



CR Review

John the Baptist  
June 2022

# CR

**JOHN THE BAPTIST 2022**

478

<b>Shearly Cripps Children's Home</b>	<b>3</b>	<i>Nicolas Stebbing CR</i>
<b>Bike Ride - Ford End to Tunbridge Wells</b>	<b>5</b>	<i>Peter Sowden</i>
<b>The Blue Cross</b>	<b>11</b>	<i>Christopher Irvine</i>
<b>The MIRFIELD Liturgical Institute</b>	<b>14</b>	<i>Cyril Mushambi</i>
<b>The Lower Church at Mirfield</b>	<b>16</b>	<i>George Guiver CR</i>
<b>Mass Practice</b>	<b>21</b>	<i>V. Rev. Fr Richard Duffield, Cong. Orat.</i>
<b>Visit to The Mirfield Collection</b>	<b>22</b>	<i>Anisha Christison</i>
<b>A Monastic Library</b>	<b>26</b>	<i>Nicolas Stebbing CR</i>
<b>In a Car with Desmond Tutu</b>	<b>29</b>	<i>Alan Speight</i>
<b>Book Reviews</b>	<b>30</b>	

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*Cover photograph: Memorial to Arthur Shearly Cripps in Ford End Church (see "Bike Ride" article)*

## Shearly Cripps Children's Home

Back in 1970, I went to teach in the school at St Anne's Mission, Wedza. It was one of the happiest times of my life. One important part of that experience was the mission priest, Fr Michael Zambezi. He was a great character, talkative, intelligent and hard working. I discovered he had been an orphan in the Charter district of (then) Rhodesia. He had been found by Fr Arthur Shearly Cripps, taken in, sent off to school and eventually became a teacher, then a priest. He described Fr Cripps as "A grand old man." Fr Cripps died in 1952. 70 years on, he is still remembered; indeed, he is regarded as a saint and the area in which he worked is strongly Anglican, despite its considerable poverty.

In 1976, now a priest, I moved to the mission of St John's, Chikwaka and became chaplain to the Shearly Cripps Children's home there. The civil war was creeping up on us and Chikwaka became more and more affected by it. Yet the Home was an oasis of peace and joy. The 60 kids were full of life and affection. It was lovely to come back from trips to the outstations and be welcomed by the kids and the two nuns. In 1977, I had to leave, partly because of the war, and partly to follow my vocation to CR. I left, literally, in tears.



I have been back many times and watched with sadness as the Home has struggled to survive. The government should pay a substantial grant, but never does. Social welfare comes low on its priorities. Finally, last year, as most readers will know, we decided Tariro had to step in and help. The urgent need was to repair windows, doors, holes in the roof and at some considerable expense to replace the plumbing in the showers and toilets so that they worked for the first time in ten years. The floors and walls have also been tiled, and the rest of the interior is being painted now. The children are delighted by this turnaround. They know they are being cared for. We have also restarted the garden so that they get more fresh vegetables. The next stage is to bring in laying hens to improve the diet. The Home used to have a profitable piggery and we need to restart that to bring in some income. That will require more funding but will pay off in the end. Doing all this in present-day Zimbabwe is not easy with inflation on the rise, but Zimbabweans are resourceful and so long as they get the funding they can do wonders.

The bigger problem is the children themselves. They are delightful, friendly and easy to talk with. However, I have worked often with children's home kids and know there are huge underlying problems. They lack a family background. This makes them insecure. As orphans ('nherera' in Shona) they are despised and have no status. They find it hard to fit into Shona society, which is very conscious of family and tribal background. As long as they are at the Home they are fine. When they leave, they tend to fall apart, or at least achieve nothing. They have to leave at eighteen. We need to prepare for that long before it happens, and be ready to help them on their way.

It was partly to meet this need that Tariro was founded twelve years ago. During that time, we have taken a handful of Home kids into the House in Harare where they become part of that family. Some of these young people have done well. One girl is now happily married with a child. Two of the boys are doing well in their tertiary studies. One delightful young man, Kudakwashe, came to the House two years ago and seemed quite unable to smile. Quite suddenly, in the last few months, this has changed, as this photograph shows.

Our plan now is to start introducing the Home kids to the Harare House at a much earlier age. They should come for visits, for weekends, for some of their holidays. They need to find they have a family in Harare. Most of the youngsters at the Harare House come from similar backgrounds. Now they are well adjusted and doing well in their chosen fields. The Shearly Cripps children can find in them role models who will encourage them to do the same.

It is a long process building up the confidence and social skills of young people in these circumstances but we have had sufficient good results already to know it can be done. It is important that it should be done. Looking at a bunch of these



*Kudakwashe*

scruffy kids one can easily miss the fact that each one is an individual. Each one has been hurt and abandoned in some way. Each one has hopes for the future, but a great fear of the future. They look like millions of other kids in Africa yet each one is special to God. They want the same things that our kids in England want – a good life, love and fulfilment. If we cannot help them find that they will look for it themselves, probably in self-destructive ways.

This is important not just for themselves but for Zimbabwean society. Every child who goes bad sends destructive ripples into society. This results in petty thefts, vandalism, drugs, sexual diseases, pregnancies, abandoned babies and the same cycle of destructive behaviour which has led to their own presence in the Home to start with. Breaking the cycle of destruction has the opposite effect. One of the most fulfilling aspects of our work with Tariro has been seeing this happen. Young men and women from bad backgrounds growing up happy and secure, able to find jobs, get married and build their own homes. It sounds like a middle-class cliché, and that is what it is. It is a cliché because it is so true. Those who manage to create that sort of life become the bedrock for society in the future. Right now, in all the chaos and corruption of Zimbabwean life, a new

generation is coming into being who have different standards, who are realistic about the state of the country yet determined to create something new. We want the Shearly Cripps children to be part of this change.

It is also an important part of preaching the Gospel. The Anglican Church, like the Roman and Methodist churches, has tended to do its evangelistic work quietly through institutions for education, health and social care. This is no cynical using of ‘works of mercy’ just to gain converts. Jesus himself spent a lot of his time healing the sick and counselling the troubled. There is no evidence that many of them became members of the post-resurrection church. He did it out of love, His own love for them and his Father’s love, too. Some of those helped do become faithful, loving Christians. Fr Zambezi was one such. But the social work of the Church proves that we are a body of caring Christians – that love, real practical love is at the heart of our life. The Anglicans in Zimbabwe need Shearly Cripps Home to remind themselves constantly that God really cares about the poorest of the poor. Those poor, abandoned kids need us; we also need them. They keep us rooted in love. “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” (Lk. 6: 20) We need to identify with the poor if we are to find a place in the Kingdom of God.

**Nicolas CR**



## Bike Ride - Ford End to Tunbridge Wells

*27 April to 1 May 2022*

**M**irfield, the place of my birth, is also home to the Community of the Resurrection. In the *CR Review* I noticed an article by Brother George in which he said he planned a sponsored bike ride in Essex and Kent, raising money for the Tariro charity in Zimbabwe. Would anyone like to accompany him? I fancied a bike ride in the Essex and Kent countryside, and so replied Yes Please.

Would there be a big crowd of people? Fr George had just one taker – myself. We'd never met. What would we make of each other? Both scholarly-minded people, we had excellent conversations. Although Brother George, in his mid-70s, has an electric bike, he did not zoom far ahead. He turned out to be ecumenical, observant but not rigid about saying the daily office, and good company. He pronounces his vowels in a pleasing northern way. Possessing no money of his own, he nevertheless had the Community credit card to hand, and indulged, modestly, in a steak in the





*With some of the congregation at Ford End*

Spotted Dog on the first evening and in one pint of Stella at the Gravesend Premier Inn.

Biking in the lovely Essex and Kent countryside was as expected: green; quiet; undulating terrain, with some hills, but not like West Yorkshire; peaceful country churchyards to rest in, always with a good bench, and in most cases the old, interesting church was open. The route, Ford End in Essex to Tunbridge Wells in Kent, was chosen to commemorate Arthur Shearly Cripps (1869-1952), a Church of England priest who worked in Zimbabwe, which was at the time Southern Rhodesia, where he championed Africans' rights and continues to be greatly venerated. Born in Tunbridge Wells, he was the parish priest of Ford End before going to Africa.

In my case the route started before, in Eltham, over Shooters Hill, down to Woolwich Arsenal Docklands Light Railway (DLR) station, the DLR to Stratford, the Central Line to Epping, and then twenty miles of lovely Essex countryside to the Chelmsford diocese retreat house in the scenic village of Pleshey, where we met for the first time and had our first overnight stay. At the other end of the bike ride I was off on my own again, with a train from Tonbridge to Orpington, another bike ride down the Cray valley and then home via Bexley Woods, the Shuttle River Way and Avery Hill Park.

The weather was brilliant: dry; not too sunny; not too hot. The whole thing was a very rich religious experience. The sweet, soprano, in-unison chanting



of the nuns of West Malling Abbey, a beautiful, peaceful place where we stayed on the third night. The garden of the retreat house at Pleshey. The lady in Woolwich giving out “Have you Thought about Your Soul” leaflets for the Redeemed Christian Church of God. The Mass – clouds of incense and hymns to Our Lady - in St Barnabas’ church, Tunbridge Wells. The famous Chagall stained glass windows in Tudeley church. The medieval wall paintings in the church at Capel. The Roman villa at Lullingstone, with its house-church, one of the earliest Christian sites in Britain. Learning from Brother George about life in the Community in Mirfield and about his own religious development. Conversations about Everything.

There was also the unexpected. The man performing a native American ritual in front of Pocahontas’s statue in Gravesend churchyard – she is buried in the church - relaying it all via his mobile phone to a Cherokee lady in America. The tomb of the famous philosopher John Locke in the churchyard of High Laver. The enormous, magnificent Sikh-Sri Guru Nanak Darbar Gurdwara-temple in Gravesend. The tin hut which is the small mission church in Golden



*West Malling Abbey, the church, chapter house and cloister*



*Capel Church medieval wall painting*

Green. The vicarage of Fr John Caster in Tunbridge Wells – I’ve never stayed in a vicarage before – full of dodgy plumbing, hair from his two large white cats, and books. Fr George preached at St Barnabas, immediately after falling off his bike and breaking his glasses.

In Gravesend another Zimbabwe connection: a visit to the octogenarian author Byrne McLeod, whose works I publish, and her husband Magnus, farmers in Zimbabwe in colonial times, founders of the Centre Party which opposed Ian Smith’s unliteral declaration of Rhodesian independence in 1965 and the consequent racial segregation. Then came perhaps the biggest highlight, the “cruise”: the Tilbury to Gravesend ferry, a “cruise” of about ten minutes on a boat that has room for about twenty passengers and two bikes.

Heartfelt thanks to all who have donated – the ride, including donations made before Lockdown when our plans were temporarily scotched, has raised £2,668 to date, with donations still sporadically coming in. You can watch the video we made of the ride on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATujm1JKB1E>

**Peter Sowden**

## The Blue Cross

**M**y first visit to Italy was with Fr George CR in 1990, together with two other teachers of Liturgy. George proposed a trip to Milan to study the Ambrosian Rite. The suggestion was greeted with enthusiasm, and so practical arrangements were made for the visit. We spent a couple of days with a contemplative community outside the city, and then three days in Milan itself. It was during that visit that I realised just how much one can learn about the meaning of the worship of the Church from the fittings, furnishings, and decorations of a church building.

More regular trips to Italy occurred later when Rosie and I discovered a wonderful place to stay, nestling in the Umbrian hills just north of the city of Assisi. It was a simple farmhouse with outbuildings owned by an English woman called Jennifer Holmes. Although Jennifer ran the house as an *Agro-tourismo* business, she certainly made us feel as though we were guests staying in her home, and we soon became friends. Jennifer had trained as an artist, and on a perfect summer's evening she invited us to her studio, originally the barn, to view her paintings. One of the pieces she showed us, and it was very much work in progress, was a special Icon of St Francis, modelled on a surviving 13<sup>th</sup>-century Icon of St Clare. This kind of Icon depicts the saint full length in the centre and then has a series of panels on either side of the central image that show some of the key episodes in the story of the saint. Jennifer had been commissioned to paint this Icon by the International Franciscan Centre for Dialogue in Assisi.

Each morning, whenever we stayed at Casa Rosa, I would drive the short distance into Assisi to buy the provisions for the day, and on each occasion, I would take the opportunity to visit a different church or to view the artwork. On one of these occasions, I visited the single gallery museum directly behind the basilica of St Francis that holds the Perkins collection. Near the door of the gallery was an exhibition cabinet containing a blue painted cross. In the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, painted crosses were common in this region of Italy. Some of them were painted by artists who had migrated from Syria, and all of them show a clear Byzantine influence. Most of them were commissioned, especially in Franciscan churches, to hang directly above a free-standing altar. A good number survive and can be viewed today in churches and museums. Some of these painted crosses are what are known as *historiated* crosses because they, like Jennifer's Icon of Saint Francis, have painted panels, in this case, on either side of the depicted body of the Crucified. Most of the panels picture

scenes from the post-resurrection narratives of the Gospels - the women at the tomb, the Supper at Emmaus, and in some cases, the Ascension. In this way the painted surface of the painted cross presents the *whole* saving mystery of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection.

But let's return to the blue cross in the gallery in Assisi. The image caught my attention, and I was struck by its beauty. Depicted here was the crucified Christ, his arms outstretched on the cross in welcome and absolution. There are definite signs of suffering, but the body is not contorted as in later Gothic paintings of the subject but gently bent to suggest a 'z' shape, the first letter of the Greek word for 'life'. On either side are painted the figures of Mary, the Lord's mother, and St John, the beloved disciple. These two figures are painted in a way that seems as though they are looking out from the painted plane, their faces slightly turned to catch the eye of the viewer, and so to invite them to reflect on the saving work of God in Christ.

To cut a long story short, after that holiday, and during what was to be my last term working as Principal of the College, we started to think seriously about the reordering and decoration of Lower Church, and Jennifer was commissioned to paint an enlarged version of the Blue Cross to be fixed to the east wall of Lower Church. Jennifer sadly died of cancer soon after she painted the piece, but we were glad that Fr Peter CR had the opportunity to meet her in Assisi at the time when she was working on the project.

Mirfield continues to be a place of retreat, prayer, and formation for ministry, and my hope is that all who see this image will look and see the glory of the Cross, and, seeing that glory, will be conformed to the pattern of Christ's death and resurrection, and through God's grace grow more in the likeness of Christ.

**Christopher Irvine**

Christopher teaches for the Mirfield Liturgical Institute  
and is a member of the Society of the Resurrection.



# The MIRFIELD Liturgical Institute



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### ***For further information, please contact:***

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## The Lower Church at Mirfield



**N**ot all visitors to Mirfield get as far as the Lower Church, but it is not without interest. During the refurbishment 11 years ago the floor of the main church had to be removed because of structural problems. For a short while you could see down into Lower Church, arches piled on arches looking something like the Colosseum (the decking in the photo obscures the effect). It was also found we couldn't level the Lower Church floor due to structural elements in its altar step - its floor had to be raised instead. Its east-wall crucifix and figures, originally over a door in the Hostel in Leeds, now preside over another door in the College, their place in church being taken by the Blue Crucifix described in the previous article. The Blue Crucifix immediately draws your attention, its complexity a perfect foil to the simplicity of the rest of the chapel. In the sanctuary before it had stood a fine black slate altar that had also come from the Leeds Hostel. That went to be the altar of the



Romanian Orthodox church in Leeds, whose congregation had met for several years in Lower Church before outgrowing it. The present wooden altar, being moveable, gives the College and other users a flexible space, but is a fine piece in itself. It had previously been the High Altar of the Abbey of St Matthias in Trier, Germany, with whom our Community has enjoyed a covenant relationship and brotherhood for over 50 Years. When they refurbished their abbey church and installed a stone altar, they were anxious to find a good home for this one, which had been designed by Willy Weyres, a local architect, in 1967. We stepped up to the mark and went over with a van to collect it. If the Blue Crucifix connects us with St Francis, this altar can connect us to the emperor Constantine, who was made Emperor in York, and then went to establish his temporary capital in Trier. It's

*The floor being removed between Upper and Lower church*





*Lower Church altar in its previous home (looking west)*



good that a modern Christian symbol from there should have made the reverse journey to Yorkshire. And for over 40 years it was focus of all the celebrations of the Monastery and its parish, and of monastic professions.

Facing the altar is an unusual statue of Our Lady with the child Jesus, which was made at the end of the 1920s. The story in CR is that it was made by Sister Maribel CSMV of Wantage, but it doesn't seem her style. It was coloured by Armatrude de Grimston, a Yorkshire character whose unusual home at Sleights, sporting a lecture-room and a cockpit amongst its curiosities, was given to the OHP sisters at Whitby to become their Sleights retreat house. This statue too came from the Leeds Hostel chapel.

Finally, there is the statue of St Wilfred. He too was originally in the Hostel chapel in Leeds, and the story is that the College students used regularly to kidnap him, intrepid and ingenious Hostel students then finding ways to get him back.

While it is principally the College chapel, the Lower Church is also the worship-space for St Hild College and also the Diocesan School of Ministry (Mirfield Hub) who

gather once a month. It is also regularly used for weddings under the aegis of the parish priest, who then hands over to us to provide the reception in the College refectory and accommodation for the night - an important source of revenue that also helps create good relationships with local people.

The Lower Church has seen many changes over the years - when I first came here it had numerous altars, each with its own screen. Even before its present simplicity it was referred to among students as the "bargain basement", but it is in reality not negligible as an eloquent witness to Christian worship and prayer, a place to find God in.

### **George CR**



*St Wilfred*

## Mass Practice

*Watching students practice the Holy Week Liturgy,  
Mirfield, March 2022*

Here, self-conscious in gesture and word,  
They run through, awkwardly, for the first time,  
Those ancient rites which make a suffering Lord

Present to his broken world. Shy-bold, they mime  
Events whose meaning takes a lifetime to understand,  
Brave-awed steps on the rungs of a ladder they are yet  
to climb.

Do they know how much will be exacted as they fulfil  
the Lord's command,  
"As often as ye do this, do it in memory of me";  
That to stand in His place at His altar is a demand

*Costing not less than everything*; that if they are to free,  
By the power of His cross, a fallen world from the power  
of the sword,  
The fruit is only found on branches grafted to the same  
tree?

**Fr Richard Duffield**  
30<sup>th</sup> March 2022

## Visit to The Mirfield Collection, University of York

The Archivist, Novices and Librarian recently made a trip to York, arranged with Sarah Griffin (Rare Books & York Minster Librarian) on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> March. It was a trip of two halves, to deposit important archives and volumes, but also to visit the fantastic Mirfield Collection and to see how it is looked after with top-of-the-line temperature-controlled stores, library management systems and lots of Librarians and Archivists!

The day was super-promising, weather checked (no rain the app said, but alas it did!), car loaded with collection items, Brethren, Librarian and packed lunches! After an hour's drive we arrived and were taken into the bowels of the building where the temperature-controlled stores are located, and given a very informative tour.

Fr Charlie commented that 'he was very impressed with how carefully the books were arranged, grouped according to height, for optimum preservation, and also with the electronic stacks!' The facilities at York are top-of-the-line in terms of collection care and for researchers. This is very reassuring, as we had deposited precious items of note from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries for safekeeping at York that very morning, including:





*The Works of the Reverend and Learned Henry Hammond, D. D. (1680s) – Vol.I, II, IV.* Henry Hammond was a pioneer Anglican theologian, English churchman who supported the Royalist cause during the English Civil War.

*Jesu Christi D.N. Novum testamentum, sive Novum foedus : cuius Graeco contextui respondent interpretationes duae : una, vetus: altera, noua, Theodori Bezae, diligenter ab eo recognita (1592)* - The Beza Bible New Testament in Greek and Latin.

The Mirfield Collection was created when many pre-1800 books were deposited at the University in 1973 on permanent loan from the Community, primarily for collection care. The collection contains over 2000 books, mostly printed before 1800, many on the continent. Although the books are predominantly theological, there are many interesting works in other subjects. The library includes books from the Wilberforce family including the abolitionist William.

Sarah was able to show us items from our collection,

- a volume from 1492, *Prima pars operum Iohannis Gerson* (Vol.I) This volume contains the works of Jean Charlier de Gerson (1363-1429) who was a prominent theologian and Chancellor of the University of Paris
- a bible from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, *Sanctus Hieronymus interpres Biblie* (1512). With hand-coloured woodcuts. (see picture overleaf)



We were glad to hear that the collection is used by many researchers, and all items are catalogued. Postulant Tom's view expressed how we all felt: 'the collection is clearly a wealth of obscure treasures and I am pleased CR has been able to entrust it to experts who not only take great care of it but also make it publicly available'.

After a jaw-dropping visit to the book controlled store, we were shown the Borthwick Institute of Archives store by Sally Anne Shearn, Archivist. Here is a considerable amount of material from the Community of the Resurrection archive, with papers and photographs from individual brethren, including Walter Frere, Trevor Huddleston and Neville Figgis, amongst others. The archives include letters, notebooks, sermons etc. Archivists have catalogued all the archive material given them over the years, which must have been a huge undertaking! Charlie noted, 'It was very helpful to have some frame of reference for the archive itself and the people maintaining it, should we ever wish to consult it, and it was strange to think that our own notebooks and papers might someday end up in an archive!' Charlie added that someday he will come back to look at archives of Justin Pearce CR, who was beetle-obsessed: who knows – there may be beetle specimens still crawling around in his archive boxes!

Br Steven had carefully chosen material from Ronald Haynes CR and Simon Holden CR to deposit with the CR archives that morning, and these will be



catalogued and available to use by researchers too. It is difficult not to be impressed by the collection as a whole, and it is a superb resource for The Oxford Movement, the Community's involvement in Anti-Apartheid, individual brethren, and the history of CR.

On our return, full of awe, we wondered how some of the items had ended up in the collection – of course primarily brought to the Community by brethren, but with some it's a mystery. Both collections can be accessed by members of the public. More information can be found on the University of York website under The Mirfield Collection.

On a related note, the Community's Library with over 60,000 volumes in Mirfield can also be accessed by visitors and researchers. To see what we have, the library catalogue can be searched here: <http://heritage.mirfield.org.uk/>. If you would like to support the Community Library, including our efforts to care for the collection, please Sponsor A Shelf – for £5 a month you can help us ensure the library lives on for many more years.

To visit, volunteer or Sponsor A Shelf please get in touch with Anisha ([achristison@mirfield.org.uk](mailto:achristison@mirfield.org.uk)).



**Anisha Christison**  
CR Librarian

## A Monastic Library

People who visit our Community are often astonished to find how much of our large building is given over to books. There are, in fact, around 60,000 books. Do we need all this? Books today are expensive. Maintaining them is expensive. They need professional care and repair. We need increasing amounts of IT support, which is expensive. Our Community is small and does not have the number of scholars it once had. Much of the information people find in books can be found on the internet. Do we need to continue maintaining our library at its present, or even a higher, level? We believe we must but our readers may like to share in our thinking and consider whether to add their support.

A monastic community needs deep roots. It exists in a culture which is historically orientated. It is part of a tradition, not a tradition which is ossified, but one which is alive and growing, like a deep river winding its way through a continent.

At the same time, a monastery needs to engage responsibly and thoughtfully with the society around it. It is called upon to support, critique, challenge and inspire the society and the Church of which it is a part. This cannot be done with simplistic questions and superficial knowledge. It needs to be well informed, carefully thought through and considered in an atmosphere and context of prayer.

The whole history of the Church is the soil in which the monastery grows, but monastic life itself was formed first in the patristic era (2<sup>nd</sup> century onwards) and that era continues to be particularly important in the self-understanding of the monk. He needs to look to what has gone before if he is to understand what is required of him today.

Young monks, especially those entering a community like ours, in this day and age, tend to be thoughtful, questing souls, looking for large answers to questions, like the environmental crisis, or the apparent decline of democracy in the West, which affect all humankind. They want to find other people like themselves asking the same questions and willing to search together for answers that really mean something. They want a monastery in which the intellect is respected and fed, though kept in balance with the life of prayer and community.

In this way, a monastic library is rather like the monastery church:

- It stands as a witness to the importance of this intellectual search, this attempt to engage seriously with the mysteries of God;
- It witnesses to the antiquity of the monastic tradition, spanning the whole of the Church's history, since the monastic life is actually rooted in the Scriptures themselves;



- It provides a resource for the monk or nun, especially the one who needs to read widely and deeply in order to make their formation into the community a strong and secure one;
- It is a place of conversation, with authors and readers of the past, and it sets up conversations in the future;
- Digitised libraries and internet platforms may provide huge amounts of information, useful in itself, though not always easy to use effectively. Physical libraries are contemplative places. They encourage that slow, thoughtful engagement with information that gives a monastery its likeness to a large deep pool of water, quiet, calm, full of riches yet also helping people to find the simple, basic truths of life, the ones concerning God and the people he created and loves.

Many of the books in our library are those found in any theological library. Some, however, are unique. We need also to fill gaps in our library, especially in the patristic and biblical sections, with books which are quite expensive. If we want a library which is not largely concerned with ephemeral issues, we will need to pay for it.

Here is another part of our problem. Is it right to spend a lot of money maintaining a library that only a handful of people use? Will many of the books we buy not even be read? Some of our students use our library well as do a few brethren. We would love a far wider selection of people to come here and study. Yet we have to be careful. We can't afford to staff the library in a way that will enable much of this. Those who use the library need to be trustworthy (it's amazing how many books go missing from a library!) and able to find their own way around. There is the added problem that Mirfield is too far from most places to make it possible to pop in for an hour or two.

Two possible ways of meeting this problem present themselves:

Clergy, or indeed anyone whom we know could get into the habit of a reading day once a month and spend the whole day here. That way they would get to know the library and learn how best to use it to their own advantage.

People coming to stay for several days, combining retreat with serious reading or writing. This would actually help us as we need to increase the income from our Guest House.

Over the decades I have known the Community, many people have done one of these two things. They value it and they enrich our community life. It would not be a new venture; we would simply like more of the same. Would any of you readers like to try it?

**Nicolas CR**

## In a Car with Desmond Tutu

*The article about +Desmond Tutu in the last issue showed a photo of the Archbishop getting into the car of Alan and Jane Speight (Alan was until recently the College Treasurer). Alan has sent us this background information:*

In 2011 CR organized a vocations event, and as the CR church was being re-ordered at that time we used the parish church of Christ the King next door for the service, and I was tasked with driving +Desmond there the short distance from the House front door. A distance measured in yards not miles!

With the Bishop of Wakefield in the front, his crook between us extending to the back seats, +Desmond and his son in law in the back, we prepared to set off. As ever, we were running late and as I started the car +Desmond insisted we stop until he had said a prayer. I did point out that we were only going round the corner and I was not known as a reckless driver, but he insisted. I later read his biography from which I learned that +Desmond always said a prayer at the start of his first car journey of the day.

Jane and I were driving to London in that car some months later. We were in lane three travelling at around 70mph when a tyre blew out. We safely glided to the hard shoulder with no other cars around. We have always felt that car was indeed blessed.

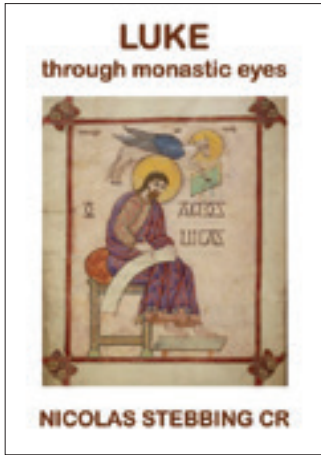
**Alan Speight**



## Book Reviews

**St Luke's Gospel Through Monastic Eyes.** *Nicolas Stebbing CR.*

Mirfield Publications. 2022. £6.00



Fr Nicolas seeks to describe Luke's message about what it means to follow Christ, praying more and living the gospel more. Though he writes particularly from a monastic point of view, the book is a good read and applicable to every Christian.

In the first chapter, Fr Nicolas writes of Luke's concern for forgiveness and its reception through humble penitence. He draws particularly on the parable of the prodigal son even though the son's penitence is somewhat false. He is driven home by hunger more than love. In monastic life there is a similar movement, leaving behind the world in order to seek God. Yet, like the prodigal we find

we are on a journey of discovery, finding out over many years what contrition really means. A monk spends his life discovering his weaknesses and sins; yet this is not a journey into misery but one of freedom and joy. This monastic life is modelled upon a teacher-disciple relationship not unlike Jesus with his disciples. The central aspect in monastic life, therefore, is life lived together, a life willingly letting go ill feelings, a life that grows out of selfishness and become centred on the other. Fr Nicolas argues that both the prodigal son and the elder brother struggled with self-centredness. Reference is made here to the Ignatian Exercises, Julian of Norwich and works on Bernard of Clairvaux.

The second chapter shows how Luke emphasises that Christian worship is rooted in the Hebrew background, centred around the temple, and brings the ordinary or poor people to share in the promises of God. It starts with Zachariah, a simple priest, advanced in age and childless and shows how great leaders came out of similar childless families: Isaac -Sarah; Joseph -Rachel; and Samuel -Hannah. Jesus will do the same. Luke shows how God cares for the poor, the weak and the powerless. The Benedictus celebrates election, deliverance, covenant, and law as key features in both Hebrew and Christian religions. Fr Nicolas relates these features to monastic life, as one is called, forgiven, taken into a covenantal relationship, and follows a rule of life. The monastic chapel is a centre for prayer, praise and listening to God's word;

like the priest Zachariah, they are there simply to worship God. Fr Nicolas challenges the religious about poverty, to be people called to follow Christ without clutter. I concur with such a challenge in my religious life. Sharing with the poor brings joy as we share in God's love. The Benedictine way of life seeks to see God in every moment and to do everything with moderation.

In the third and fourth chapter, Fr Nicolas argues that Jesus' mission strategy is simply to preach the good news to the poor. As he preached to them, he mingled with them. Christian missionaries likewise tried living the gospel they preached of the love of Christ with compassion, establishing schools and healthcare institutions.

The fifth to the seventh chapters deal with the life together, which in religious life is not just about praying together but sharing everything in common, affirming our relationship with God. It is a life centred on sharing at the Eucharist Table and the refectory table. The day's chores are done with humility. Monasteries provide space for silence that enables listening to God. Some weaknesses are inevitable in us all, but Christ came to redeem the weak and powerless and to bring about a just and equal society.

Fr Nicolas concludes with personal experience encountered in his calling. I commend him for this book that casts light both on St Luke's gospel and the monastic life.

**Joshua Musiyambiri MHS**

### **A Life-Long Springtime:**

**The Life and Teaching of Father George Congreve SSJE**, Luke Miller,  
Sacristy Press, Durham. £24.99. ISBN: 978-1789591989



I seem to recall that the author's intention was to have *A Life-Long Springtime* published in 2018 to mark the centenary of the death of Father Congreve SSJE but finding a publisher proved to be a challenge. Eventually Father Luke Miller found a publisher willing to publish his book, which made its debut in January 2022. *A Life-long Springtime*, takes its title from a quote of Father Congreve who wrote that the Christian experiences “a lifelong springtime because the truth that is in us cannot be touched by old age”. He expanded on this by saying fundamentally the source of joy in old age is participation in Christ, for what participates in

eternity is assimilated to the incorruptible, and old age is a renewed or rather re-experienced childhood.

Luke Miller gives us a detailed account of George Congreve's life and teaching. He was in his late thirties when he joined the Society of S. John the Evangelist and professed in 1875 at the age of forty. The book is comprised of over 242 pages with twenty black and white photographs. Congreve's bibliography of published works is impressive which includes some fifty-six Papers published in the *Cowley Evangelist*, introductions or prefaces contributed to published works, unpublished materials and sources. There are footnotes and references including those of Mildred V. Woodgate whose own book *Father Congreve of Cowley* was published in 1956. She was also author of *Father Benson of Cowley*, the founder of SSJE. Miss Woodgate died in 1978 at the age of 92 and had been a member of CR's Fraternity of the Resurrection for many years.

Luke Miller expands his extensive research, where Miss Woodgate's book does not go into detail. He sets Father Congreve's life in the context of developments in the age in which he lived through political, ecclesiastical, international and intellectual developments. His early life was growing up in a loving and supportive family surrounded by several siblings to whom he was especially close, though he had a special bond with a younger sister who would later offer herself as a member of the Sisterhood of S. John Baptist, Clewer, and would influence his own decision to join Cowley.

During Congreve's noviciate, he observed that brethren came and went from the Mission House, and he knew nothing much about them. He found the atmosphere an unfriendly place, mutual friendship was certainly not encouraged and community recreation was not an exercise in recreation or community. Congreve was not alone in his criticism of the lack of brotherly love and affection.

Father Benson's approach was one of austerity that was personal, emotional and physical. He preached 'deadness to the world' and expected his brethren to adhere to this principle. Congreve was however able to make lasting friendships with certain brethren including fellow novice Basil Maturin and Philip Waggett. Father O'Neill, a co-founder of the Society, was the one professed Father who showed sympathy and kindness to Congreve in the first difficult months and although he had doubts about the life, it was in the kindness and cheerful friendship shown him that he found unquestionable light, where charity shone. Congreve persevered and made his profession. He was appointed in charge of the lay-brothers with whom he developed good relations, including Br Maynard and in particular Br John, with whom he corresponded between Cowley and Cape Town.



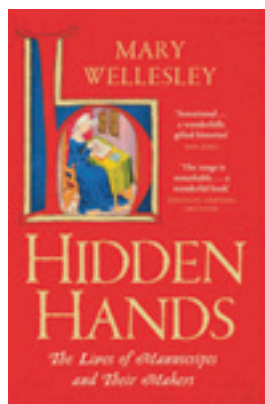
Congreve believed that friendships were both valuable and important and part of the Religious vocation, which Benson did not share. Relations broke down between the American Fathers and Benson, which precipitated the crisis that followed in 1882. Although Congreve did not see eye to eye with some aspects of the way Benson was directing the Society, nevertheless Benson appointed him Assistant Superior in 1884. Six years later to avoid another crisis within the Society that would have had dire consequences for the Society's future, Congreve had persuaded Benson to resign as Superior-General. Luke Miller records Congreve's relationship with his siblings, nephews and great-nephews especially during the Great and Boer Wars. He speaks of the morality of war as a justified means for combating evil. If the war is against an anti-Christian evil, then repentance is required at home. Our repentance will show which side we have chosen. The only way to deal with the sins, and therefore to rise to the self-sacrifice needed to pursue the war properly, is "national repentance served by private contrition: except by that link with God that restores our spiritual life and energy—our own conversion-- we cannot reach to help any other souls."

Father Congreve outlived Keble, Pusey and Newman including thirteen members of his own community, among them Father Benson, who died in January 1915, and five months later Basil Maturin, who joined the Catholic Church in 1897 and would meet a sudden and tragic death. Congreve was certainly a man of the moment and from his own experience of more than forty years spent as a Mission Priest of the Society of S. John the Evangelist, Luke Miller reveals some of Congreve's own thoughts, knowledge and teaching. His many letters to laypeople, priests, religious were published along with his books and pamphlets that show how relevant his spiritual writings and ideas were in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Congreve's contribution has something to offer us today in our own century even after their publication more than a century ago.

**Steven Haws CR**

## **Hidden Hands, the lives of manuscripts and their makers.**

*Mary Wellesley* Riverrun, 2021. £12.99. ISBN: 978-1529400946



Amongst the early printed books from the Community deposited in York University's Mirfield Collection back in 1973 is a 1475 edition of St. Augustine's *City of God*, published by Nicholas Jenson in Venice. A similar copy of this desirable incunable was auctioned by Sotheby's in April 2021 for some \$18,750. Yet while we may marvel at the value placed on such an early treasure it would only rate a place in the epilogue of this splendid new survey of medieval manuscripts, analysed by Mary Wellesley.

Dr. Wellesley gives us a wonderfully accessible overview of the world of scholars and scribes from the millennium before the printed book came onto the scene. She tells the story of the rediscovery of the St. Cuthbert Gospel in 1104, by which time the book was already some 400 years old. We meet well known texts like the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Winchester Bible, and the Luttrell Psalter from the 14<sup>th</sup>. These works contain magnificent illustrations of bible stories along with marginalia containing scenes of everyday medieval life. However, the author delves a long way further into each chosen text, illuminating the lives of their relatively unknown scribes and authors and bringing their shadowy existence into sharper relief. She makes efforts to demonstrate the world of the medieval anchoress, including the Revelations of Julian of Norwich, whose restored church I was delighted to worship in last September. But she also recognises the bawdy nature of much medieval writing – the Welsh poetry of Gwerful Mechain leaves little to the imagination for example. From the latter days of the manuscript volume she gives space to the prayer book owned by Henry VIII, complete with some annotations in the royal hand.

This is a delightful book. Medieval manuscripts may appear difficult and inaccessible to our eyes but Dr. Wellesley has provided a wonderfully chatty, yet scholarly, exposition of her subject. The book is excellently illustrated and comes with a detailed bibliography and notes for further reading. In her acknowledgments she quotes the Earliest Life of St. Gregory – “ (Do not) nibble with critical teeth at this work of ours which has been diligently twisted into shape by love rather than by knowledge”. Certainly no critical teeth from this reviewer, rather a case of “taste and see that the Lord is good”!

**Bill Hines**



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Please direct all materials, enquiries and comments to the editor, Fr George Guiver CR, at [gguiver@mirfield.org.uk](mailto:gguiver@mirfield.org.uk)  
Articles for consideration should be sent at least 5 weeks before the issue date.

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[www.mirfield.org.uk](http://www.mirfield.org.uk)

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