26)

**Sean** Well...I think your best bet would be to leave them for a bit...eventually they'll change their minds

**Helen** You think so?

**Sean** Yeah...teenagers' opinions change all the time

**Helen** But who else will I hang out with?

**Sean** Have you no other friends?

**Helen** A few down south at my last school, but I don't see much of them now. I text some of them from time to time, but nothing too regular

**Sean** You're always welcome at the church...Our Lady's...a few of us are looking after the place for a year, so you can come up there any time...I'm sure the others won't mind, if you need a friend or somewhere to get away for a while.

**Helen** You sure?

**Sean** Yes, 'course I'm sure. Come any time. Come this evening if you like

**Helen** OK then.... *(she looks at her watch)* Oh..I'm late...I've got to get back to class

**Sean** Right..bye then...see you

*They stand up and she hugs him*

**Helen** Thanks...thanks a million

**Sean** Eh...no problem...see you then

*She exits*

#### **Scene 4**

*Josh is being brought into a living room by a lady, Sylv, whose husband, Bert is dressed in a boiler suit and sitting in an armchair with a mug of tea watching television*

**Sylv** Come on in then, sit yourself down

**Josh** Thanks

**Sylv** Bert, this is Josh, one of the young people looking after our parish this year... *(loud whisper)* Bert's not a Catholic

27)

**Bert** You can come in as long as you're not one of that lot with the briefcases. *(shakes his hand)* How are you, Lad? Sit down here. You'll have to excuse me; I'm just home from work *(he turns off the TV with the remote control)*

**Josh** Oh...that's fine *(he sits down)* ...thanks

**Bert** Young people looking after the parish...whatever will they think of next?

**Sylv** They're doing very well, Bert, and we're glad to have them. Coffee, Josh, or tea?

**Josh** Coffee please

*She exits*

**Bert** I don't go in for this religion stuff meself...too many rules, too much control...stops you doing what you want....no offence

**Josh** None taken

**Bert** Sylv...she's a believer...she's a good woman and good to me...we've had a simple life...but a happy one...our only sadness is that we couldn't have children. We tried but it didn't happen. Nearly broke her heart, it did...and mine too, I suppose...it would have been so grand to have had a little family but...oh well...that's how it is. She goes to church a lot...says it helps her...I go with her at Christmas and that, and ...well, it's OK....but all that's stuff's not really for me

**Josh** It's like that for some people

**Bert** You don't look like a churchy sort of person

**Josh** I'm not

**Bert** Can't think there'd be many young people wanting to do what you're doing...you're not going to be a vicar are you?

**Josh** Er...no...there's six of us working up there together for a year before we go to university...one of us wants to be a priest, so he says anyway

**Bert** Oh yes...and how are you going on, then?

**Josh** OK....most of the time...some people are kind and others...well, you know....they don't think we should be doing it because we're too young

**Bert** That's rubbish...you're never too young to do something worthwhile, lad

**Josh** Yeah...I hope so

28)

**Bert** University eh? Bright lot, then, are you?

**Josh** I dunno...maybe a bit...perhaps

**Bert** I'm not bright, me...I've been to the university of life...I'm a plumber

**Josh** I think plumbers are more important than boffins, Bert...whatever happens to you, you'll always need a plumber...computers don't unblock drains, as I've found out!

**Bert** Aye....we're busy enough ....so why did you want to do it anyway, you know...spending a year in a parish? I thought you lot wanted to travel, get away and that

**Josh** When Fr.Smith told us he was leaving and that there would be no one to look after the parish unless someone volunteered, my friend Katie persuaded us to go for it...so here we are

**Bert** A bit eh...formal....that Fr.Smith, wasn't he? I didn't know him, only saw him at Christmas...but I thought he was a bit, you know sure of himself. Sylv's a very charitable woman and she wouldn't let on, but I think she found him a bit difficult

**Josh** I think a lot of people did

**Bert** Bit different now, eh?

**Josh** Just a bit...I suppose none of us had any real plans for the year. My mate Sean wanted to earn loads of money and go to Australia for a few months, back-packing, but Katie talked him out of it

**Bert** Must be a very persuasive lady, this Katie

**Josh** Oh yeah..she is *(he laughs)* She said we should do something really worthwhile, something good for other people rather than worrying about ourselves, something to try and bring a bit of life into the parish, make it a loving family again after...you know...So we sort of found ourselves doing this, and it's OK

**Bert** Loud music in the priest's house, eh? I bet the neighbours love it!

**Josh** Oh...we're not that bad, really...but we do have our moments...specially when two or three of you want to play something different all at once

**Bert** Oooh... can just imagine it

**Josh** And we're getting on OK too...we didn't know one lad, so it's been a bit difficult for him and us..and some of us are a bit messy, including me...you kinda forget where you put your clothes...and the girls are into ironing their hair to make it straight, mascara and all that women's stuff. Some days, we're better off out of it...you don't need to tart yourself up to do this job, just a wash'll do...well, that's what I reckon ...so I come visiting to get out of their way

29)

*Sylv comes back with coffee and biscuits*

**Sylv** There you are, Josh...help yourself...have you two been having a nice chat?

**Bert** Aye...we have...haven't we lad? Told him my life story without really trying eh? Listen ...anytime you want to get out from the women or whatever, you're always welcome here...or if you need anything up there in the plumbing line, just call...all right?

**Josh** Yeah....thanks, Bert...I will

*The lights fade*

## **Scene 5**

*The lounge. Katie, Laura, Leah and Sean are having a cup of coffee*

**Laura** So how did you go on in the old school?

**Katie** That assembly made me nervous as hell...but...I survived...Hey, we had no idea what it's like for those guys standing up there every week in front of a load of bored teenagers

**Sean** I had a wander round and met a few people. Some of last year's Year 12 came up to say hi, and told me I was mad; what the hell did we want to do this for? It was a bit difficult. Then I met a nice girl called Helen

**Girls** Ooooh!

**Sean** No, it's not like that you fools! She was new, just come up from the south, didn't know anybody and nobody was trying to make her welcome. The old school doesn't change that much, does it? Still some prats around the place who can't see when someone is lonely. Anyway, we got talking and she told me a bit about herself...quite sad, really..and how no one wanted to know her, so I invited her up here anytime she liked. She might come this evening

**Girls** Ooooh!

**Sean** Get lost!

**Leah** I had a 6th form RE class...they were awful....not bothered about anything except going out and football...they didn't even listen to me..... kept talking and sneaking texts

on their phones...and they weren't particularly interested in what we're doing here. It was really hard...I was glad to get out

**Sean** Do you think we were like that?

**Laura** Probably, some of the time

30)

**Sean** Ugh!

**Katie** I hope the guys are OK out visiting

**Laura** Yeah...I'm going to go in a bit...it'll take some time to get round to everybody

**Katie** I wonder how Andy's doing in his black gear

**Leah** They'll probably invite him in and ask him to hear their confessions...he'll love it

**Katie** Leah....don't be horrible

**Leah** Well...I feel he's so different from us...a bit superior even...it gets on my nerves

**Sean** He'll be OK in a bit, you see. Listen, I promised Josh I'd meet him in Burton Street at 5.00, so I'd better get going. See you later. Who's cooking tonight?

**Laura** You are

**Sean** Huh?

**Laura** No, it's me silly.....so don't be late

**Sean** That's a relief...see you

*He exits*

**Leah** I met a really nice family last night...young couple with two little ones...they were so welcoming...invited me in for coffee, asked me if I wanted supper...and they said for us all to come round one evening when the kids are in bed for a chat

**Laura** Aah...isn't that lovely? I'm sure they won't all be like that

*The doorbell rings*

**Katie** I'll go

*We hear a very agitated woman outside*

**Claire** I want to see the priest, please

**Katie** There isn't a priest here now...but a group of us instead

**Claire** I beg your pardon?

**Katie** We're looking after the parish for the next year

**Claire** Don't be ridiculous. I insist on seeing the priest

31)

**Katie** Well, there isn't one here, really, except at weekends...would you like to come in?

*They enter. Katie speaks to the others*

This is Mrs....eh

**Claire** Ms. actually.....Ms.Claire Snowden

**Laura** You're welcome Ms.Snowden, what can we do for you

**Claire** I want to see the priest about my daughter's christening

**Leah** Pardon?

**Claire** I want to get my daughter christened on November 13th at 3 o'clock. Do I make myself clear?

**Katie** How old is your daughter?

**Claire** Eight months

**Laura** Oh...why did you wait so long ?

**Claire** I had to get my figure back...it took ages in the gym...

**Katie** And why does it have to be that day?

**Claire** That day is the only day suitable as it is the only day our friends can come..Some of them are flying over from France

**Leah** France?

**Claire** Yes, France...they live there now

**Laura** Well, there's a few things we need to do first, and the date might not be convenient

**Claire** Make it convenient!

**Katie** In this parish, parents have to take part in a programme of preparation for baptism



**Claire** I beg your pardon?

**Laura** We have 3 week courses every six months - usually on a Sunday afternoon

**Claire** Look, I haven't time for that sort of thing; I'm far too busy

**Leah** Busy, doing what?

32)

**Claire** You don't understand; my husband's job demands that we're out several evenings a week and most weekends we end up doing something or other

**Katie** What about Mass?

**Claire** Yes, what about it?

**Katie** Do you manage to get to Mass regularly?

**Claire** What's that got to do with it?

**Katie** You know, praying with us, as a parish family

**Claire** Well, Easter and Christmas and a couple of other occasions when I can make it

**Katie** Don't you think that's important, you know, being part of the community?

**Claire** What's the community got to do with it?

**Leah** Well, when your daughter is baptised, you are bringing her into the community, the family of the church. Seems a bit hypocritical if you're not part of the community yourself

**Claire** Are you refusing me? Are you calling me a hypocrite?

**Laura** No, but we're asking you what you think baptism is

**Claire** Look, we want to have an event with our friends and family to mark Ciara's birth, we want to get it in before all the Christmas business, and we want to feel that God has blessed her, that's what I think it is

**Katie** And you don't think it places any responsibility on you at all, like being a regular member of our community

**Claire** You ladies need to get real. Most people don't have time for religion now; there's too much else to do and it's difficult to fit it all in, and if you can't well....I'm sure God understands. And my child has a right to be baptised, so I want to see the priest and to arrange it for Sunday November 13th, if you don't mind

**Laura** You can see Father after Mass at the weekend if you like

**Claire** What time is that?

**Leah** 6.30 on Saturday and 9.30 on Sunday morning

*Claire gets out her diary*

33)

**Claire** I'll see...Saturday's out, we're at the theatre, and Sunday...I might just squeeze it in before a drinks party

**Katie** I think you'll find that Father says more or less the same thing to you as we have

**Claire** We'll see about that..... and what are you young people doing running a parish?

**Leah** There was no one else, so we volunteered

**Claire** Shame they couldn't find someone more experienced and sympathetic

*She makes to leave*

**Leah** Yes, it is, isn't it?

**Claire** Look, don't punish the child because of me, will you?

*She exits*

## **Scene 6**

*The lounge. Cups are being put on the table and they are preparing for a meeting of the Christmas Bazaar Committee. Josh enters with Bert*

**Josh** Come in, Bert, come and meet the others. Guys, this is my friend, Bert; he's come to fix the shower

**Katie** *(goes to shake his hand)* Oh great...come in Bert, are we glad to see you?

**Josh** This is Katie...and Sean and Laura...and Leah and last of all Andrew

**Others** Hi Bert!

**Andrew** Hello

**Bert** I'm sorry, am I interrupting anything?

**Leah** Bert you are not interrupting anything; you are the most welcome visitor we've had...especially if you manage to fix the shower

**Bert** Oh...

**Laura** We're having a meeting to plan the Christmas Bazaar, Bert, that's what all this is about

**Bert** Best of luck, then.....I 'm sure Sylv'll help you...she usually does

**Josh** Yeah.... come on then, Bert, I'll show you the problem...you want a coffee?

34)

*They begin to exit*

**Bert** I'll have a mug of tea with two sugars if you don't mind, lad

**Josh** A mug of tea it is, then

*They exit*

**Katie** The Christmas Bazaar Committee eh? I wonder what they'll make of us

*The doorbell rings*

**Laura** Well, we'll soon find out. I'll let them in

*She exits and returns with several people: Josie, Patricia, Doris, Joe, Mary and John Burton. Josie is in charge. She has a big folder. John looks very uncomfortable*

**Leah** Come in everybody...your're welcome...please sit down

*The adults sit down and the young people stand. Tea and cake is offered and received*

**Josie** Shall I start, then? Well, as we now have a new regime here in the presbytery, we thought it was only right for us to come along to see if you had any ideas about how me might organise our Christmas Bazaar. We're always glad of new ideas

**Joe** Specially if it'll make any more money

**Josie** Yes.....well, what do you think?

**Katie** What have you done up to now? I've been a couple of times to help Mum on a stall, but I never organised anything

**Patricia** Well, dear, we have all the usual bazaar stalls....Tombola, raffle, fancy goods, books, toys, Father Christmas, groceries, cakes and the white elephant

**Josh** White elephant?

**Patricia** It's the stall where you have all the bric-a-brac and often rubbish that nobody else wants. Usually does rather well

**Leah** And what else do you have?

**Josie** Tea and cakes...Doris does that...children's games, I do those

**Patricia** It's very jolly, particularly if we decorate the hall...perhaps you could do that

**Sean** Yeah...sure...but the girls don't do ladders

**Laura** We'd be pleased

35)

**Josh** What about food?

**Doris** Food? I do the tea and cakes

**Josh** No, food, like hot dogs or burgers...something for the kids

**Burton** It isn't McDonald's you know...it's a respectable Christmas Bazaar

**Josh** Yeah... I know...but you want it to be a bit of fun, don't you?

**Burton** Fun? May I remind you that this is to create much needed revenue for the parish, particularly now that we have six rather than one mouth to feed

**Andrew** I agree

**Burton** Thank you

**Laura** I think we could liven it up a bit..and it should be fun...it is Christmas after all

**Patricia** And quite how would you propose to liven it up?

**Sean** Irish Coffee

**Patricia** What?

**Sean** Irish Coffee...it's a winner every time...a couple of those and they won't know what they're spending their money on

**Burton** That is alcohol and we do not have an alcohol licence

**Sean** It's only a drop of booze...there can't be much harm in that

**Josie** Well...if you're prepared to take the responsibility...be it on your heads

**Sean** Fine...we can cope

**Andrew** I don't want to take the responsibility

**Sean** OK...the rest of us will then

**Laura** And we'll do some food....we'll have the ...eh burger and buttie stall

**Joe** Good idea...save me having to have my supper

**Josh** Can I ask a question?..... What do you do with the money?

**Josie** I beg your pardon?

36)

**Josh** You know...the money you raise...what do you do with it?

**Doris** Give it to Father...that's what we've always done

**Katie** But there's no Father now, is there? And what did he do with it anyway?

**Burton** Put it in the parish account, we presume, to pay off the debt

**Sean** And how much was the debt?

**Joe** Dunno...he never told us...he was always going on about it, though, so we thought, we must still have a debt

**Sean** But you didn't know....because he never told you?

**Burton** Look, he told us we had a debt to pay off...and you don't question a priest's word

**Laura** And he never published parish accounts...you know...so's you could find out how much you'd got?

**Patricia** Why ever would he want to do that?

**Leah** 'Cos it's your money...you coughed it up

**Josh** And it's your right to know what happens to it...to decide what happens to it

**Josie** We've never done that before

**Katie** So none of you know that you haven't actually got a debt at all

**Patricia** I beg your pardon?

**Laura** You haven't got a debt at all...and don't seem to have had a debt for some years

**Burton** Don't be ridiculous...of course we've got a debt...Father Smith told us

**Josh** What Fr.Smith didn't tell, you, Mr.Burton, was that you are 30,000 pounds in the black...this parish is extremely well off

**Adults** What?

**Katie** And we're going to publish the accounts so that everybody will know what's happening to their money

**Sean** And we're going to tell them how much the collection is every week

**Laura** And thank them...every week

37)

**Josh** And we think you should give it away

**Josie** Pardon?

**Leah** The money from the Christmas Bazaar...we think you should give it away

**Sean** All of it

**Katie** To people who really need it

**Laura** Like homeless people, people on the streets, people who are hungry, people who are forgotten in homes and hospitals...people who have nothing and no one

**Burton** Give it away...this is ridiculous...the parish has enormous running expenses, especially now

**Joe** I think it's a good idea

**Doris** So do I...help people a bit wouldn't it?

**Josie** Oh, dear...I'm not sure

**Mary** I think it's a lovely idea

**Patricia** You can't be too careful...you never know when we might need it...I think we should hang on to it

**Andrew** I agree

**Burton** You know my feelings

**Sean** Only too well

*Burton glares at him*

**Katie** So we suggest we ask the parish next weekend

**Patricia** Pardon?

**Leah** We tell them what we've got in the bank, what our income is and ask them if they agree to our giving it away

**Laura** Then if they agree, we ask them where they want us to send it to...they choose

**Burton** I think this is absurd

**Sean** I think it's democracy

38)

**Joe** If you want to ask everyone, I think you should...good idea

**Josie** Well...OK

**Burton** And may we ask what other plans you have got cooked up for us this Christmas?

**Katie** Oh yes..... we thought we'd take a present round to every retired person..you know to let them know they're not forgotten

**Josh** Quietly give a few quid to some needy families so that they could get by

**Laura** Have a party in the hall for the children

**Leah** A disco for the young people

**Sean** Join the other local churches for carols

**Katie** And have a candlelight Midnight Mass

**Josh** That's about it for the moment...I'm sure we'll come up with more

**Burton** It's quite enough, I can assure you...I think it's preposterous

**Joe** I think it might be fun

**Sean** Good for you

**Andrew** Christmas is not meant to be fun...it's a very serious time..the dawn of our salvation

**Leah** Quite right, Andy...but it's fun too...I hope we all have a great time

**Patricia** We'll have to wait and see won't we?

**Burton** Some of us may not be prepared to wait and see...we might be forced to go elsewhere

**Sean** Whatever you like, Mr.Burton

**Josie** Well, I think that concludes everything for this evening..shall we be going?

*They all get up*

We'll wait to see what happens after this weekend then...and decide afterwards. Good night and eh..thank you

*They all file out except Mary who waits behind. She squeezes Katie and Laura's hands*

**Mary** This is really great...I'm so excited...it's wonderful

39)

*She goes out. Laura closes the door and they all flop down on the sofas together except Andrew, who stands to one side in the corner*

## **Scene 7**

*Laura and Leah are in the lounge tidying up when the doobell rings*

**Laura** I'll go

*She is overheard talking to someone outside and saying, "Come in". She re-enters with a young woman who has a pram. She struggles to get it into the room*

Come in here....Leah, this is Rachel...and?

**Rachel** Joseph...it's Joseph

**Leah** Hi, Rachel! Hi Joseph! *(she goes over to the pram)*

**Laura** Come in, sit down...what can we do for you?

**Rachel** Well, I was hoping to see the priest...it's taken all my courage to come

**Leah** There isn't a regular priest here now, only at weekends...so we're sort of in charge

**Rachel** Really?

**Laura** Yeah...we're spending our gap year here looking after the place. You don't mind, do you?

**Rachel** Oh no, not at all...It seems a bit strange

**Leah** So how can we help you, then?

**Rachel** I'm not sure I should have come...but it's not for me, it's for Joseph

**Laura** Yes?

**Rachel** I wonder if it would be possible for him to be baptised?

**Leah** I don't see why not



**Rachel** Well...I haven't been coming to church and I've really no right to ask, but I thought it might help, you know, to get me sorted out again, and be something for him, something to belong to, something good, if you know what I mean. But I'm sure I don't deserve it...I just hope he does...he's done nothing wrong...it's me that's made the mistakes

**Laura** Do you want to tell us?

**Rachel** Do you want to listen?

**Leah** Yes, we do...go on

**Rachel** Well, it's a bit of a pathetic story...my parents split up when I was 13. Dad cleared off with someone else and Mum got all bitter and resentful. She was really awful to live with. We used to belong to our parish and do things up to them but she was so ashamed, so worried about what people might say about her that she just stopped, and I stopped too. I never felt that good about it but I went along with it. I felt so lonely and was desperate for affection for love, and she was too bothered about her own problems to give it to me. I began to think I was no good and started acting as if I was no good. I got into trouble at school...they said I had an 'attitude'...flunked my exams and sort of went off the rails. Mum made it clear I wasn't welcome...told me I should get a job and help with the house, as Dad had stopped paying maintenance, and I couldn't be bothered. I started to stay out late at night...didn't really want to come home...then I met this guy, who was all smooth and charm. Turned out he was only after one thing. You can imagine what happened next. Anyway, when he found out I was pregnant, he just abandoned me, said it was my own fault, I should have taken something, and said he didn't want to see me again when I told him I couldn't get rid of it. Even Mum wanted me to get rid of it..him...but you can't do that, can you, just kill babies because they're not convenient? So I had him, and here I am. Mum told me to get a flat, and the council gave me one, but it's a real struggle to survive, what with clothes, nappies, food and rent but he's so lovely though, isn't he? Well, I thought that if he could be christened maybe I could put things right, you know, get back into the church again and try to live a better life. So I came up here to the next parish, where nobody knows me and...well, it was probably a silly idea anyway

**Laura** No it wasn't...it's the right idea, isn't it, Leah

**Leah** 'Course it is...we'll help you

**Rachel** I thought you'd turn me away because I you know....

**Laura** Look, this could happen to any of us

**Leah** And you sound as if you've had quite enough rejection in your life already

**Laura** It'll be all right, honestly... we might be able to get you a few clothes for him...and how are you doing for furniture?

**Rachel** I've got a few bits but not much...I hate taking things from people

**Leah** But you do need furniture...we'll see if we can get you some...there's always people chucking out perfectly good stuff when they're re-decorating. We'll ask around

41)

**Rachel** What about the baptism?

**Laura** Come along to Mass at the weekend, and we'll introduce you to Father Paul. We'll see what he says. I'm sure it will be all right

**Leah** Then once you feel part of our family...that will be the right time

**Laura** And you can always come up here to us if you feel a bit lonely

**Leah** Or we could look after Joseph for you if you had to go anywhere, if you feel you could trust us

**Rachel** That would be so wonderful...I don't believe all this....I don't deserve all this

*She starts to cry*

**Laura** Yes you do....you're honest and good...you could have got rid of Joseph and saved yourself a lot of embarrassment...but you kept him, and that deserves respect from anyone...now what about a coffee?

**Rachel** Oh yes please...if it's not too much trouble

**Leah** It's a pleasure... *(to Laura)* a bit different from our friend who came the other week, don't you think?

**Laura** And the rest!

*Laura exits as the lights fade*

## **Scene 8**

*The lounge. The group are sitting having coffee with Fr.Paul. Helen and Rachel have joined them.*

**Fr.Paul** We'll you've survived Christmas guys...well done

**Katie** Thanks Father

**Fr.Paul** And managed to make a few friends, I see

**Helen** They've been really great, Father...I'm new here and they've helped me so much...I didn't think I'd ever make friends up here...but it's been great

**Fr.Paul** Good for you, Helen

**Rachel** I can't possibly tell you what they've done for me, Father...got me loads of things for Joseph...and made me feel good about myself again...I don't believe it

42)

**Fr.Paul** They'll be getting big-headed if they're not careful. Oh...you have done really well...everybody's delighted with the Masses you've led..especially at Christmas...the old folks' presents and kids' parties...you're looking a bit tired but it's been great

**All** Thanks

**Fr.Paul** So how've you been getting on visiting?

**Laura** Some people are really nice to us, Father....they want you to come in and stay, especially the young couples

**Sean** Some are too busy to see us...they make us feel in the way...you know, as if it's not convenient

**Leah** Can't fit us into their diaries...like as if we should have made an appointment to see them

**Katie** A few people have been just awful...virtually shut the door on us...tell us we're too young and we have no business running the parish

**Sean** Specially that John Burton

**Leah** Oh yeah...

**Andrew** I get on fine with him

**Laura** I met a bloke who was gay..I didn't know what to say to him. He said he felt rejected by the Church because of ...you know....so he stopped coming ages ago

**Fr.Paul** What did you say?

**Laura** I said it wasn't my place to make judgments about anybody and that he'd be welcome here any time. Seemed a nice guy...but a bit tortured..you know...on the outside of things

**Fr.Paul** We need to try to bring people like him back and make them feel wanted again

**Andrew** How can you do that, Father? I mean...he's a sinner and that's the end of it

**Katie** No he's not...it's not as simple as that at all

**Andrew** It is to me...he shouldn't be allowed into church

**Sean** Andy, that's crap...Our Lord never turned anyone away...you know that

**Laura** And what do we know about him or his life...what's been happening to him?

43)

**Fr.Paul** He needs great patience and understanding...I'm sure you did the right thing, Laura

**Leah** Some people seem really screwed up about things, Father...you know.. getting themselves in a stew about nothing

**Fr.Paul** They're carrying a lot of baggage, some of them....about the past...and how someone, maybe a priest or nun or teacher made them feel guilty or horrible about themselves...We've got a lot to answer for, you know. You're too young to have baggage, thank God, and you can see things more clearly and directly than many of us who are older. Don't be surprised if they don't like it

**Andrew** Look, Father, people need to be told about their responsibilities and duties...it's their duty to come to Mass each week, to support the church...and to be loyal and faithful

**Katie** Listen Andrew, they can't always get their heads round it...it's not as easy as that...it's not easy at all for some people. We haven't a clue about what they have to put up with. I tell you what Father, I think I've led a pretty sheltered life...I didn't know just how much pain there was about...illness, death, tragedy...people hurting each other, controlling each other...sometimes it's awful

**Andrew** That's no excuse

**Katie** Oh, Andrew, get a life

**Josh** I've met some great people, Father...there's a lovely couple called Bert and Sylv. Bert's not a Catholic as he's always telling me, but they've made me so welcome.. I can go any time I want, just sit down and make myself at home..They never make me feel stupid...they listen to me and take me seriously...it's really great. I know it's hard for some people to adjust to us...we have to give them a chance too, especially as many of them knew us when we were little

**Fr.Paul** Tell you what...I think you lot could do with a night out...get dressed up and leave the responsibility to one side just for the evening..it'd do you good

**Sean** Great idea...let's go out on Friday...agreed?

**Girls** Yeah

**Andrew** Well, count me out...someone will need to stay and look after the place...in case we get called out

**Fr.Paul** I'm sure they'll be all right for one night, Andrew

**Andrew** No, I insist...I'm not a great party animal anyway....I find it difficult...I'd sooner stay here, if you don't mind

**Sean** Please yourself, mate.... *(to Helen and Rachel)* are you two girls coming as well?

44)

**Helen** Yes please...I'd love it

**Rachel** So would I, but...you know...Joseph

**Fr.Paul** You look as if you could do with a night out, too Rachel...does anybody know someone who could look after Joseph?

**Laura** I do. Justin and Cathy...they've got two little ones of their own..I'm sure they wouldn't mind...if you don't mind, Rachel

**Rachel** What do you think?

**Leah** Come on...it'll be all right...honestly

**Rachel** OK then, I will....*(she smiles)* ...great

## **Scene 9**

*The lounge. Andrew enters with a suitcase. He removes his clerical collar, and sits down to write a letter. When he finishes it, he puts it in an envelope, seals it and leaves it on the table. He puts his coat on, looks round the room and leaves. After a while, we hear noise outside and the others are coming in, giggly and excited*

**Katie** Oh...that's was great...I really enjoyed it...you lot were ridiculous!

**Laura** Yeah...I hope no one from the parish saw us

**Sean** Why? There's nothing wrong in having a good time

**Leah** Where's Andy? I thought he'd be here

**Josh** He might be upstairs...I'll go and get him

**Leah** Don't wake him up if he's asleep, Josh

**Sean** Sure, wake him up...we've brought him a drink

**Leah** Ooooh!

*Josh exits*

**Laura** He might have had to go out to somebody...you know...sick or something

**Sean** No...he's probably having an early night...saying his prayers

**Katie** Don't be horrible, Sean

*Josh returns, clearly in shock*

45)

**Josh** He's gone

**Leah** Gone?

**Josh** Yeah....his room's tidy and his gear's gone. Everywhere else is a real mess. I don't understand it....the whole place looks like a bomb hit it up there

**Katie** Let's go and look

*They all rush out of the room except Leah, who, about to go, notices the letter on the table, picks it up, opens it and starts to read. She sits down on the sofa. Sean rushes in*

**Sean** Leah, we've had a burglary...someone's broken in....did you leave anything valuable in your room?

**Leah** No (*she seems completely disinterested*)

**Sean** Come on, Leah, come and check

**Leah** It's OK...doesn't matter

**Sean** What do you mean?

*She gives him the letter. They both sit down, as Sean reads. After a while the other three enter*

**Josh** Bastards...they've nicked my mini-disk player

**Laura** And some money of mine...stupid...I shouldn't have left it lying around

**Katie** And my granny's jewellery....God.....is the safe OK?

**Josh** Yeah...I checked...and the church

**Katie** Thank God for that at least...Hey, what's the matter?

*Sean gives her the letter*

**Sean** It's from Andy...he's gone

**Laura** Read it out, Katie

*Katie takes the letter and reads:*

**Katie** My dear friends, I'm very sorry to do this to you, but I could think of no other way. I'm so embarrassed and ashamed. I feel that my time with you has been a mistake, that I have ruined a lot of the things you wanted to do because of what I thought and said. Clearly we have such differing views on where the Church is and should be going, and I felt I was holding you back. Forgive me, there are some things I just can't

46)

stomach, perhaps it's me...I don't know...I don't know anything at the moment. I'm certain that it would be better if I left, so that you could do what you think is right for the people without hindrance or argument. I've grown to like you all a lot, but didn't really know how to show it, and I thank you for putting up with me. Please don't be cross at me for my disappearing act. I couldn't face saying 'goodbye'. Please pray for a coward. I hope you will always think of me as your friend. Yours, Andrew

**Leah** Ooooh....

**Sean** God...

**Laura** Do you think we did that to him...you know...made him want to go away?

**Katie** Maybe....I hope not

**Josh** What'll we do now?

**Katie** We'll have to tell the police about the burglary in the morning...check what's gone...and as for Andy.....who knows?

**Laura** I'll go and make some coffee

*She makes to exit and the phone rings. She answers it*

Hi Sylv! You're late ringing....yeah...he's here....I'll get him for you...Josh..it's Sylv

*He takes the phone from Laura, who waits*

**Josh** Hi Sylv.....how are you? OK.....OK.....right....are you with him now...where are you? OK...OK...I'll come down now...No, no....it's no trouble...I'll come down ...OK...see you Sylv (*he puts the phone down and talks to the others*) Bert's ill...he collapsed this evening complaining of pains in his chest and stomach...Sylv got the doctor who whipped him into hospital...Sounds as if he's really ill....Phew....I'll go down now

**Laura** Josh, you can't go on your bike...you've had a drink

**Josh** It's OK...I'll walk

*The others give him a hug*

**Katie** Oh, Josh....

*He puts on his coat. The others look at him as he leaves, then sit down with their heads in their hands*

**End of Act 2**  
**ACT THREE**

47)

**Scene 1**

*Bert's house. Josh is talking to Bert who is sitting in an armchair, looking really ill.*

**Bert** It's not good, Josh...I've got something in me lungs...something nasty...

**Josh** What do you mean?

**Bert** I mean they can't do anything for me...it's gone too far

**Josh** Too far?

**Bert** I mean I'm going to die, lad....not today or tomorrow....but fairly soon

**Josh** God!

**Bert** It's the fags...I'm sure they've done it....sixty a day for 30 years...they've knackered me lungs

**Josh** I...eh...I don't know what to say...does Sylv know?

**Bert** Oh yeah...Sylv's smart...saw it coming ages ago...tried to nag me to go to the doctor when I started that coughing...but you know me....stubborn...turns out it wouldn't have made any difference if I did

**Josh** What are you going to do?

**Bert** Take it on the chin, lad....that's all I can do...Oh me and Sylv had a few tears..she cried, I cried..it's years since I cried...we'll not have our retirement after all, she'll be on her own, and that's worrying...more important than what happens to me, really...but nothing's going to change things, so I might as well accept it and try to make the best of...you know...the time left

**Josh** But....isn't there any treatment? Can't they do anything?

**Bert** Oh yeah...but it's so aggressive they said...and the chances of it working are slim...so we decided not to bother...I don't want to lose any more of me hair, and be throwing up and feeling crap all the time. I'd rather keep me dignity...and face it when it comes



**Josh** I...I don't know what to say

**Bert** There's nothing to say, lad...nothing...we have to accept it...tell you what though, there's one thing you could do for me

**Josh** Sure...anything...anything

48)

**Bert** Look after Sylv, mate...she's a good 'un and she'll be all right...eventually...but look after her...eh?

**Josh** Oh yeah...of course...you know we will...I will

**Bert** Yeah...I do...I know you've got to go away next year, and so does she...but when you come home for the holidays and that...you know...you will pop in to see her, won't you?

**Josh** Sure, Bert...of course

**Bert** Thanks....I appreciate that...I really do..I've not known you long, Josh, and I'm sorry I didn't know you before.....I'm proud of you, lad...proud to be your friend

## **Scene 2**

*The lounge. The group are sitting with Fr.Paul, Rachel and Helen.*

**Helen** Father, they don't deserve this...after all they've tried to do for us...they just don't deserve it

**Fr.Paul** Nobody deserves this sort of thing..nobody

**Rachel** It's so unfair...when you've been so good to us

**Leah** Perhaps it's a punishment on us...you know for not being good to Andrew

**Laura** Yeah....I feel really guilty about that...he was suffering inside and we didn't notice..we just thought he was, you know..odd

**Katie** I think I was cruel to him...I just wish I could say 'sorry'...no one knows where he is

**Fr.Paul** Look guys, stop blaming yourselves...these things happen and no one's to blame except the people who did it....they don't just choose nasty people to burgle you know...they're not choosy at all...must have been watching the place when you all went out...and probably came in when Andrew left

**Sean** Bastards!

**Laura** Sean!

**Sean** Sorry

*Josh enters ashen faced. Everyone turns to him*

**Josh** Bert's really ill...he's going to die...not yet...but soon

49)

**Laura** Oh Josh....

*The girls all hug him*

**Josh** It's not fair...he's such a good bloke...he doesn't deserve this

**Katie** We've just been having that conversation with Father

**Leah** I think we've failed...you know...we've messed up

**Fr.Paul** Don't be silly...'course you've not failed...in fact you've succeeded if anything

**Laura** What do you mean?

**Fr.Paul** Welcome to the pastoral ministry, dear friends...when it starts to hurt, you know you've been doing the right thing..when it begins to get to you..you know..people's problems and sufferings..that's when you know you're doing a good job

**Sean** Well, we must be doing a great job because this hurts like hell

**Helen** You are doing a good job....look at us...we're proof of that

**Sean** Thanks...but...

**Fr.Paul** Anyway...you musn't be frightened to fail...we all fail sometime...we don't always get it right..and sometimes we make a real hash of it...but we're still trying, aren't we? That's all that matters...we're trying..and you're doing OK, whatever you think

**Josh** How can I help Bert, Father? How can I help, Sylv?

**Fr.Paul** Just be yourself...like you've always been..and be there for them when they need you

**Josh** What if he...you know..dies when I'm with him? What do I do then?

**Fr.Paul** Pray with him and for him...if there's no priest about, you do it...and if he wants to tell you the story of his life, then let him. There are some lovely prayers for the dying...I'll give you a copy and keep it in your pocket..just in case...anyway...it may be some time, yet

**Josh** OK...I'll do that...thanks...Poor Bert

**Laura** Poor Sylv

**Leah** Poor Andy...I hope he's all right

50)

**Fr.Paul** Well...it'll not get sorted out now. We'll contact the insurance people tomorrow and see if they can help us. I'm sure it'll be OK. You'll be fine with Bert, Josh, even though it's a terrible thing...and..there's the not inconsiderable matter of Holy Week and Easter to be thinking about...so if you could put your minds to that, I'd be very grateful

**Katie** Sorry, Father...of course we will

### **Scene 3**

*Everyone is in the lounge except Sean. The doorbell rings.*

**Laura** I'll go

*She exits then returns promptly*

It's that Mr.Burton, you know that chap who came and complained the first night we came

**Katie** What's he want? I don't think I could cope with any more complaints just now

**Laura** Katie, he looks really sad, and he asked could he see us, please

**Josh** Better wheel him in then

**Laura** OK *(she exits)*

**Leah** I hope this isn't going to be you know..unpleasant

*Laura enters with Burton who looks very embarrassed*

**Katie** Hello Mr.Burton

**Burton** It's John

**Josh** Pardon?

**John** My name is John....please call me John

**Leah** OK....hello John

**John** Look, I'm really sorry to trouble you, but I need to speak to you

**Katie** That's OK... eh John....please, sit down

**John** You've had a burglary, haven't you?

**Josh** Yes...how did you know that?

51)

**John** Everybody seems to know now.... did you lose much?

**Josh** I did..my new mini-disk player I'd saved up to buy

**Leah** I lost my camera...digital..my parents bought it for my 18th last year

**Laura** I left some money lying around, maybe 25 quid....silly really, but I thought it would be safe here

**Katie** I lost some jewellery..it's not worth an awful lot but it was my grandmother's, so it's kinda sentimental, you know

**John** I am truly sorry...truly sorry ....do you know who did it?

**Josh** We think so

**Leah** We did a silly thing....we let a lad in here last week. He came to the door cold and wet.

**Laura** You couldn't leave him out there in the cold, so we brought him in and gave him some coffee

**Katie** Turned out he was on drugs...seriously into smack...he needed some money for a fix

**Josh** We gave him a couple of pounds...but he got cross....said it wasn't enough

**Leah** We said we'd give him food, but not money for drugs

**Laura** He got cross then and started swearing at us...called us hypocrites. "What sort of Christians are you?"

*Sean enters and sees John*

**Sean** Oh, it's you.....

**Katie** It's OK, Sean....John's come to see us...we're just telling him about the burglary

**John** Hello Sean

**Sean** Hi ...eh John

**Laura** Then he ran out swearing...it was terrible...said we should be here to help people not abandon them...all that sort of stuff

**Leah** I felt...you know he was sort of 'casing' the place while he was sitting here...He was looking round in a funny way. I said it to Katie and you said I was being a bit paranoid

**John** I don't think so...sounds like him all right

52)

**Sean** Do you know this guy, then, John?

**John** Know him? I'm afraid do only too well ...he's my son

**Laura** Your son? Oh.....we're terribly sorry

**John** It's me that's sorry, believe me....you didn't deserve this ....I could kill him, but he's my son. He's completely wrecked our lives. My wife is on medication for stress and depression; we've had to re-mortgage the house to pay off his debts. These big men coming to the house threatening to burn us down if we didn't pay up, or if we went to the police. He's stolen everything of value from us - TV's, video players, even my wife's pearl necklace I bought her for our silver wedding. He hawks them for next to nothing just to get a fix. He's been in prison several times...the humiliation, the hurt...I just can't tell you...we've no dignity left

*Laura sits next to him and puts her arm round him...Leah follows*

**Laura** Oh John...you poor man

**John** We spend our lives on a knife edge just waiting for the next thing...the knock on the door from the police or from some bully boys wanting money. It's a living hell...complete nightmare...and there's no end to it...now this...stealing from other young people who are just trying to do a bit of good

*The others look surprised at each other*

That sounds a bit strange coming from me, doesn't it?

**Sean** Just a bit...yes

**John** That night I came, you know...well it had been a bad day...he'd been arrested again, and I was angry...angry with every young person I could see. I've always tried, you know, coming to church, being respectable, and all that sort of thing...but I thought God had abandoned me and my wife and family. Fr.Smith used to listen but he couldn't do anything. Then when I heard you were coming...young people...well you can imagine what I thought. It was as if I never wanted you to be good...that's strange isn't it? Because if you were good and kind, you'd have been all the things he never was. I wanted to think of you all as the same...selfish, greedy, horrible people...it was the only way I could cope. I am so sorry

**Josh** Phew...what a story? Look, John, don't worry about it...at least don't worry about the burglary...we can get some money back on the house insurance. Fortunately we'd remembered to lock the place up...Anyway, it mightn't have been him at all

**John** It was him all right...bears all the hallmarks of one of his...Look, you shouldn't have to go through insurance...will you let me pay for the damage and the loss? I think I might feel a bit better, if you did

53)

**Katie** No, you musn't...we won't let you...look they're only things...people are more important than things

**John** But what about your grandmother's jewellery?

**Katie** Yes, that's really sad...she was a lovely person...but it's gone now, and I'll have to put up with it. We're learning to live with disappointment here...it's a bit hard, 'cos we're not used to it...but it's probably good for us.

**John** Look, I think I might know where he might be...he has a few regular places he hangs out at night...If I could find him and maybe persuade him to tell me what he's done with it...we might get it back

**Katie** Well...as long as it's not dangerous for you

**John** Frankly, I'm past caring...he's ruined my life...he can't hurt me any more

**Josh** Listen, Sean and I'll come with you...yeah..we will...for protection

**John** OK then, if you insist

*He stands up*

If you'll allow me, I would like to apologise to you all most sincerely, and to take back all those horrible things I said to you when you first came. The parish has come to life since you've been here...people are smiling when they come out of church, talking and chatting to each other, and that never happened before. I'm sure it's down to you...I know how hard you've tried...and I'm only too sorry that there have been people like me who were never willing to give you a chance. Please forgive me...

**Laura** Oh...John...what a lovely man you really are

*She hugs him as do the girls, then reluctantly, the boys*

**Katie** That's one of our hugs John...reserved only for special people

*He smiles*

**John** Thank you...thank you very much...shall we go then?

**Sean** Yeah, we'll just get our coats

*They exit, and he follows. The three girls sit down in shock*

**Katie** Phew!

**Laura** Gosh!

**Leah** *(draws a one with her finger in the air)* Success!

54)

**Katie** Yeah! Maybe we haven't failed after all

*They all clasp hands and the light fades*

#### **Scene 4**

*John, Sean and Josh enter and find three crumpled figures obviously doing drugs*

**John** Is that you, Thomas? .....*(no reaction)* I said, is that you, Tom?

**Tom** Yeah....what do you want?

**Darren** Who's he and what's he doing here?

**Tom** He's my Dad...I said, what do you want?

**John** I want the gear you stole from these young men back, Tom?

**Tom** What do you mean?

**Josh** He means the stuff you stole from the presbytery the night you broke in. My mini-disk player, Leah's camera, Laura's money and Katie's granny's jewellery

**Tom** What are you talking about?

**Josh** You know exactly what I'm talking about - we want the gear back

**Tom** Get stuffed

**John** Thomas, you have done some terrible things in your life, but stealing from a presbytery, from people of your own age is about as low as you can get. I'm sure you won't still have it, so please tell me what you've done with it

**Tom** Clear off, Dad, this isn't your business

**John** I'm making it my business

**Tom** Clear off

**Sean** We would like the stuff back if you don't mind

*The other addict reacts*

**Darren** Hey, I know you, don't I?

**Sean** Do you?

55)

**Darren** Yeah, the other day, when I was begging outside Sainsbury's, you gave me a couple of quid, and you didn't look as if you could afford it

**Sean** Oh yeah, I remember

**Darren** Tell them, Tom

**Tom** Tell them what?

**Darren** Tell them what you did with it

**Tom** Get lost

**Darren** The Red Lion

**John** Pardon?

**Darren** The Red Lion in Talbot Street. Go round the back and ask for Coco. We only sold him the stuff yesterday. He might still have it. I'm afraid it'll cost you

**John** It won't cost us...it'll cost them...receiving stolen property....I'm sure the police would be very interested in that

**Darren** Hey, don't do that. Just give them a few quid and they'll let you have it

**Josh** Have they got all of it? What about the jewellery?

**Darren** (*hesitates*) Tom?

**Tom** What?

**Darren** Tom!

**Tom** What?

*He puts his hand in his pocket and brings out the jewellery. Josh takes it*

**Josh** Thank you!



**John** We'll go round to the pub and then come back with the police

**Darren** Hey, give us a break, mate

**Sean** Leave it, John, it's OK

**John** I don't suppose it'll do any good me telling you how ashamed I am of you, Thomas

56)

**Tom** No, it won't

*They exit leaving the drug addicts to their business*

## **Scene 5**

*The church Fr.Paul is vested. Rachel holds the baby with Sean, Laura and Leah as his godparents*

**Fr.Paul** Rachel, what name do you wish to give to your son?

**Rachel** Joseph John

**Fr.Paul** And what do you ask of God's Church for Joseph John?

**Rachel** Baptism

*She looks surprised and delighted. Everybody smiles*

**Fr.Paul** You have asked to have your child baptised. It will be your duty to bring him up to keep God's commandments by loving God and our neighbour. And so I ask you? Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?

**Rachel** I do

**Fr.Paul** And now I ask the godparents.... Sean, Laura and Leah, are you ready to help Rachel in her duty as a christian mother, to support her and care for her, protect and encourage her, showing her and her child the love of Christ today and always?

**All 3** We are

**Fr.Paul** Joseph John, this Christian family welcomes you with great joy. in its name I claim you for Christ our Saviour by the sign of his cross which I now place on your forehead.

*The light fades*

## **Scene 6**

*Bert's home. Josh and Sylv are sitting with him. He is clearly dying.*

**Bert** I'm cold, Sylv

**Sylv** All right, love...I'll get you another blanket

*She exits*

**Bert** Well, lad...tonight could be the night....

57)

**Josh** Really?

**Bert** Aye..I'm weak now...and everything's a bit of an effort...remember what I asked you, won't you?

**Josh** 'Course I will

**Bert** Thanks mate

*Sylv re-enters with a blanket which she puts round him*

**Sylv** There you are, love

**Bert** Thanks...wonder what Josh thinks about us, eh love?

**Josh** I think..I think you're the nicest people I've ever met in my life...that's what I think

**Sylv** Bless you, Josh...we love you, too

**Bert** You know I've always envied you Catholics...with that faith...I wish I'd have had it

**Josh** Really?

**Bert** Aye...I've been a stubborn fool sometimes, right Sylv?...bloody stubborn...but I've always admired the Catholics

**Josh** Why didn't you join up, like, yourself?

**Bert** I wouldn't be good enough for your Church lad...the good Lord wouldn't want to be bothering himself with the likes of me

**Sylv** Bert...don't be silly..'course he would

**Josh** Bert, are you telling me that you would like to be aCatholic

**Bert** You know, lad, I'd like that more than anything...more than anything

**Josh** Right...let's do it...let's do it now. Bert...do you believe in God the Father, in Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit? Do you?

**Bert** 'Course I do

**Josh** Do you believe in the Catholic Church, the family of God...and ...do you accept what the Church teaches us about God?

**Bert** Yes I do

**Josh** And do you want to be forgiven for all the things you regret?

58)

**Bert** More than anything

**Josh** Well, Bert....may the Lord forgive you for your sins and bring you into the Catholic Church...in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen  
You're a Catholic now, Bert

**Sylv** *(starts to cry)* Oh Bert..

**Bert** Just like that?

**Josh** Just like that

**Bert** But I thought priests had to do this sort of thing

**Josh** There's no priests here, Bert...only me and Sylv...we're the Church here....we're your Church...don't worry...Fr.Paul told me what to do

**Bert** Well I never...me a Catholic at last...well I never.... *(he coughs)* Jesus Christ

*There is a silence and Bert has clearly died*

**Sylv** Has he gone, Josh?

**Josh** I don't know....I've never seen anything like this before...I'll get the doctor

**Sylv** No...let's stay with him for a bit, shall we? Let's have a few moments on our own with him first

**Josh** OK Sylv *(he puts his arm around her and fumbles in his pocket for the card. He starts to pray)* ...In the name of God the Father who created you, in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the living God who died for you, in the name of the Holy Spirit who was poured out upon you, go forth Christian soul....

*The lights fade*

## **Scene 7**

*The group are in the lounge with Fr.Paul, Rachel and Helen*

**Katie** That was sheer bedlam...how do you put up with it, Father?

**Fr.Paul** First Communion Day is the most stressful day of the year for me - so many people, making such a lot of fuss, and we're trying so hard to keep their minds on the essentials

**Leah** It got like a circus wiith people climbing over the benches trying to get the best photos and video moments

59)

**Sean** I think you should ban every camera from the church and get one person to do the lot - much simpler and more reverent

**Fr.Paul** Not a bad idea; I'll remember that for next year. anyway, you did your best with all the preparation and the liturgy was beautiful, despite the David Baileys

**Josh** Thanks

**Fr.Paul** So...it's Bert's funeral next week, then not long before you're off on your separate ways

**Laura** Don't remind us, Father...I'm dreading it

**Fr.Paul** Really?

**Laura** It's been so great here, together...I'm a bit frightened of going off on my own

**Katie** Me too

**Sean** And me

**Fr.Paul** You'll be fine...you'll be just fine...go for it

**Leah** Josh and I would like to stay for another year, Father...you know if the bishop doesn't mind...I'm not ready for university just yet and Josh wants to stay and look after Sylv for a bit longer till she can stand on her own

**Fr.Paul** Sounds like you've got a dose of the responsibilities

**Sean** Eh?

**Fr.Paul** I think it's what we call love...you love them and you don't want to leave them yet, do you?

**Josh** Something like that

**Leah** Do you think it'll be all right...the bishop won't mind, will he?

**Fr.Paul** I'm sure he'll be delighted

**Josh** And do you think he'll mind if Helen and Rachel stay with us...and Joseph of course?

**Fr.Paul** I really don't know...you'll have to ask him...and you girls...do you want to do this?

**Helen** Oh yeah...

**Rachel** Oh yeah...

**60)**

**Fr.Paul** Well, that's very good of you

**Rachel** No it isn't...it's good of them to have us

**Leah** We get on so well, Father...it would be OK, really

**Fr.Paul** I'm sure it would be...tell you what...I'll ask the bishop for you

**Helen** Oh thanks...thanks

**Fr.Paul** Think nothing of it...you lot have been a revelation here..it's been fantastic

**Katie** I know this sounds funny, Father, you know...but I feel that something has died in me this year...I can't quite work out what it is

**Leah** I should be glad of another death

**Katie** Pardon?

**Leah** T.S.Eliot, 'Journey of the Magi'...I did it for 'A' level...it's the story of the three kings... "there was a birth, certainly; we had evidence and no doubt, but this birth was hard and bitter agony for us, like death, our death. We returned to our places, these kingdoms, no longer at ease here in the old dispensation with an alien people clutching their gods. I should be glad of another death"

**Sean** Very profound, Leah

**Katie** But it's true though, isn't it...something has died in us

**Fr.Paul** And something has come to life in you too

**Katie** Yeah...that's it...something I didn't know about...hadn't felt...it's weird

**Fr.Paul** I don't think it's one bit weird..it's all in the gospel

**Laura** Really?

**Fr.Paul** Anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it...remember?

**Sean** Oh yeah

**Fr.Paul** That's what's happened to you...just a little...but it has

**Sean** Who cares about Australia eh...?

**Fr.Paul** Pardon?

61)

**Sean** I was going backpacking...you know in my gap year...seems a long time ago now...but I wouldn't have missed this for the world

**Katie** So I was right, then, after all?

**Sean** Yeah...I suppose you were

**Katie** Thank you (*she smiles*)...it'll be so hard to say 'goodbye'

**Fr.Paul** Then don't say 'goodbye'...you'll all be home at Christmas...why don't you come round here and stay together?

**Josh** Oh yeah...great idea Father...if the girls don't mind

**Rachel** 'Course we don't mind...it'll be lovely

**Helen** Yes, it will

**Fr.Paul** That's settled then...I'll have to go...it's been a long day...and I've got to pop into the hospital on the way home...Listen, we'll have a get-together after the funeral some time before you go...and I'll cook, how's that?

**Sean** Sounds good, Father...it'll save me having to bale them out yet again

*There is much sound as they bash him with cushions and the lights fade*

## **Scene 8**

*The church. Bert's funeral. Fr.Paul is vested. Everyone is present. Laura is holding Sylv. The others hold candles. Katie sings:*

**Katie** How can I speak, how can I sing?  
When you are near, Jesus my king?  
I am so weak, but in you I am strong;  
you be my voice, you be my song

How can I move, how can I see?  
Only if you stay near to me.

With you I rest and with you, I arise;  
you be my hands, you be my eyes.

I give you all, all that is mine,  
yet 'tis no gift, 'tis but a sign;  
I only give what you first gave to me:  
you are my gift, ever to be.

62)

**Leah** (*recites*) Stop all the clocks, by W.H.Auden.  
Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,  
prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone  
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum,  
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead  
Scribbling on the sky the message he is dead;  
put crepe bows round the white necks of the public doves  
Let traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my north, my south, my east and west,  
my working week and my Sunday rest,  
my noon, my midnight, my talk, my song,  
I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong

The stars are not wanted now, put out every one;  
pack up the moon and dismantle the sun;  
pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood.  
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

**Fr.Paul** We want you to be quite certain, brothers about those who have died, so that you do not grieve about them like the other people who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and that it will be the same for those who die in Jesus. God will take them with him.....There are many rooms in my Father's house; I am going now to prepare a place for you, and after I have gone and prepared a place for you, I shall return to take you with me, so that where I am, you may be too.

**Josh** (*moves to the lectern, looking very uncomfortable*) Eh.....you'll have to forgive me...I've never done this sort of thing before...I haven't even been to many funerals...but Sylv said, you know, that Bert would like me to say a few words...so here goes. I first met Bert earlier this year when I went to visit him and....and...Look, Bert was a great bloke...he was a great bloke. He wasn't famous like all those celebrity types in 'Hello' magazine; no one's going to know what a special bloke he was except us...we know, and that's all that matters. He was a great bloke...a good man...a kind man...isn't that enough? It is for me. Bert never...ever...made me feel stupid...he never told me I was too young to know anything...never said I didn't know what I was talking about. He treated me as an equal...he made me feel respected...I think he even got a bit fond of me, so Sylv says, and I'll not forget that...ever... Bert was ordinary...he wasn't a poseur, he didn't try to be anybody else...and he was so

generous...made you feel welcome and wanted in his home. He was never too busy to see us, to see me, never made me feel it was inconvenient. He was so natural. What a great Dad he would have been if he'd had the chance. He sort of became like an extra Dad to me...you could tell him anything, and he wasn't a bit phased or put out. I feel so sad, and lost without him...he became kind of necessary to my life. That's selfish, I know, Sylv. You must be missing him like hell ....sorry....but I promise you, we promise you, like we promised him...as long as we're around we'll look after you...you can be part of our family...and even if we go away, you'll still be our family...we'll not

63)

let you down. We'll not let him down. Bert, you were a good mate...and thanks.... thanks for everything. Rest in peace now..you deserve it.

*Music and the lights fade*

### **Scene 9**

*All the group are in the lounge. Everyone except Josh and Leah have cases and rucksacks. They hug each other and start crying*

**Katie** *(to Leah)* I'll miss you

**Leah** I'll miss you

**Sean** *(to Josh)* See you, mate...look after the place...and the girls

**Josh** I will

*Laura is overtaken with crying. She hugs everyone melodramtically*

**Laura** Thanks....thanks....thanks...it's been great...I'll write

**Katie** I'll e.mail you all every week...promise

**Sean** I'll phone and text you...so that we can keep in touch...you know...with what everyone's doing

**Helen** Thanks for everything Sean...I'll not let you down here

**Rachel** Thanks for rescuing me...and Joseph...and don't forget you're his godparents...so you can't say 'goodbye'

**Laura** No we can't, can we?

*There is an awkward silence, which is broken by Katie*

**Katie** Come on, let's go...this is going to get really difficult if we don't...see you at Christmas



*She rushes out*

**Laura** See you

**Sean** Cheers.....and thanks

*They go....there is silence in the room*

**Leah** That was bloody awful

64)

**Josh** I don't want to do that again

**Helen** Me neither...it was horrible

**Rachel** I hope they'll be all right...you know...on their own...without us

**Josh** They'll be OK

*The bell rings*

**Helen** I'll go...I wonder if any of them's forgotten something

*She exits. Josh and Leah look at each other. Helen returns with Andrew, dressed in jeans and a T shirt*

**Helen** We've got a...eh visitor

**Leah** Andrew.....gosh...what are you doing here?

**Andrew** I came to...eh....see everyone before they went

**Josh** They've only just gone..it's a wonder you didn't see them as you came in

**Andrew** Well....eh...I wanted to say 'sorry' you know, for being a bit of a prat and for leaving you like that...it was stupid

**Leah** That's OK...really...hey I like the gear

**Josh** Yeah...dead cool...suits you better than the black

**Andrew** That was a bit silly wasn't it...I suppose I was trying to be someone else...you know...the sort of person people would expect me to be....bit of a pretence really...but you lot..well, you were just yourselves and you didn't care what people thought. I couldn't handle that at first, but while I've been away..you know...it's sorta made sense...so here I am

**Helen** Do you still want to be a priest?

**Andrew** I don't know...I feel a bit mixed up...messed up

**Rachel** What are you doing with yourself now?

**Andrew** Nothing really...I'm sorta lost...don't know where I'm going

**Leah** Why don't you stay here and work with us?

**Andrew** But you wouldn't want all that again, would you?

**65)**

**Josh** Look we need a guy here as well as me...and anyway, all that stuff's gone now, hasn't it...you're a different person

**Andrew** I suppose I am .... chastened...that's the word...but what would the people think and what about the bishop?

**Josh** The people will be fine...probably be glad to see you out of that...you know...gear...and we'll square it with the bishop. He asked us to find another guy anyway, so this is fine

**Andrew** Are you sure you don't mind?

**Helen** Mind? We'd be delighted

**Andrew** I don't know what to say

**Josh** Don't say anything...just go home, get your stuff and come back as quick as you can...oh and by the way...

**Andrew** Yes?

**Josh** You're on cooking tonight...we haven't had a decent meal for ages

*There is pandemonium as everyone hugs Andrew and rushes Josh out of the room. Leah is left alone*

**Leah** This birth was hard and bitter agony for us, like death, our death....I should be glad of another death

*The lights fade on her*

**END**