

Jesus Caritas Fraternity of Priests

# *Be Brothers!* Britain & Ireland

New series 28

June 2022

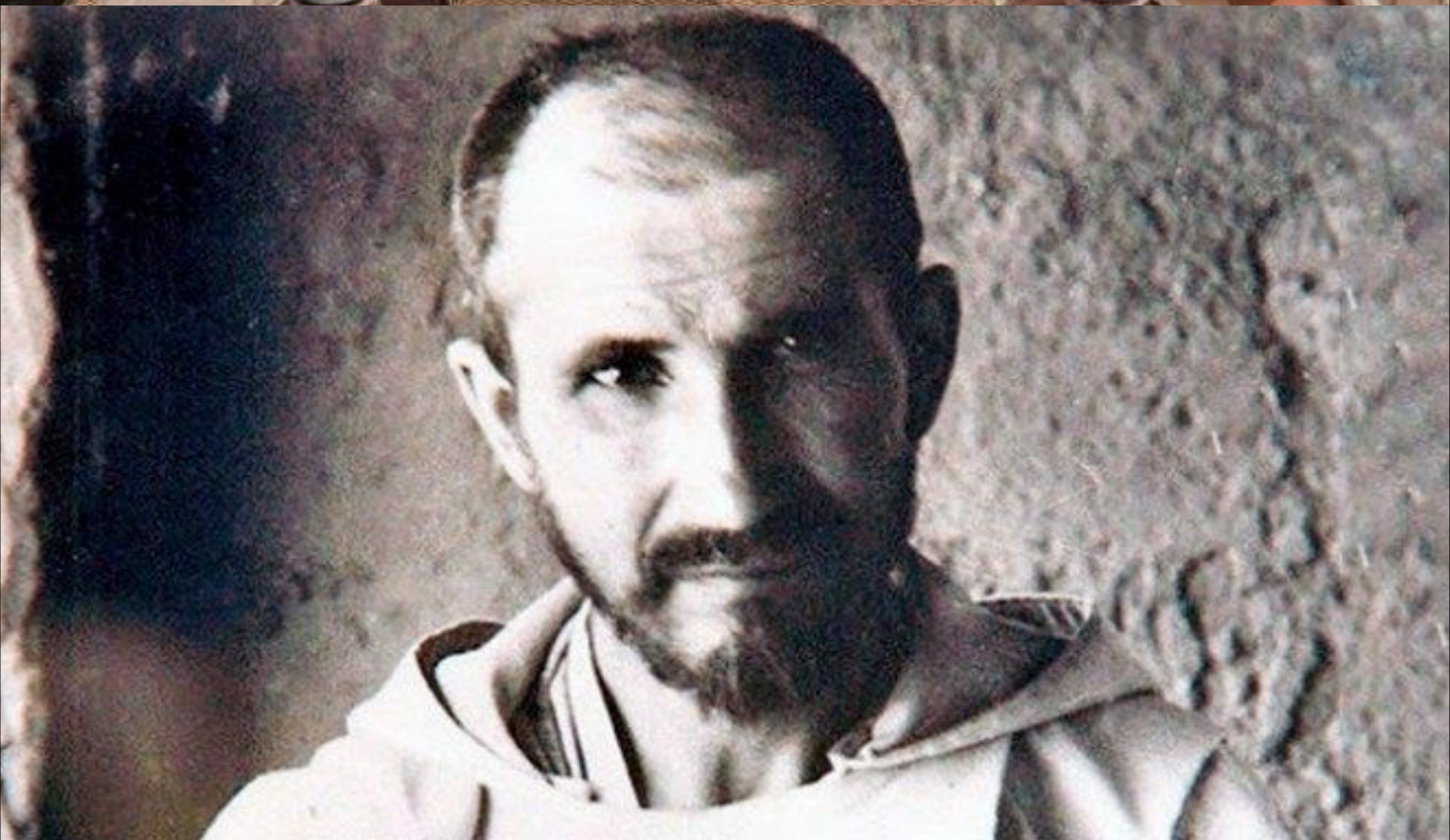
(Was "BB's uk"  
till 2021)

*Saint Charles de Foucauld*

1858-1916

*Canonised in Rome 15th May 2022*

*(See page 9.)*



*The canonisation has been a great celebration for the family of Br. Charles. It has encouraged us to live his charisma of universal brotherhood with renewed conviction and fervour. It is a one-off opportunity to grow the Fraternity.*

## From the GB Responsible

Sometimes, however, I have wondered: 'What would, what does Br. Charles himself make of it all? How does being elevated to the ranks of the saints sit with his desire to take the lowest place? For sure it is part of the paradoxical nature of the Gospel that he who humbles himself will be exalted. Like all the others, Charles had no say in his own canonisation, but is there a danger we could exalt ourselves in our jubilation? Thanks be to God there has been no sign of triumphalism in the celebrations, only joy and thanksgiving. In our humble gratitude we have a key to overcoming clericalism, the scourge of the priesthood and the whole Church. May Br. Charles, in the words of Pope Francis, enable us to share his dream of being a universal brother by identifying ourselves with the least and most abandoned people.



Steve.

## Fraternity news

- **“Be Brothers Britain & Ireland” by email:** This copy is being distributed by email as a PDF file to GB & Irish brothers via their Responsibles and also through GB fraternities as ‘hard copy.’
- **Note a subtle modification of title** for our newsletter, after kind brothers in Ireland made suggestions, which the British ‘Regional’ Team were very happy to agree to!
- **The GB ‘Regional’ Team** has, since November, met ‘live’ at Nympsfield on 20/1/22 and by “Zoom” technology on 3/3/22, with sundry informal communications in-between, and was due to meet by “Zoom” on 25/5/22. Decisions made show below or elsewhere in this issue. The GB ‘Regional’ team recently voted £1000 of our funds to assist the International Team (not least to assist fraternities in poorer countries.)
- **Next GB Meeting of Responsibles:** This will be on Wednesday September 14<sup>th</sup> 2022 between 12.00 and 4.30 (other arrangements to follow.)
- **Little Sisters of Jesus “News Notes:”** As advised earlier, the GB ‘Regional’ Team has financed a copy of this annual publication to be sent to each GB fraternity; it should come with this edition of “Be Brothers.” Hopefully its inspirational stories can be circulated around each fraternity’s brothers.
- **January Irish retreat:** Unfortunately this retreat, advertised last time, had to be abandoned after the Dominican centre in Dublin gained an outbreak of Covid. However, see:
- **Note this invitation from the Irish Responsible:** *All our UK Brothers are welcome to consider joining us from September 18/22 2022 in the beautiful rural seaside location of Mullaghmore in the west of Ireland for our Autumn retreat. Please seriously consider this invitation and contact me directly [frniallahern@gmail.com](mailto:frniallahern@gmail.com) or 087 7973432 to make a reservation. Knock International airport is just beside us and we can arrange transport for you on request.*
- **Apologies to a couple of contributors** for whom we have run out of space this time; hope for the next issue! Do keep them coming, but as below-
- **PRESS DATE for the November 2022 “Be Brothers Britain & Ireland” is 1st August for full articles; snippets accepted till August 15th.** Contributions from British and Irish fraternities very welcome.

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## *How I met brother Charles*

*By PeterCoxe (Plymouth fraternity.)*

*I'm from a fairly conservative (small "c") background and had little understanding of the Church's social teaching and what Christian poverty entails, apart from the fact that some people chose to embrace religious life. I was, however, impressed by the way the Order running my boarding school practised real poverty, providing top school facilities while living in very modest quarters. These Frs and Bros were instrumental in sowing seeds of discovery for many priestly vocations, even though I had no sense at school of wishing to become a priest. Mother Theresa's brief visit to the school was also significant; I sensed we were meeting a saint.*

At University I was fortunate to meet good people, and gradually discovered I might be called to priesthood; but still maintained a middle-class attitude in many areas of life. If Charles de Foucauld were mentioned at school or University, it probably went in one ear and out the other.

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Not long after my Ordination in 1982 I joined a local Jesus Caritas Fraternity, as I'm gregarious by nature and value support groups, scripture study and Eucharistic Adoration; the latter seeming to have been side-lined in many parishes supposedly following "the spirit of the Council."

At my first Month of Nazareth in 1986 I enjoyed the devotion, Scripture study, shared table and camaraderie; but didn't empathise strongly with the value of vulnerability and being "with" the poor rather than helping them from some supposed position of superiority. My attitude was still very much that of a spiritual "paratrooper" swooping down to other people's level; visiting so called "lapsed" Catholics in their homes to try and "rescue" them, with encouragement to return to Church, before returning to my ivory tower.

Meanwhile, when back at my parents' home, all was not well. I overworked, and my mental health took a tumble; but a breakdown became a breakthrough. Due to therapy in a Christian setting I discovered how important it is to be broken. 30 years later, a second breakdown and diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome reinforced this conviction. Meanwhile, I continued to find huge support in attending Jesus Caritas regularly. Others showed (and still show) appreciation for what I can contribute, but I remained largely unaware of Brother Charles. I valued the Scripture reflection and review of life, but desert days and living with the poor were a bridge too far.

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As an ardent Brexit "Remainer" (who studied and worked in Spain for a total of over 17 ½ years) I found summer 2016 most upsetting. My principal consolation was a second Month of Nazareth with excellent input on Bro. Charles. I was fascinated by the way the Islamic people's fidelity to



*Continued overleaf*

religious practice was a precursor to his rediscovery of faith, and by his approach to evangelisation and interreligious dialogue - about a century ahead of his time! I was particularly moved by the Moussa's condolence letter to Charles' family after his violent death.

In summer 2019, this awareness was reinforced by an August "Week of Nazareth," where we covered similar ground. After the worst of the pandemic I was also delighted to attend the autumn 2021 Month, despite contracting a mild "cold" which resulted in a positive Covid test a week after!

Both events took place at The House of the Open Door (HOD) near Broadway, Worcs., who were most welcoming and provided much human warmth as well as great value for money. At this most recent event, I was very touched by Michael Fitzgerald's reflections on how relevant Bro. Charles is to interreligious dialogue. I'm proud to be one of the few people who probably caught very mild Covid from such a warm, humble Cardinal who had just returned from a Conference in Hungary!

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Since then, I have joined the Jesus Caritas team that helps the British National Responsible. I'm always delighted to meet up with fellow members and Fraternities and move beyond the culture of my youth.

As I pray for guns in Ukraine to be silenced, thanks to Jesus Caritas I'm delighted to have met so many people with East European roots who belong to the HOD community, helping me feel closer to Ukraine. In fact, I wrote most of this article while looking forward to another visit to HOD to meet with a local Jesus Caritas Fraternity.

Even though I feel I'm far from a good "universal brother," I long for the day when "foreigners," "vagrants" and other oft-maligned categories of people are no longer on the margins of society. A first step towards achieving this is for me to step outside my comfort zone and engage more with those on what the Pope calls the "peripheries." Maybe my motto should be, "Onward and Downward!" Blessed Charles, pray for us!

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## [Last Survivor of Tibhirine Massacre in Algeria dies aged 97 in Midelt, Morocco](#)

Monk Jean-Pierre Schumacher, the last survivor of the Tibhirine community, died on November 21 in Midelt, Morocco, at the age of 97. Schumacher was born into a Catholic working-class family of six children in 1924 Lorraine, France.

*We were greatly honoured to know Frere Pierre when some of us made a "Month of Nazareth" at his monastery in Midelt in 2008, as reported in the very first 'new series' "Be Brothers," of January 2009. (Your editor remembers Bro. Pierre's recollection of the liberating Scotch regiment entering Paris late in WWII, kilts a-swing!) Photo from 2008.*

Details on this website:

<https://www.morocoworldnews.com/2021/11/345656/last-survivor-of-tibhirine-massacre-in-algeria-dies-aged-97-in-midelt-morocco>

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## *An Easter message from the Irish Regional Responsible, Niall Ahern*



*Dear Brothers,*

*We are delighted here in Ireland to continue this association with our Brothers in the UK and to be kindly included in BR BROTHERS once again.*

*The Covid experience left us all bereft of face to face encounters with our Fraternities for so long but thankfully many were able to join zoom and so keep contact. It was a poor substitute and we are all gradually resuming our meetings again.*

*It was a real disappointment not to be able to meet in Dublin for our post Christmas retreat as planned due to an outbreak of Covid at the retreat centre. It was especially so as so many had booked in and we were so pleased to be in a position to host some of our Brothers from the UK. Please God there will soon be another opportunity as outlined below and it was good that complete refunds were made to all involved.*

*To date we have ten Brothers from Ireland who plan to be present at the Canonisation of Blessed Charles in Rome and we are being welcomed to reside at the Irish College by an Irish Brother - Fr Aidan Ryan who is a member of the staff. We will be joined by one of our Little Sisters from Belfast for the pilgrimage and by some Irish Brothers already residing in Rome. We know it will be graced time for the Fraternity worldwide and an amazing moment to be present to one another on a global scale. To this end we have made a small donation to the International team and hope that our shared time together will enable us to bring the spirit of Blessed Charles home to our local members with increased devotion and insight.*

*All our UK Brothers are welcome to consider joining us from September 18/22 2022 in the beautiful rural seaside location of Mullaghmore in the west of Ireland for our Autumn retreat. Please seriously consider this invitation and contact me directly [fniallahern@gmail.com](mailto:fniallahern@gmail.com) or 087 7973432 to make a reservation. Knock International airport is just beside us and we can arrange transport for you on request.*

*Finally, as I write one of our founding fathers here in Ireland - Christopher Fox MHM - is being laid to rest. God grant him eternal peace.*

*Easter joy to each and every one of you - NIALL AHERN / RESPONSABLE - IRELAND. +*

### *Broadway "Month of Nazareth:"*

Should anyone have wondered how the "bee hive shelter" featured in the last issue, that some of us started to construct actually worked out, well here is our rustic front wall incorporated in the finished and operative structure some time after we left!

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## *The GB January mini-retreat (at the Marian Missionary Sisters of the Poor, Nympsfield, Glos. 18-20 January.)*

*The following are notes taken by the editor but a fuller, 6-page resume' made by Peter Coxe is available from Peter or the editor (see rear cover.)*

**Talks by Fr. Jonathan Cotton (Responsible for Nottingham Fraternity)**



### **1<sup>st</sup> presentation, Tues. evening:**

Jonathan has just retired from involvement with the Ignatian Prayer Teams, and has been a vocations officer and i/c The Briars Youth Centre. A member of Jesus Caritas for many years.

What is the 'season' of our spiritual life- Spring, Summer, Autumn or Winter? The Autumn of retirement or the Spring of new activities? Be honest with god as to where we are; *where am I?*

A day in the life of Jesus- Mk. 1: 31-39. How balanced is my day compared to Jesus'? Jesus goes to the synagogue, has time with family, the needy and time for prayer. There are 2 attitudes- the Father's will, and missionary drive.

Jonathan is getting his new life in balance- his family, prayer, home life, what care for the needy? 2 handouts given for us to work on-"What season i my spiritual life?" and "A day in the life of Jesus."

### **2<sup>nd</sup> presentation, Weds. Morning: Brother Charles and evangelisation.**

Jonathan did a series of parish sermons to reach out to the non-practising. "The new evangelisation" -a new creative way to bring Jesus into the community!

The training for this is called kerygmatic proclamation -to reach the heart in deep conversion. There are 3 parts- pre-evangelisation, evangelisation and ongoing evangelisation. It is effective through 7% our words, 38% of the way we say it, and 55% body language. 95% is in the area of sowing seeds; ie, pre-evangelisation.

Pre-evangelisation includes prayer for specific people to come to faith. Prayer for oneself, too - how to do it, and divine appointment. Coincidental meetings are ordained by God. Be alongside people with our giftedness, etc. Finally, plant seeds of faith. Pray silent blessings on someone. Not hide one's Christian lifestyle. Be loving and compassionate. Use Br. Charles story on pre-evangelisation. It is far more radical than us. Fr. Jonathan is following the papal lead from "Evangelii Gaudium" of JP11. The priority of Jesus; Christ in all evangelising. We must not hold back with excuses.



Mother Teresa found Christ as present in people as in the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus in the poor. Br. Charles was even more radical. 'Whatever you did to the least, you did to Me.' Br. Charles: "No Gospel phrases mean more to me than those spoken by the 'uncreated Truth-' 'This is my body/blood.'" Note the link between Christ in the sacrament and in people, similar to Mother Teresa. Jesus became ONE with all humanity, even if he had a preference for the poor.

Br. Charles evangelisation (in a 1912 letter) "What we

do is for the evangelisation of our African empire." It needed many priests so he made friends with the people. The laity were needed for even more contact, even in Muslim homes; good women religious for instruction, etc. There would be no conversions for a long time, but just love people. It will come in years, decades, even 100's of years.. He was ahead of his time. Br. Charles: "My apostolate is one of kindness. If I am seen to be good, my religion must be good, and my master, Jesus, must therefore be so good!" Love with those who love; weep with those who weep; make myself 'all' in 'all' A humble, meek, faithful imitation of Jesus. Br. Charles saw himself as a Universal Brother. Jesus said, "Go out to all nations." He wants all Christians, Muslims etc. To be universal brothers. The poor are here to have as a brother. Go to the most hidden, like Jesus in the 30 hidden years.

**3<sup>rd</sup> presentation, Weds. p.m:** *Br. Charles conversion and his "Prayer of Abandonment:"*

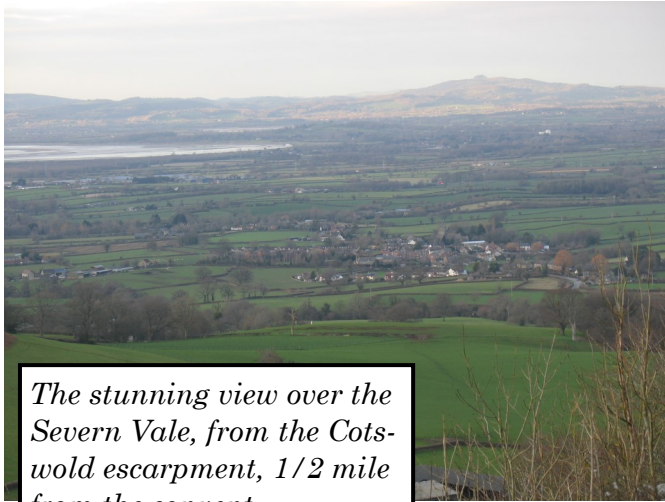
"Unless a grain dies..." Charles achieved fame from the book of his Morocco survey; but the Moslems impressed him, suggesting there is something greater than this world. He encountered Christ on meeting Abbe' Huvelin. The question then was whether to be a monk, missionary or what? Listening to the Spirit and to his spiritual director, he went to the Holy Land. He wanted to share Jesus' poverty, hidden in Nazareth. From this came hints for the Prayer of Abandonment. He joined the Trappists but left after 7 years to be a hermit, with a desire for martyrdom. Annihilation was the most powerful way to be with Jesus. So, where are the most 'abandoned' in my life? I can be closest to Jesus there.

Groups tend to form but then eventually get abandoned. "Forming, storming, performing and mourning." Jonathan had known this in a charismatic community. The founding principle just got lost after 18 years. But on locking up after clearing out all the group's artefacts, he found he was given the message, *"It is you I want, not your possessions."* Cf. 1 Cor. 12. *"Unless a grain of wheat shall die..."* Soon a

*Continued overleaf*



*A number of the sisters, not long arrived in Britain from Nigeria, and who served us so well, were professed on April 30th.*



*The stunning view over the Severn Vale, from the Cotswold escarpment, 1/2 mile from the convent.*

new group was founded by the last couple to leave! It was successful, while others went on to get good posts. Cf. Acts after Stephen was martyred -all scattered to preach elsewhere! Just so, Br. Charles' death let to many groups existing now.

The Prayer of Abandonment sheds light on the Father (like Jesus springing from the Father.)

Cf. Jonathan's handout with scripture parallels with the lines of the Prayer of Abandonment.

**4<sup>th</sup> Presentation, Thurs. Morning:** *Nazareth and Br. Charles' symbol of the Sacred Heart:*

Jesus lived under his parents' authority in Nazareth. Br. Charles imitated Jesus in his hidden life (not preaching) and is therefore always seeking the lowest place. For him, living in Nazareth equated to that lowest place.. Though Son of God, Jesus lived in poverty.

Br. Charles lived in obscurity with the Nazareth Poor Clares, but later realised he could live Nazareth anywhere. One's whole life should cry Christ. To live in Nazareth equated to living in constant love and service of God. It is to be abandoned as the most abandoned people, totally available to the people, and to Christ's presence.



He made the Tuareg dictionary so that future missionaries had access to the people. It had been finished just 2 days before he died.

We are called to friendship with Jesus, and to be formed into His image. Thus devotion to the Sacred Heart challenges our humanity. Cf. John at the Last Supper, his head resting on Jesus' heart. Our meditating on, eg. the daily Gospel or Office is our leaning on Jesus' Eucharistic heart. Cf. Ps. 102: "God doesn't repay us according to our sins," and we need to do the same. Cf. John:

*"We should love one another."*

*"This heart on my robe is for Jesus to love you."* It is a symbol of the infinite love of Christ. Br. Charles' followers were to preach by example of an all-embracing charity.

How are we to gain the strength to do all this? The Holy Spirit wants to push us out beyond our barriers.

### Plenary:

Don Stoker said that Br. Charles went through a lifetime of blind alley mistakes but was still driven on. One cannot preach Jesus' words without causing offence. God is all; one has to BE Jesus! +



*-and finishing with "happy hour!"*

*Prayer of Abandonment: Father, I abandon myself into your hands;*



*Sunday 15th May 2022*

## *Canonisation of Charles de Foucauld*

*From the blog of GB Treasurer, John Nolan*



*St Peter's with pictures of the 10 to be canonised*

A reasonable early breakfast, well 8.00am, and we were at the Vatican for 9.00am. Half an hour in

the security queue (I had to give up my large tube of factor 50 sunscreen) and we were in the square. However all the seats were taken.

*Swiss Guards all dressed up.*



There was a sea of yellow hatted Italians there for the canonisation of Fr Giustino Russolillo the founder of the Vocationist Fathers (who now run three parishes in Birmingham Archdiocese) and the Sisters of Divine Vocations. We guessed that many had bussed in for the day.

Having picked up an order of service each, (exactly as attached to yesterday's blog) Hazel and I wandered as far forward as possible but no seats were available. Also the sun was getting to me and my fair Irish skin so I retreated to the shade of Bernini's colonnade where I spent the next few hours. Sun-goddess Hazel was out taking photos. However, dear reader do not despair about my lack of view: God provided in the shape of my mobile phone and the English version of the Mass on Vatican TV; fantastic!

*Continued overleaf*

### *A prayer for the day*

Lord,  
 May we be wholehearted  
 in the way we live our lives.  
 May we be inspired  
 by people like Charles de Foucauld,  
 who could not imagine belief in God  
 with reservation.  
 Like him, may we respond  
 to the witness of sincere people,  
 brothers and sisters of whatever faith.  
 Amen.



*This "Prayer for the Day" was presented by Fr. Oliver Crilly (Derry Diocesan Priest) on BBC4 as part of a week-long series.*

do with me what you will. Whatever you do, I thank you. I am ready for all,

The service started 10 minutes early and after the introductory prayers went into a 20 minute summary of the 10 being canonised. Vatican TV provided great close ups of the Pope, who did look frail, and all the action. He at least was shaded by a large canopy.

From the TV shots it looked like there were about 20 cardinals, 100 bishops and 1000 to 2000 priests concelebrating. A couple hundred of special guests to the right of the altar, opposite the cardinals and bishops with a further enclosure of a few thousand special guests in front of and closest to the altar - along with the priests.



After, the 20 minute summary, we went into the liturgy of canonisation which included the litany of saints. It was all very accessible in terms of joining in. When Fr Giustino Russolillo's name was called a big cheer went up but an even bigger one went up for Charles de Foucauld- all those French present!

In the shade of the columns, even though there were some people chatting and speaking on their mobile phones, Hazel and I found we were able to get fully involved in the liturgy. We got a live English translation of the Pope's homily - although the Pope kept going off-script causing the translator a few problems. Here it is:

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2022/documents/20220515-omelia-canonizzazione.html>

It was all very prayerful and there was a special joy in being at a Mass celebrated by Pope Francis. I have to say, the potted biographies of the others being canonised were also moving.

The celebration was over just after 12:00noon and we met up with Fr Jonathan Cotton (Responsible for Nottingham fraternity) for a final meal together. Fr Jonathan had concelebrated with the other priests and had sat in the sun for the best part of two-and-a-half hours. He was quite dehydrated and that beer was very gratefully consumed. After lunch, we said our goodbyes to Fr Jonathan and returned to the flat for rest and a siesta.

Come early evening, we packed our bags and then headed out for a last stroll through Rome and a light supper.

With the setting sun, as we crossed and re-crossed the Tiber, the views were lovely and it felt a fitting way to say goodbye to Rome. +



*Finally, a shared pizza over a glass of wine: how Roman!*

I accept all; let only your will be done in me and in all your creatures, I wish no more than this.

## *St. Charles de Foucauld's shared essence and universality of faith*

*From Vatican News, 20/5/22;  
by Devin Watkins*



***Just three days after declaring Charles de Foucauld a Saint, Pope Francis met with a delegation of the many women and men inspired by the French missionary.***

Speaking to the Association of the Spiritual Family of Charles de Foucauld on Wednesday, the Pope called him a “*prophet for our times, who knew how to highlight the essence and universality of the faith.*” He said St. Charles de Foucauld boiled the meaning of faith down into two words: “*Jesus – Caritas* (“Jesus – Love”). The Saint discovered that truth by returning to Jesus’ hidden life at Nazareth, after he lived in Jesus’ hometown for several years.

*“I encourage you, like Brother Charles, to continue to envision Jesus walking in the midst of people, patiently carrying out a difficult job, and living day-to-day in a family and a city.”*

### *Love as the essence of faith*

Pope Francis said it must please the Lord to see men and women imitate St. Charles along “*the path of littleness, humility, and solidarity with the poor.*” He added that the French missionary discovered the essence of the faith, which he wrote was that “*God gives primacy of place to love and then to sacrifice inspired by love and obedience derived from love.*” The Pope urged the Church to return to the “*essence of the faith, not to get lost in secondary things and risk losing sight of the pure simplicity of the Gospel.*”

### *Universal openness in joy*

Saint Charles, added the Pope, also focused on the universality of faith, living Christianity as a brother to all, especially during his 15 years in the Sahara Desert of Algeria. “*He did not have the objective of converting others, but only of living in the gratuitous love of God, carrying out an ‘apostolate of goodness.’*” The new Saint sought to have “*Christians, Muslims, Jews, and idolaters*” consider him their brother by opening the doors of his house to all people.

Pope Francis thanked the men and women inspired by St. Charles de Foucauld for helping spread his spirituality and openness, “*especially in a time like ours in which we risk closing ourselves off, increasing distances, and losing sight of our brothers and sisters.*”

### *Saint's spirituality helped Pope's formation*

Speaking off-the-cuff, the Pope said Charles de Foucauld’s spirituality helped him personally when he was studying theology. “*He helped me overcome my crises and find a more simple, less Pelagian path of Christian life which is closer to the Lord.*”

The Pope concluded his speech by inviting the group to focus on St. Charles’ joy, “*because joy is the purest witness that we can offer to Jesus in every place and time.*”

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Into your hands I commend my soul; I offer it to you with all the love of my heart. For

***Following the murder of Fr. Jacques Hamel in his church in Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray, Northern France, in July 2016, Moira Potier (European Lay Responsible) sends commentaries on a real-life living of the Jesus Caritas way.***



*“Cardinal Michael (Fitzgerald) shared with me these two very recent (17/2/22) articles in French in the publication “Aleteia.” I have had a go at translating them into English. I also attach the Obituary of Janine Coponet (wife of Guy, whose testimony this is, Ed.) that was published in our International Bulletin of the Lay Fraternities in September 2021.*

*The image of Guy Coponet reciting words from the **Prayer of Abandonment** in the secular context of a court room and in a secular society such as France is one which will stay with me. A picture of deep faith and courage. You will see from this that Guy and Janine have been members of the Lay Fraternity since 1951! Moira*



**THE MOVING TESTIMONY OF GUY COPONET AT THE SAINT-ÉTIENNE-DU-ROUVRAY TRIAL** by *Agnès Pinard Legry*; first published in the French periodical, “Aleteia.”

*Now 92 years old, Guy Coponet was present during the assassination of Father Jacques Hamel on July 26, 2016. Forced by terrorists to film the scene, he was then seriously injured. He is a civil party to the trial of Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray, and this Thursday (17/2/22) delivered a moving testimony before the special court of assizes of Paris.*

*“I can tell you how my day went on July 26, 2016. It will be fresh in my head until the end of my life.” At the age of 92, before the special assize court in Paris, Guy Coponet impresses with his calm, his simplicity and his clarity. A direct witness to the assassination of Father Jacques Hamel, he was forced by terrorists to film his martyrdom before being stabbed in his turn. He finally survived, but in extremis. His appearance on Thursday, February 17 as a civil party did not require him to make a statement. He could simply answer the questions of the president of the assize court and of the lawyers. But he chose to do so nonetheless. “And you will ask me questions afterwards,” he said. “I think of them [the terrorists, editor’s note] every morning,” he said. “When I shave I have to be careful not to cut myself because an area has become numb”. This area, at the level of his neck, is a scar of about twenty centimetres the result of an attempt by one of the terrorists to cut his throat. “As soon as I daydream a little, the images come back. In the back, too. It stays you know. There is no danger of my forgetting.”*

On July 26, the day of his 87th birthday, Guy Coponet attended, as usual, with his wife Janine, the Mass celebrated by Father Jacques Hamel. Unlike the Sunday Mass, the entrance for the office during the week is not through the main door but through the sacristy. It was the holidays, so there were fewer people than usual. “Three sisters, my wife (Janine, editor’s note) and me,” he recounted. “As usual, the weather was fine, Father Hamel was happy because he was going on holiday afterwards! The service began and during the Mass a man entered for the first time, he came inside asking for information. One of the nuns asked him to come back later. He went out. At the end of Mass, the door opened again. Vio-

I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself into your hands, without re-

lently. Then two men entered: Adel Kermiche and Abdel-Malik Petitjean”.

*“They put me in the first bench, and put this camera in my hands,” he continued. “What I was seeing through the lens was being transmitted to another person. I said to myself that I had to aim well, I was careful not to move anything. I did what I was told to do. Father Jacques was still on his seat. Then they grabbed him, brought him to his knees and stabbed him.”*

In the courtroom, the seconds suddenly passed more slowly, more painfully. Guy Coponet’s voice was stifled with emotion. *“The suffering he may have felt at that time,”* he said with a sob. *“On Good Friday, around the church, Catholics make the Stations of the Cross. Now I can’t. I go there every time but the last two stations... It’s Father Jacques, that’s what he suffered.*

*“They slaughtered him like that. I don’t know if it’s a matter of faith, if they thought they were doing this for religion, these two lads. A few metres from the dais, they dragged him to the ground.*

*“He defended himself as best he could, with the little strength he had left, he pushed the leader away with his feet,” he continued. “When the other was approaching him, Father Jacques said ‘Satan go away’ He repeated it a second time, sounding authoritarian like giving an order: ‘Go away, Satan.’ The blood began to vomit out of his mouth, and the Father didn’t move. It was over for him.»*

Father Hamel received a total of nine stab wounds on the upper part of the thorax. The already unbearable scene did not end there. *“They took the camera out of my hands and put me on the dais”,* resumed Guy Coponet. The two terrorists destroyed their devices and one of them then turned to him saying: *“It’s your turn now.”* *“He was coming with something in his hand and I said to him, ‘What are you going to do, are you going to kill your grandfather?’”* he recalled.

He received stab wounds in the back, the arm and then the throat. *“From the dais he swung me to the side. I fell two or three steps down”.* Guy Coponet then had the reflex to tighten his throat. *“It came to my mind: ‘Above all, don’t move because if you move it will finish you’”.* So he stayed on the ground, waiting.

What went through his head? *“It felt a long time. It didn’t take much to make it worse. All the spiritual resources that I have I drew on, I turned to perpetual prayer. I felt like I was in a spiritual retreat, I took stock of what I have done, what I could go towards in the future.”*

It was while saying at the last words of *“Hail Mary”, “Now and at the hour of our death”,* that he finally saw someone enter. *“I know that the emergency services and the police were very busy but it was time for them to arrive,”* he continued.

He was transferred to the Rouen University Hospital where he underwent several operations. *“The doctor underlined yesterday your exceptional physical resistance given the suffering”,* Franck Zientara, the president of the court, said. *“We take stock of it today when you are re-counting your ordeal. The court salutes this resistance and resilience. »*

After this moving testimony, which each person present felt the weight of, the president of the assize court asked him: *“What do you expect from this trial by becoming a civil party?”* He answered bluntly: *“Let those who gave the orders, let those who trained those who came, let these people come and ask forgiveness from all those whom they have hurt. It would be such a rebuilding of community relations.”* His words became deeper, more luminous. *“When you don’t forgive, it becomes hate. It is not liveable.»*

In another, lighter tone, he confided following another question about his stay in the hospital and the call from François Hollande,

*Continued on page 17.*

serve, and with boundless confidence, for you are my Father. (Brother Charles.)

## News from the GB fraternities



### Clifton Fraternity

*Last time we featured Clifton's annual overnigher meal in Chipping Sodbury; now here they are at their usual venue of Nymphsfield Convent, Gloucestershire, for their September 2021 fraternity. L > R: John Blacker; Peter Slocombe; Alan Finlay; Jim Williams; Michael Healy; Matt Anscombe & Vincent Curtis. Responsible, Barnabas Page, appears to be taking the photo.*

### Wrexham Fraternity

*After about 10 years since re-founding, Wrexham remains Wales' only fraternity; with a remarkably buoyant 8 brothers in a diocese of only 42 secular and religious priests. With a very rare full attendance, here they are at their February 2022 fraternal, meeting as usual in Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary's Noddfa ("Refuge") retreat centre in Penmaenmawr (the grand old house & grounds was once Gladstone's 'country cottage.')* Clockwise from Bob Rainbow (Responsible) at front right: Bernard Lordan, Edwin Regan, Shaji Punuattu, Damian Jackson, Adrian Morrin, Charles Ramsay and Bernard Morgan. Three brothers of this fraternity have died since 2019. +



*Is any other fraternity (British or Irish) able to contribute to this section?*

## *A & B Brighton Fraternity*

News from Benny O'Shea last Nov. 23rd:

*Greetings from Rottingdean. We had our annual 'Overnight' together at St. Martha's Convent here in Rottingdean a couple of weeks ago. We had 15 brothers present and all enjoyed the chance to 'catch-up' following a difficult year and a half for everybody. We have planned a Mass at our Cathedral in Arundel on May 24th 2022 with Bishop Richard to celebrate the canonisation of Bl. Charles.*

*We now have a new Responsible for our Group here in East Sussex - Fr. Tristan Cranfield - [tristan.cranfield@abdiocese.org.uk](mailto:tristan.cranfield@abdiocese.org.uk) - Please address any future information to Tristan. We will still be having our meetings here at Rottingdean.*

*PS I have forwarded your Nov communications to each member of our Group here, including your request for Subscriptions.*

## *Plymouth Fraternity*

*Peter Coxe (Plymouth Responsible, left) entertains his fraternity at Schlerder Abbey!*



*Many thanks to Peter and all our contributors to this section this time; can anyone else keep it going?*

## **Smiles**

### *Jesus Caritas puzzles:*

*Last time I asked- how many common English words of more than 3 letters (not names and excluding plurals) can you make from the letters of the one word "Tamanrasset?!"*

*Rather short on responses from you guys, but I made it 38; viz:*

Asset; Mane; Mass; Mast; Master; Matter; Mare; Mate; Meat; Mess; Name; Natter; Neat; Nest; Rate; Ream; Rest; Same; Sate; Seam; Seat; Smart; Smarten; Start; State; Steam; Stern; Tame; Tamer; Tamest; Tart; Taste; Team; Teat; Test; Tram; Treat; Tress.

*For next time, how many English words, of 4 letters or more, NOT names or plurals, can you get out of -*

*"Saint Charles de Foucauld?" (I'm up to 77 and still coming; 38 are 5 or more letters!) +*

## *E.mail received by the editor*

*Sent: Sun 28 November 2021*

Thank you very much Bob, for a lively, well presented and very engaging bulletin. Well done everyone.

Just one little correction maybe? Under the notice about the death of Br Thierry on page 16 you have photo of Thierry on the left, but the photo below right is Antoine Chatelard - who also died last year, in December.

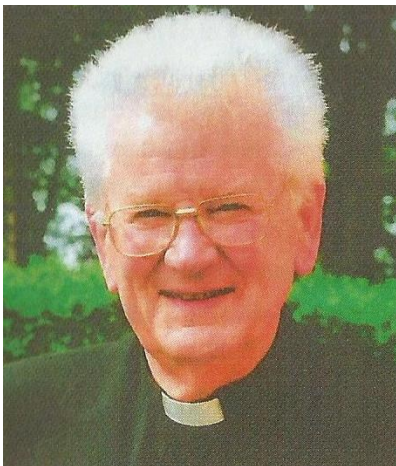
Also, just to be clear the article you have included from me on page 11 was sent to me by Michael, but not written by him - can't remember the source at the moment.

Hope you are keeping warm and well.

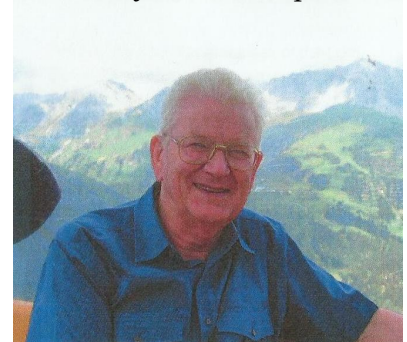
*Moirira Potier (European Lay Responsible.)*



## *Obituaries*



**Monsignor Canon James Fealey** (1937-2022) of Wrexham fraternity, passed away aged 84 years on 16th January 2022 following admission to Ysbyty Glan Clwyd on 7th January and a rapid decline in his general health; 50 years a priest of the Diocese of Wrexham. His requiem Mass, led by Bishop Brignall, took place at the Holy Family, Llandudno Junction (where his ministry was fondly remembered) on 26th January, followed by interment at Llanrhos Lawn Cemetery. A good contingent from his fraternity were able to concelebrate. May he rest in peace. +



The editor was recently able to revisit the grave of our erstwhile GB. treasurer, **Deacon John Carter** of Wrexham Fraternity, in the Anglican churchyard at Llanfihangel Dyffryn Clwyd, near Denbigh, and finds this fine stone now marks the resting place of both John and his wife, Patricia, who passed away so soon after him. Rest in peace!

*Niall Ahern e.mailed on 18th March:*

“As I write one of our founding fathers here in Ireland - **Christopher Fox MHM** - is being laid to rest. God grant him eternal peace. +



*Jacques Hamel, Continued from page 13.*

*preferred to be in my place than in his”.*

Another lawyer asked him about his daily life today, did he still go to Mass etc? His wife having died last year, he goes to Mass alone. Well, not quite alone. *“In Mass, we receive the presence, a presence, it is the Lord who is there. I go there every week, as before with my wife, and the Lord is there,”* he said. *“Coming home, I go through the cemetery and find her. And the Lord is there. I stay with her. It gives me freedom. It's love. »*

As his hearing ended, one of the general counsel in the trial wanted to tell him again how much his testimony touched her and the courage it had taken for him to come. To the last question of whether he had anything to add, his answer was once again overwhelming. *“In everything that happened, I had nothing to do with it. Lord, do with me as you please. Whatever you do with me, I thank you, I am ready for anything, I accept everything as long as your will be done in me and in all your creatures.”* His words, those of Charles de Foucauld's famous prayer of abandonment, soar in the Salle Voltaire in a solemn, respectful silence. *“It is a need to give, out of love. This is the engine, the force. It's not my doing. »* (Editor's emphasis.)

#### THE SLOW ROAD TO FORGIVENESS BY ROSELYNE HAMEL

*Recalling her desire to ward off "the hatred that destroys our humanity", Roseline Hamel, the sister of Father Jacques Hamel, gave her testimony on the fourth day of the trial of the Saint-Étienne-du-Rouvray attack. A life path mixed with suffering but also with forgiveness.*



She has not hidden the suffering that is inside her. Almost six years after the events, she was able to share with the special assize court of Paris, who her brother was, what she went through and what her life is like today. *“The pain of his disappearance, in those circumstances, persists. It was heartbreaking for all of us and it is permanent.»*

When she returned home after her brother was murdered, it was in the church next door, at the foot of a pietà statue, that she sought solace. *“Mary lived the martyrdom of her son without being able to intervene. I asked her to give me her strength so that I could walk in the footsteps of my brother as she had walked in those of her son to bring a message of peace and love.»*

In the months that followed, while people kept asking her if she had forgiven, Roseline Hamel wondered who could suffer more than her. *“I know very well that suffering cannot be compared, cannot be hierarchised,”* she admitted. *“But a few months later I got my answer. I am a mother, I had four children. Another woman had four children and lost one on July 26, 2016.”* This is Aldjia Kermiche, the mother of one of the two assailants. *“When I had the pleasure of meeting her, she opened the door to me asking for forgiveness,”* she said. *“I told her that was not what I wanted from her but that we could learn to manage our pain together, I wanted to help her. That's how I found my life path.”*

For nearly six years, Roseline Hamel has been rebuilding herself, but hides nothing of her suffering. *“We are rebuilding ourselves piecemeal, like a puzzle. But it remains fragile.»*

At the end of her statement, Roseline Hamel found the strength to turn to the dock (where the

accused were sitting) to tell them: *"You will not have my hatred [...] this hatred which destroys humanity."* But also, to express her faith, what she believes in: *"It is with the love that God has entrusted to us, this magnificent gift of love, that we build peace, freedom, fraternity."*

*"Forgiveness has a force that moves mountains,"* she concluded. *"Mountains of trials. Carrying this message of forgiveness is now my way of life."* Words which, like those of Guy Coponet the same morning, touched the hearts of those present in the audience.

*"Thank you for this beautiful testimony, full of controlled but evident emotion, hope and generosity",* the president of the special assize court said. A thank you also expressed by the Advocate General: *"Thank you for this touching and strong testimony, full of truth and humanity."*



***The Obituary of Janine Coponet that was published in the International Bulletin of the Lay Fraternities in September 2021:***

**JANINE COPONET HAS JOINED  
FATHER JACQUES HAMEL**

***"' love you, I die happy, don't be sad, love life".  
These are Janine's last words to her family, in a  
whisper, that Guy, her husband, shared with us.***

**Members of the Secular Fraternity of Normandy (France), Guy and Janine Coponet lived the spirituality of Brother Charles with great faithfulness. They were very attached to the fraternity and had been members since the years 1950/51.**

On July 26, 2016, Janine was present with Guy at the time of the assassination of Father Jacques Hamel by two terrorists, during the Mass in Saint-Etienne-du Rouvray (near Rouen). Guy himself was very seriously injured and operated on with great expertise. These events marked the end of Janine's life.

*"We ask God to forgive, to help us not to harbour hatred,"* she testified a year after the tragedy. *"This drama,"* she added, *"has also been a source for me of a deeper closeness to God in prayer. How not to thank, praise, pray to a God who is so close and full of mercy?"*

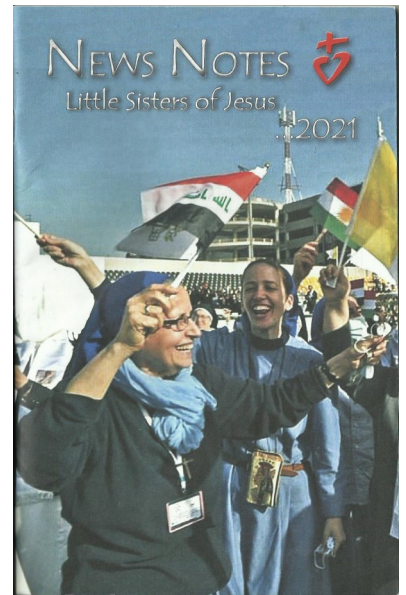
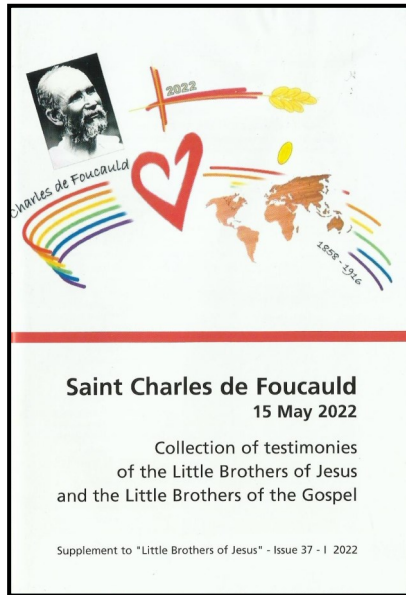
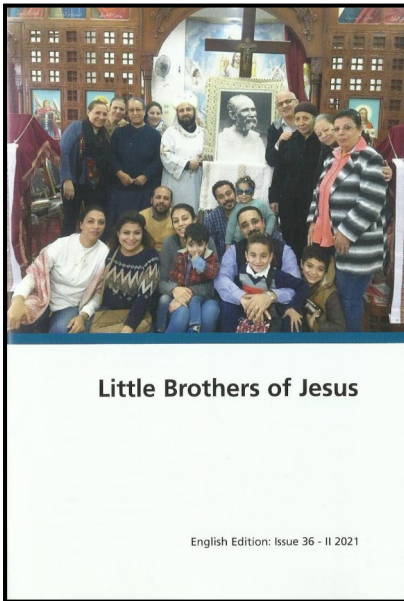
Janine left peacefully to join Father Jacques Hamel, in the house of the Lord, on April 19, 2021, following this terrible pandemic. She was 91 years old. Here are some excerpts from the homily delivered by Mgr Dominique Lebrun, Archbishop of Rouen, during her funeral on April 28:

*"The path of JESUS is a path of faith because he gives us an example: 'I am the way, the truth, the life'. It is this path of truth and life that JANINE took, believing in JESUS, placing her trust in the Holy Spirit. JESUS walked the paths of human life, first in Nazareth for thirty years, son of the carpenter and carpenter himself. This path seduced CHARLES DE FOUCAULD. He seduced you GUY and JANINE. To love whatever the circumstances of life and in the circumstances of life, with, in the end, a certain indifference that is sometimes difficult to understand: 'I abandon myself to you, my Father', but which is not a cutting off.. You loved where you were planted, where you flourished, seeking to serve your loved ones, your parish, your city of course, and first of all ,your family. [...] In this parish, how many different priests have you known? How many changes have you experienced in the world and in the Church? What matters is to walk in the footsteps of JESUS. Not following his ideas which sometimes can make us stop walking. You walked in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray as JESUS walked in Nazareth. »*

*In 2017, Guy and Janine agreed to testify on the Christian television channel KTO. Here, for French-speaking readers, is the link to this video: <https://youtu.be/yUkSNMRAE-w>*

*This beautiful testimony enabled fruitful exchanges in fraternity. Thank you again Janine!" +*

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## No Rush, No Haste

*Michael Hurley*

Time,  
Where do you go?  
I strain and pant,  
Anxious to contain you.  
Yet, you steal away  
With each escaping moment.

The desert day  
gave me richer time.  
St. Senan's ancient church  
Where ancestors sought shelter,  
The country's yearly greening,  
The ageless Shannon sweep,  
Shanid's far-seeing castle,  
All hint at timelessness.

Richer still  
The silence of eternity  
Unmeasured, uncalculated  
To lead my returning spirit  
Deep within  
Where I am grasped  
In the womb  
of the divine rest.

And now I know that  
In your will  
There is no rush, no haste.  
Your time is mine  
to accomplish  
What bears fruit.

*Michael Hurley is a Dublin Diocesan Priest*

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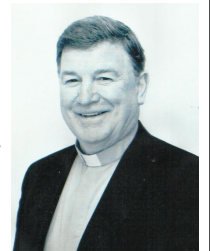
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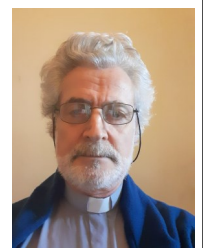
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