

AVE

The Magazine of

the Society of Mary



£2.00

Presentation of Our Lady, 2014

The Superior-General writes

Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Grace, Nettuno, 2014

EACH EVENING during the May Festival, a long and sinuous Procession begins from the Piazza before San Giovanni church and winds itself round the narrow streets of the Old Town. It is a Penitential Procession and the Rosary is said, interspersed with Marian songs. All carry lighted candles.

On return to the Piazza an Altar has been set up on the steps before the Church and the Clergy and others leading the Procession take up their places around. Slowly, slowly, those who have taken part



assemble until the Piazza is crowded with thousands holding lighted candles below the festival lights strung from the buildings and the Church

Silence falls as the Sanctuary Bell rings. The Blessed Sacrament, in a vast Monstrance, is brought from the West Door.

The crowd falls to its knees as the Monstrance is placed on the Altar. Benediction begins.

The theme of this year's Festival is **Hope in Christ**. This Hope is seen as represented by the image of Our Lady at the Foot of the Cross. As part of Benediction, I was asked to preach a short Homily on this theme and image:

Together with Love and Faith, Hope is one of the three great callings given to us as Christians. To have Hope enables us to go on striving for the future. To have Hope keeps our minds and our lives focussed on what is to come. To have Hope gives us a sense of purpose and a clear goal to achieve.



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In everyday life we hope for many things. For a good and worthwhile job; for happiness and health; that our soccer team will win the European Cup; for our family wellbeing.

Within this general hope in life is our Christian Hope. This kind of Hope is clear and it is certain. It does not lack focus of detail. It is not a vague kind of Hope. Our Hope as Christians is very, very certain. It is clear and has a definite purpose.

This Hope is all these positive things because our Hope is in Jesus Christ our Blessed Lord.

Christ Jesus IS our Hope. On Him we have set our hearts and our eyes; on Him we have set our minds and our purpose; on Him we rely completely.

When we see our Blessed Lady at the Foot of the Cross on the Hill of Calvary on Good Friday, there we have the perfect image of Hope.

As Mary stood by the Cross, all seemed to have been lost. All hope seemed to have gone. All looked HOPELESS. Yet, even then, Our Lady does not lose hope. She is Our Lady of Hope. Her Hope in Her Son remains sure. In the face of hopelessness, She continues in Hope.

On Easter Morning, Mary's Hope is fulfilled. Jesus is Risen from the dead. In Him all Hope is restored. Hope is rewarded by sight.

And this image of Our Lady of Hope, at the Foot of the Cross, must be OUR inspiration. If all seems hopeless for us, we much look at our Lady and, with Her, continue to trust in God's Will; continue to pray that He will answer us in accordance with His purposes.

When our hope for world peace; when our hope for the unity of the Church and people within it seems most hopeless – then it is our Christian Duty to hold onto hope. To pray and to work hopefully.

Here as we kneel before the Blessed Sacrament, held before us, held above us in Benediction, we are kneeling with Our Blessed Lady, as it were, at the Foot of the Cross of our Lord. As She gazed in Hope at that wounded, crucified Body, let us gaze with like Hope on the Sacramental Body of Christ.

And let our prayer to Mary – Our Lady of Hope – be this: “Mary, give us your strength, hold us in Your immaculate Heart; share with us Your Hope in Jesus Your Son”. Amen.

Live translation of the Homily into Italian made for short sentences and paragraphs, which seemed to suit the direct simplicity of the



moment. When Bishop Norman Banks gave Benediction, the devotion of the crowd was profound.

By way of complete contrast, once the Blessed Sacrament has been returned to the Church, the rising excitement was clear. A great surge to enter the Church. The

expertise and experience of the members of the Confraternity of our Lady of Grace controlled the movement and soon we were before the enthroned image of Our Lady.

Then began the great Hymn of the Confraternity. A hundred, deep, male voices raised, singing the ancient words of love of Our Lady Mother of God:

Madre Tutta Santa – O Most Blessed Mother, O Mother of Our Lord: the earth eternally sings to thee a song of Love.

The Tenor Solo arching and evocative: *Santa Madre di Dio, porta del Cielo, ascolta tu pietosa la preghiera - Blessed Mother of God, Gateway to Heaven: hear our prayer O compassionate one.*

Then the slow fall of feet moving up to the Image; personal prayers being offered; infants lifted to touch the foot of the image; the Rosary quietly recited, well on into the night.

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✦ Robert Ladds – *Superior-General*

A Letter from the Chaplain-General

My dear friends,

This time last year I was writing to you to ask individuals and wards to help with funding for the young people who would be going on Pilgrimage to Lourdes in August: I hardly imagined then what a transforming experience it would be for all who



went, both young and old and how much we would all gain and learn from that pilgrimage. The programme was deliberately organised so that most of the events were shared, but the youth group had their own programme, with games and discussions at the Youth Village each evening and a Vigil at the Grotto on the Monday evening. Whilst the adults explored the bars and restaurants of the town on Tuesday at Saint Bertrand de Comminges, they went to the Roman remains in the valley and held a prayer vigil at the 5th Century Basilica of Saint Just en Valcabrière. Whilst the rest celebrated a Mass and visited the Museum of the Shrine of Our Lady of Bétharram on Thursday afternoon, the young people visited the Caves nearby. At the International Mass on the Wednesday, they bought up many of the Gifts at the Offertory and provided an English petition during the intercessions. At the Torchlight Procession on Thursday evening, they were the torchbearers to keep the end of the Procession in order. And, to the benefit of us all, the crowning glory was that they had written their own meditations and led all the pilgrims for the Stations of the Cross. I am very grateful to all who helped to make to possible for them to go.

With reference to Pilgrimage, I must let you know that next year our Society Pilgrimage will again go to Loreto, Subiaco and Rome, from 15th to 22nd September. I do not yet have a price or further details, but if you are interested, please contact me (if possible, by e-mail) and I shall send them to you as soon as I know them, hopefully by the end of November. We intend to go to Lourdes again in 2016, from 1st – 5th August (and to take a youth group!): more details in due course.

Our thanks go to Fr Rodney Marshall for a warm welcome in Barnsley at the October Devotion and to Dom Damian Humphries OSB for a profound and moving homily. I am very grateful to Fr Marshall and to all his people for the organisation. We have had some discussion, at the Council and Executive meetings, on the nature of the October Devotion and whether it should be a 'Northern Festival', intended to attract people from all over the North of England, or a 'local' festival which moves round and becomes a celebration for the parish and those who are able to come, from near or far. It is partly my fault because I began the tradition in 1979 when I was at Our Lady and S. Thomas in Manchester! We cannot easily make it a national festival as there are so many other events on the Saturdays in October, but

agree that it should continue to move from place to place to spread the word and work of the Society to different areas. So that is what we shall do. I shall let you know the details in the next issue of AVE.

The May Devotion next year will be on Saturday 2nd May at S. Silas. Mercifully, it is not so soon after Easter as this year so the last minute planning should not be quite as frantic! But I do ask you to make a note of the date now and to try to be there. It is a wonderful celebration of our life as a Society, by which we witness to our faith and show our support for one another.

With my love and blessing,



Fr Graeme Rowlands, *Chaplain-General*

P.S. We have just heard that Fr Philip North has been appointed Bishop of Burnley and our prayers and love go with him as he prepares for his Consecration on February 2nd.

The May Devotion, 2015

The May Devotion will take place on Saturday 2nd May, beginning with a Solemn Mass at 12 noon. We need the following help on the day:

- Servers for the Mass and Procession and for Vespers etc at Holy Trinity: please let Fr Rowlands know **by Saturday 25th April** that you are willing to help and bring your own cassock with you on the day.
- Stewards / sidesmen for the Mass and for Vespers.
- Serving wine and drinks at Lunch.

Please remember that the Procession will take 20 minutes: if you cannot walk that far, there is a bus which will take you almost door to door: more details on the day.

**2015 – PILGRIMAGE TO
LORETO, SUBIACO AND ROME**

Tuesday 15th – Tuesday 22nd September 2015.

Full details in the next issue of Ave.

2016 – PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES

1st – 5th August 2016.

**DEDICATION AND BLESSING OF
THE RESTORED SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF LINCOLN**

The Dedication and Blessing took place within Evensong on the Feast of the Visitation of Our Lady to Saint Elizabeth, Saturday 31 May 2014. This historic occasion was the culmination of an aspiration taking over five years of planning and devotion. Restoring Our Lady to her rightful place in this great Cathedral and City dedicated to Her has been a widely ecumenical endeavour, receiving particular support from the local Roman Catholic community. The Society of Mary has been privileged to support the work, both by central funding and through the gifts of individual members

During the afternoon invited guests, representing those who have supported the project, gathered in the ancient Library of the Cathedral. After words of appreciation and thanks from Canon Gavin Kirk, who has masterminded the project, Professor Peter Burman, Arts and Heritage Advisor for the work, gave an illustrated overview of the Restoration project. He traced the development of the project since 2008, when restoration of the Shrine was proposed as part of realising the Cathedral's potential

The earlier restoration of the Shrine of S Hugh of Lincoln had been an historic moment and further developments are being considered relating to his burial place. Focus on the role of Our Lady of Lincoln had been expressed by Professor David Stocker as Mary “extending Her protective cloak over the City and Cathedral”, pointing to the fact that a great number

of ancient images of Mary already existed in the building. Notably, in the glass in the restored Shrine, depicting Mary as Queen of Heaven and on a roof boss showing Her Coronation. From the outset the restored Image of Our Lady had been seen as both “a liturgical work of art and a focus for prayer and pilgrimage”.

The full realisation of the aspiration had, he said, only recently become apparent. The polychrome work on the Image having been completed only hours before the Dedication. The result has been described as giving the Image “a human and jewel-like presence”.

The artist and sculptor chosen for the work is Aidan Hart; himself a member of the Orthodox Church and an Icon writer who had worked and studied at Mount Athos Monastery in Greece for some two years. His talk gave a detailed description of his thinking and devotion during the creation of the Image and its relationship with the ancient and precise traditions of icon making.

He sees those who have worked to plan and provided for the image as being “fellow pilgrims” and now that the “work of the chisel and brush” is completed all that remains to fulfil the aspiration for the restored Shrine and pilgrimage “is to pray”.

Most striking in Hart’s presentation was the interplay between the practical details that he, as sculptor and artist, had had to deal with and the relationship between these and the spiritual dimensions of his work. He spoke of the decision, first, to use stone and then the desire to use local, Lincolnshire Limestone. The relationship built with the quarry owner in selecting the material and his subsequent decision to make a gift of the stone. The intention to use, in icon writing tradition, earth pigments and egg tempora for the colouring. The great difficulty he had had in getting the blue of Our Lady’s Cloak and the colour of Her Royal Slippers exactly right. With the pigment being made of the semi-precious stone Azurite, deciding to take £500-worth of pigment off and to start again the day before the Dedication!

Throughout the work, central for Hart had been the words of S. Athanasius: “God was made Man that man might become God” – the Theosis – the process for Christians coming into union with God through Christ. In this process all created matter is involved. Because “the Word was made flesh” it is possible that “prayer and praise can be made in stone and colour as well as in words”. Thus, his “single vision” has been to “make a door between earth and heaven”. As an Icon Writer, he has not signed the

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Image, because his “work is now completed and done”; the “last touch of the chisel and brush on stone” has taken place; all that remains to be done is “for the Pilgrims to pray and to love our Lady to bits!”

Evensong began with the *Deus in adiutorium meum intende* from the 1610 *Vespers of the Blessed Virgin Mary* by Monteverdi; the voices and baroque trumpets resounding through the vast Cathedral. The Hymn within the Office, *Hail, O star that pointest* was intoned to Gregorian Chant; the Magnificat was to the *Collegium Regale* setting by John Tavener, as relating to Aidan Hart’s Orthodox tradition. Parsons’ *Ave Maria* was the Anthem.

Following the Office, a great Procession to the Shrine was formed. The Bishop of Lincoln dedicated the Image and Shrine by prayer and with Holy Water and Incense. As the Choir sang the *Regina Cæli* by Herbert Howells, the Bishop lit and offered a Votive Candle; followed by the Cathedral Canons, the visiting and ecumenical Clergy and then by the members of the large congregation attending

An historic and important day.

As a Society, we owe thanks to Father Stephen Jones, former Member of the General Council, who not only alerted us to the opportunity of involvement in the Restoration project, but has kept us in touch as well as enthusing local Members to become involved and contribute financially.

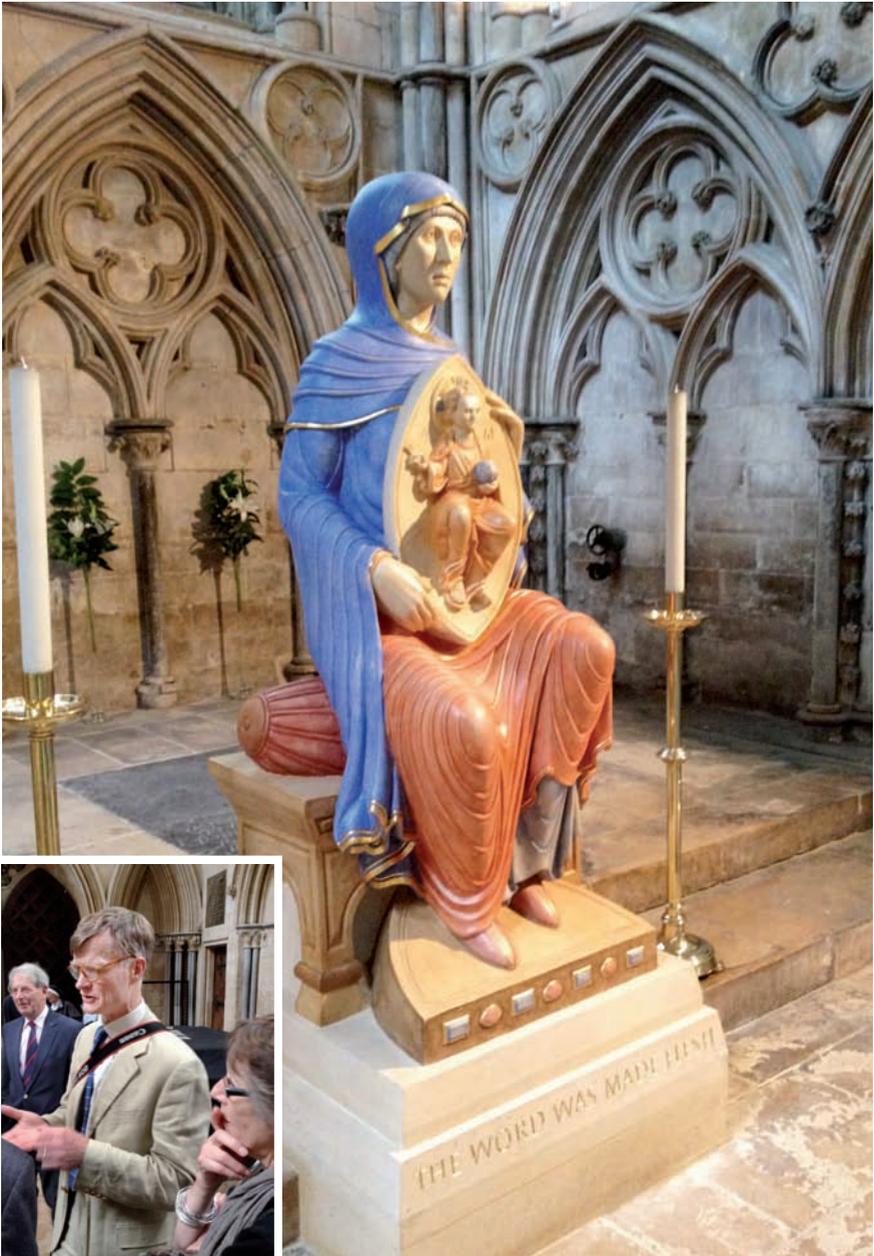
Thanks also to Canon Gavin Kirk for his invitation to our Society to become close associated with work and to take a formal part in the Dedication and Blessing. We offer him, too, our congratulations on the achievement of so important and significant an achievement

A characteristic of the Shrine of Our Lady of Lincoln was, and is, its being visible along the full length of the Cathedral immediately the Pilgrim enters at the West Door. The more than life-size Image being instantly visible and compelling. The eyes of Mary are raised, pondering, looking into the distance; welcoming and drawing forward. Once drawn close, the eyes of Christ, whom She holds, are upon the Pilgrim.

It is hoped that Members of our Society will make the Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Lincoln and so be a part in achieving Adrian Hart’s wish that we “love our Lady to bits”.

Fr Stephen Jones and members of the Lincoln Ward wished to thank the General Council of The Society for their enthusiasm and support for establishing the statue and most particularly to Bishop Robert Ladds.

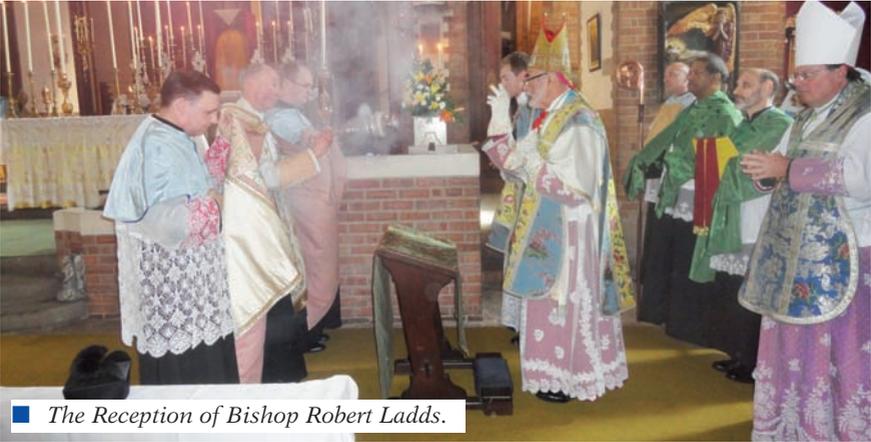
n.b: Please also refer to the event last year in Lincoln Cathedral described on pages 18 and 19 of the last (Annunciationtide) *Ave*.



■ *The Statue of Our Lady of Lincoln. Inset: The Sculptor, Dr Aidan Hart.*

THE MAY DEVOTION and AGM was held in the Parish of S. Silas the Martyr and Holy Trinity north-west London on Saturday 3rd May.

The Superior-General was the Principal Celebrant at the Concelebrated Mass in Saint Silas, which was followed by a street procession of witness. Appropriate hymns were sung, accompanied by a small brass band.



■ *The Reception of Bishop Robert Ladds.*



■ *Bishop Robert Ladds (Superior-General), centre, with Bishop Norman Banks and Simon Cuff (Deacon), who on 22nd June was Ordained to the Priesthood by the Bishop of Fulham in Christ the Saviour Ealing, where he is serving his Title.*





■ *The children who accompanied the Statue arriving at Holy Trinity Church.*



THE ANNUAL CAKE

It is now a tradition at the May Devotion to have a cake which is created by Ruby Marshall and is raffled to help fund work with children.



THE MAY DEVOTION SERMON

The preacher was Fr Simon Morris, Parish Priest of St Mary's, Tottenham.

What might Mary's response to the Annunciation have been these days? Updated her Facebook status? Checked how much child benefit is? Asked herself, 'What about my career?'. Been filled with fear as she contemplated the prospect of joining that awful Mums and toddlers group at the synagogue?

The fact that she doesn't do any of these things or indeed any of the things more likely is a tribute to her wisdom, her trust in God at work in unexpected ways. There's something of the prophet about the Mother of God as she speaks God's praises into a situation where panic might have ensued. This full-of-grace woman can discern that this is indeed good news, glad tidings.

God can also be at work, of course, even when the news is a little less obviously good. So often the tendency to whinge, moan or criticise can impede the discernment of the power of God. I want to examine briefly three examples where the Christian world could be given to whinging and where maybe reassessment is needed so that we can see God-at-work:

1. From the *Seattle Times* 2010: "Jewellery trends: Rosary beads aren't just for praying anymore." Shock horror from many in the Catholic world after celebrities and even David Beckham took to the streets or boxing rings or cat walks wearing rosaries. And yet, might this not be a means of grace? An opportunity for us to teach about prayer, God's Spirit, the intercession of the saints. Rather than moan about this, we would do better to ask if our churches have opportunities to pray the rosary or literature available showing how to pray one. Are rosaries given to people in the Church, maybe as Sunday School prizes or Confirmation gifts so that they're kept in the realm of faith?

2. More shock horror and potential for complaining from the sidelines came as another assault on our religious heritage occurred (and I quote from *The Sun*) **“Nurse faces sack over ‘dangerous’ 1-inch cross.”** ‘Persecution!’ came the cry but what an opportunity! For too long have people been buying and wearing crosses without having to give much thought “to that little man” who hangs there. Let’s see this as an opportunity to preach the Cross in to such situations; the salvation we know through it and through the Son of God hanging there. Let’s speak of God’s love in a way we don’t normally get to.

3. Finally, and for even longer a problem, people working on a Sunday. It’s a problem all our churches are facing and have by-and-large failed to come to terms with over the past decades. But rather than write off so many people who do work or simply blame this aspect of modern life let’s again see God at work. There are members of the congregation at S. Mary’s Lansdowne Road who book a holiday so they can come to Mass more regularly than they would otherwise. I am sure the same is true in the other parishes represented here. A church where people cannot simply skip to Church because there’s nothing better to do must surely be a stronger Church? Maybe it can provoke a richer diet of midweek Masses; a greater range of Sunday worship times. Let’s inspire people to make a choice for God, difficult choices that require sacrifice and can speak of the importance of God in their lives. The outside world would look at this and be amazed.

The absence of complaint in Mary’s response to the news of the Incarnation teaches us something else: Don’t think God works in distinct categories. Don’t **find** yourself thinking that this seems like a bad situation and therefore God cannot be at work. Don’t believe that God is only at work in what seems to be good and wholesome. The witness of humanity as recorded in Scripture doesn’t match up to this - think of Jonah running as far away from what God asked him to do; the upheaval in Ruth’s life as she sought to be faithful; don’t think the call of the apostles brought instant joy and certainty. An act of faith was needed; time to reflect and discern was called for. As we think on life, let us never be afraid to look at what seems most chaotic and least like God and be confident that we can find him there too.

Grateful thanks are extended to Dr John Salmon for many of the ‘May Devotion’ photos.

THE OCTOBER DEVOTION

The successful and colourful October Devotion was held at St Helen's Church, Athersley, Barnsley. A powerful and absorbing sermon was given by Dom Damien Humphries, OSB, which was followed by a colourful outdoor procession.



The Sermon Preached on 17th May by Fr Phillip Swingler at the Shrine of Our Lady of Egmanton, Nottinghamshire

“Blessed are the eyes that see what you see!” (Luke 10:23)
- Word of Jesus to his disciples on their mission.

According to David Cameron, our Prime Minister, Britain is still a Christian country - a sentiment which has met with approval by Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury. But what does this really mean? From an historical perspective we do indeed have a heritage of Christian institutions and teaching; but is this really understood by, or informing of the attitudes and behaviour (doctrinally or morally) of most of our population in 2014?

A few years ago I was in a state primary school answering children's questions about God and religion. In the course of their discussions the name of Mary came up. “Who is Mary?” I asked them. One little girl replied, “She’s a dead Roman Catholic.” Another child spoke up (he was a Muslim boy), “She’s one of the gods whom Christians worship!” This may show the poor quality of religious education in a post-Christendom society, but I suspect reflects the view of many people. For Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians, and for some Anglicans and a few *Continued on P39*

THE PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES

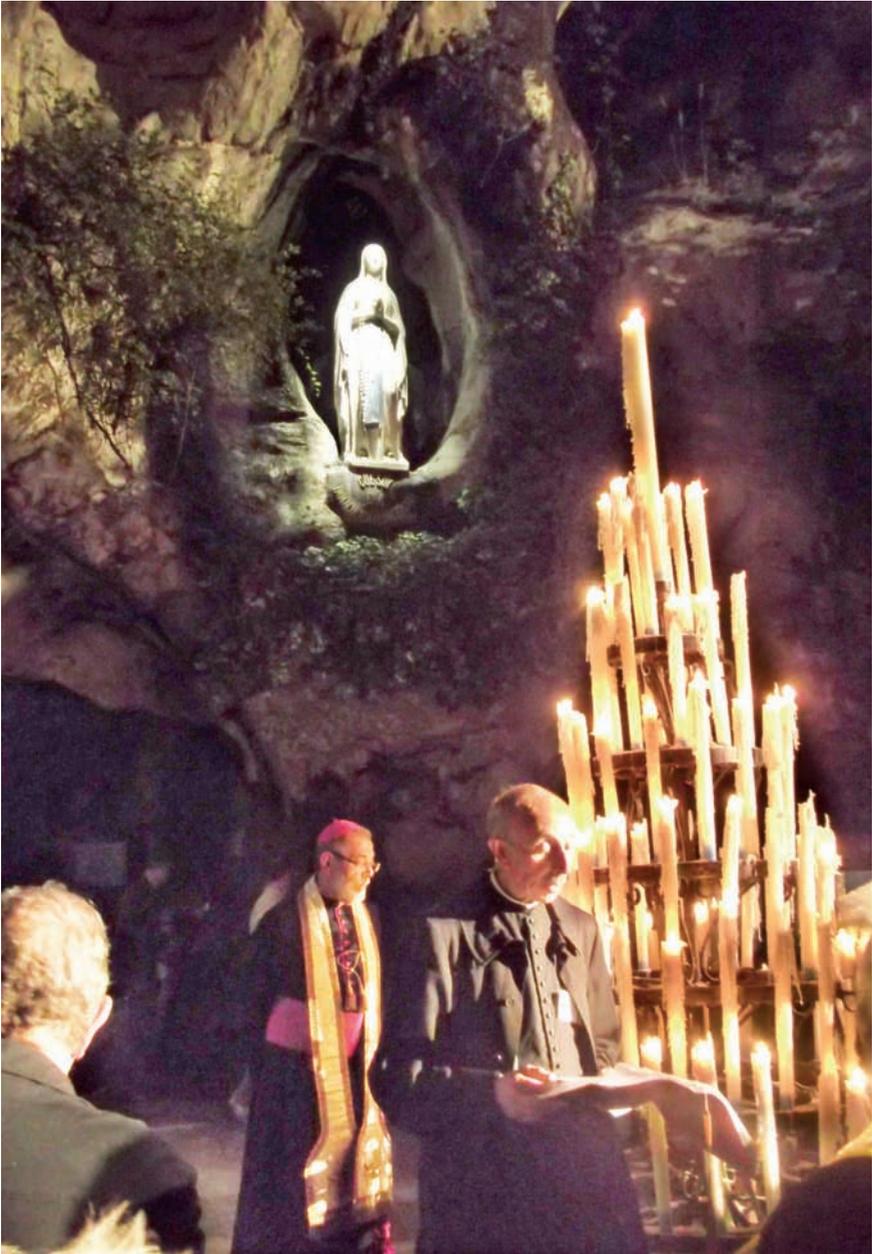
This year's pilgrimage was an enormous undertaking with 109 people participating, including three Bishops (Robert Ladds, Peter Wheatley, and Jonathan Michael Goodall), fifteen Priests and included a group of 25 youngsters who stayed in the youth village and led some of the liturgies, particularly the Stations of the Cross.

The journey to and from Lourdes was a pilgrimage in itself. Pilgrims travelled from London and transferred in Paris for the onward journey. For those travelling overnight couchettes were reserved to give some rest.

On the first evening a walk down the zig-zag path was made to the Grotto. This is a hallowed pathway as Bernadette had once walked along the pathway, but in the opposite direction..



■ *The Torchlight Procession.*



■ *The First Visit to the Grotto.*



■ *Sacramental Healing Ministries.*





■ *The Devotion of the young Pilgrims.*

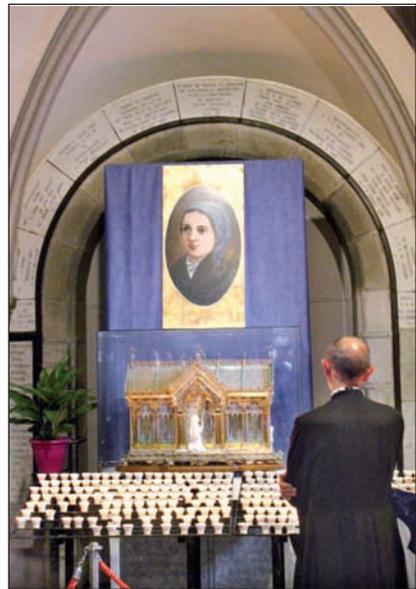


■ *One of the young Pilgrims reading the Psalm in S. Joseph's Chapel.*



■ The first pilgrimage group Mass on Monday. Tuesday commenced with Exposition and Benediction in the Crypt Chapel before the journey to S. Bertrand de Comminges - see picture below.





■ Reliquaries of S. Bernadette.



■ *The complete pilgrimage group at Lourdes.*





■ *Some of the youth in readiness to assist the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament.*









THE INTERNATIONAL MASS











Address given by Fr Philip North at S. Bertrand de Comminges

Joy of the encounter and promise of happiness

We were doing a Bible study on the Parish Youth Holiday a few years ago when I asked the older teenagers a question. 'What do you most want to achieve in your life?' They thought for a bit and then one particularly loud-mouthed 15 year old girl took the plunge. 'Well Father,' she said, 'I want to be living in a ten bedroom house in the countryside. I've got four cars and a helicopter. The hairdresser visits every day. I've got six kids and I'm engaged to a really rich boyfriend.' You see the quality of the moral teaching the young people receive at St Michael's, Camden Town. Then she finished, 'Most of all I just want to be happy.'

According to the book 'Making Sense of Generation Y,' a survey of attitudes to religion amongst 14 to 21 year olds, that girl's answer is typical. Happiness is what most young people want above all else. Indeed happiness is probably what most people would say they want above all else. And of course that's fine. What's wrong with happiness after all? The problem is, how do you achieve it. Most people, like that girl on my youth holiday, would look to the things of the world. Happiness is about the right networks of relationships, a good job, enough money in the bank, the acquisition of the right consumer objects, the possession of a comfortable house, a solid pension and so on. Happiness in the view of most people is something that can be engineered or bought or saved up for. Even for many Christians, that is sub-consciously how they think. Just try running a Stewardship Campaign if you don't believe me. The trouble is, if our happiness is based on the things of this earth, we are making ourselves profoundly vulnerable. People get sick and die. Jobs can be taken from us. Savings can witter away. Families can break down. Pensions can be blown by corrupt banks. And then, if the guiding ethic of your life is happiness, what happens if you are unhappy? Has your whole life been a failure? Has it all been pointless?

The Gospel we have heard in this Mass, short as it may have been, contrasts two different visions of happiness. On the one hand there is the woman in the crowd. 'Blessed the womb that bore you!' she shouts. In her view, Mary must be happy because she has such a great son. Happiness for her is derived from the pride a mother takes in her children. Happiness

comes from the things of this earth, from relationships and family and so on. But Jesus, with his riposte, utterly undermines this whole way of thinking. 'More blessed still are those who hear the word of God and keep it,' he says. Mary is indeed happy. But that happiness is not because she is the earthly mother of Jesus Christ, as this woman thinks. Look what has already happened in Luke's Gospel. Mary has been obedient to God's call through her yes to Gabriel's message. She has rejoiced at God's triumph with Elizabeth and sung of a new world order in her Magnificat. She has heard the shepherds' testimony and treasured their words in her heart. She has heard Simeon's prophecy that she, like all of Israel, must decide for or against the Messiah-ship of her Son. Later we will see her with the disciples awaiting the gift of the Spirit. Threaded through the Gospel we see a beautiful story of Mary's conversion, of the change wrought in her through the Holy Spirit as she is changed from being the mother of Jesus to being his disciple. And that is the source of her happiness. Happiness for her is derived not from her earthly motherhood, but from her conversion to Christ. 'Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.'

And that is why Mary is our Mother. It can be tempting, when we honour Our Lady, to feel a little jealous of her. What an honour it must have been, for her to hold the Christ-child in her womb and be mother to the Eternal Word! We can feel second rate that such a privilege was accorded her and not us. But don't forget, Mary's happiness came not from her motherhood but from her conversion, and that conversion can be ours also. Mary is our mother because she shows us the path of conversion. She shows us how to be disciples of her Son, and it is only in following him that real and lasting happiness is found. Happiness is conversion to Christ.

A pilgrimage is the ideal place to reflect on happiness, because in the context of this journey, we see that happiness is itself a journey. I am an incredibly impatient person. I want everything to have happened by yesterday. I cannot abide provisionality. Things like bus queues, call waiting systems, and complicated recipes drive me bonkers. But look how long it took for God to work his conversion in Mary's life. Like the gestation of a baby, our conversion to Christ is not a thing that can be hurried. Just as it takes a long time to get to know a person, so it takes time to know God and to turn to him fully. It is not something that can be rushed or accelerated. It is in the experience of walking with God that we come to know who God is. The contemporary demand for instant happiness, for

immediate gratification is something that Christians must resist. God has his own time, and who are we to rush him?

And especially on pilgrimage to Lourdes, we see that the journey to happiness may be a very long journey. On Our Lady's third apparition to Bernadette on February 18th 1858, she said, 'I do not promise to make you happy in this world, but in the other.' Conversion is not just lifelong. It takes all eternity. In this life we may catch glimpses of the happiness that is to come. But even that is nothing compared to the glory that awaits. Many of you here may find happiness something that is hard to come by. You may have gone through long periods of unhappiness, you may be going through one now. That does not mean that your life is a failure. As Christians we see everything in the context of eternity. Happiness is not a mood or a state of mind. It is a gift from God. And though at times the ways he prepares us to receive that gift may seem hard to comprehend, that does not mean he has abandoned us. The promise of happiness is not for this world, but for the other.

Three weeks ago I took the funeral of a 21 year old woman of South Sudanese origin. I committed her body to the grave and then her father called for a halt to the desperate sound of grieving and began to speak. He waved his hand over the grave and he said, 'I received my daughter on a day. I lay her to earth on a day. 21 years and ten months. Such is the timeliness of God.' There is a man who understands, I think, the truth about happiness. A man who, from the very depths of desolate grief, could proclaim the triumph and sovereignty of God. For happiness is not about success or wealth or jolliness. It is about conversion to the Christ we meet now at this altar, the Christ who holds time and eternity in his hands and yet who stoops to feed us mere mortals with his own life. To be happy is to know him. That's all. That's enough. Amen.

BISHOP OF TARBES ET LOURDES

The Society is delighted that the Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes, Nicolas Brouwet, has accepted Honorary Membership of the Society.





■ The 'Youth Group' with their leaders.

Free Church people, of course, she is neither of these caricatures - for she is the Mother of Jesus, the Theotokos or God-bearer, popularly venerated as the Mother of God in liturgy and piety; and this was especially true in this country in the Middle Ages when England became known as 'Our Lady's Dowry' because of its devotion to Mary and its many shrines to her such as that of Our Lady of Egmonton here in Nottingham county - developed, it is said, as a result of an appearance of the Blessed Virgin Mary to a young woman in Lady wood (named after Our Lady) 1½ miles east of today's village.

Thomas Arundel Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote in 1399 that "we English, being the servants of her special inheritance and her own Dowry, as we are commonly called, ought to surpass others in the fervour of praises and devotion." This devotion to Our Lady was in part kept alive and daily made vivid through the flower legends and names of plants and flowers regularly seen in daily life and so reinforcing spiritual culture. Names have changed, but the flowers still grow - Our Lady's Tears (lily of the valley), Our Lady's Cushion (sweet william), Our Lady's Smock (cuckoo-pint), Our Lady's Fingers (honeysuckle), Our Lady's Mantle (morning glory), Our Lady's Lace (wild parsley), Our Lady's Taper or Candlemas Bell (snowdrop), the Annunciation or Madonna Lily, Saint Mary's Tree (the rosemary bush), Mary's Star (oxeye daisy), and so on. The Marigold (Marygold) speaks of this glory of Mary even today. One very commonly occurring little wayside flower has a special message for us - it is the FORGET-ME-NOT (*myostis scorpiodes*), called the EYES OF MARY since early times

In his schematic view of the human being, Saint Thomas Aquinas proposed a hierarchy of bodily senses and placed the sense of sight as the highest of the five human senses through which the perceiving subject was understood to receive the world. Saint Augustine of Hippo (*City of God*, Book 22, Chapter 29) wrote that, in this life, human beings aided by God's grace could apprehend spiritual realities through the sense of sight, and in the life to come pious Christian hoped above all else for the perfect vision of God.

In ancient times people called our eyes 'the windows of the soul'. Words are not needed when our eyes speak. Others know we wish them well or indeed love them by the way we look at them - think of the husband looking tenderly into his wife's eyes at the bed of sickness of a young mother or a young mother into the eyes of her new-born child. The blue and gold forget-

me-nots ask us to view all we see as Mary would, through eyes reflecting paradise - bright, clear and kind. When Mary looked at her child God, she could not fail to reflect Him. To look at Mary reminds us of the paradise He came to restore - the Kingdom of God, God's way of living and loving in our midst. Forget-me-nots remind us of this paradise and call to mind the Christian heritage of God's mercy and love and help us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus as Mary did.

An old legend tells how the young Jesus, looking into his mother's eyes one day in front of their home in Nazareth, said, "Mother your eyes are so beautiful, everyone looks at them in wonder. What a pity those who will be born in future generations will not be able to behold them - because in your eyes one can see my paradise, and whoever looks into them cannot help but be drawn toward it." Then he touched her eyelids and passed his hands over the ground as though sowing seeds. Immediately forget-me-nots sprang up, hundreds of tiny blue eyes with golden centres, as a reminder for people for future generations of the pure eyes of our Lady Immaculate. Another legend tells of God walking through the Garden of Eden after the creation. Noticing the small blue flower, He asks its name. Overcome by shyness, the flower whispers, "I'm afraid I've forgotten, Lord." God answers, "forget-me-not: and I will not forget thee."

Forget-me-nots are among the many flowers and herbs in our horticultural heritage that can remind us of Mary, who in so many of her images in Marian Shrines point to her child as if to remind us not to forget Him and his message. As she said at the wedding at Cana, pointing to her son Jesus, "Whatsoever he says to you, do it!" (John 2v5). When we see the forget-me-not and when we see the renewed old Shrines of Our Lady and her holy Child we are reminded of our Christian heritage and challenged to respond in treasuring, valuing and approaching this today, and called to witness again to those vital truths of God's revelation to Christ through his coming into our lives through the Incarnation by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary - of that love of God the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier which alone can save us and all humanity and lead our country, our culture, and our world to prepare the way of the Lord's Kingdom - the beautiful way of God's living and loving mercy and compassion.

At the heart of our Christian heritage is found the great saving and transforming truth for all ages and cultures that is summed up so clearly in the words of the great Tractarian priest of the nineteenth century Anglican

Revival, John Keble, "Mary, when she conceived Jesus Christ in her womb... became in very deed the Mother of him who is the most high God." (John Keble: *Easter to Ascension*, p.161). This is what real Christian heritage calls us to remember with awe and worship and so to respond with every part of our being with undivided will, that the Holy Spirit of God may transform our society and sanctify all we are and think and do. This is what forget-me-not really means - as we begin again to see Jesus through the eyes of Mary.

Mary the Mother of Jesus, above all other saints in the Christian history of salvation, is known by the title 'blessed' (Magnificat). She is regarded in the general Christian tradition as having been brought nearer to Christ than any other created being. The spirit which filled her was lowliness. God exalted her as being especially humble and meek. We see this in her behaviour, when the angel brought her the message from heaven, "Hail, you who are highly favoured, the Lord is with you: you are blessed among women." (Luke 1:28). Instead of being excited by this, we are told that she was troubled at his saying, and wondered what it could mean. Her response was one free from pride which often takes over when we are praised for any kind of goodness (cf the pride of Eve, which played its part in the Fall of Man - contrast Mary, the Second Eve, with her humble acceptance and obedience to God's will, her lack of pride).

It is Mary who 'kept all these things and pondered them in her heart' (Luke 2:51). Over and over she ponders all the strange things that happen. The angel appearing to Zecharias; the extraordinary conception of John the Baptist by her cousin Elizabeth, with the declaration that, great as he was, he would prepare the way of one greater than himself; Mary's own conception of a child, with the message of the angel announcing it; the baby leaping in Elizabeth's womb at the sound of Mary's salutation when she came to visit Elizabeth; the miracles at the birth of John and still more at the birth of Jesus; and especially that she became herself a virgin mother.

Mary stands at the conjunction of the Old and New Testaments. She is the one who in her incomprehension remains faithful to the call of God. She is the one who is God's instrument for the radical revelation that it is in poverty, simplicity and humility that God is found. She is the one who manifests selfless love of the Lord Jesus.

As no other human being was ever favoured like Mary, so we cannot imagine any other person making so perfect a return love as Mary in her place as the mother of Jesus - Jesus himself said, "Whoever does the will of

my Father, he is my brother and sister and mother.” (Matthew12:50) Mary in her response to the annunciation of the birth of her son is the model of what the whole Church should be, and the pattern of every Christian, in making the most of the love God has implanted in us, ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour. He has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: from this day forward all generation shall call me blessed’ (Luke 1:46-48).

We might have expected that a woman favoured as Mary was could have done little more than retire from the world. But, on the contrary, she continued to live an ordinary life, the same as any of us. The verses of her Magnificat alternate between thankfulness and humility. They call for an overthrow of exploitation and power, and the institution of gentleness and meekness in their place.

The picture of Mary at the cross (in John's Gospel) inspires particular devotion. For a mother to be present at the death of an only son is a terrible thing. The mother of Jesus stands by and sees her son crucified between two thieves. She hears him call out to his Father, “Why have you forsaken me?” (Mark15:34). Our eyes turn naturally upon her, because at the crucifixion God brought nearest to him in suffering the woman who was nearest to him in blood. The crucifixion is the bitter sting of an inconceivable honour, the price paid for bearing in her womb the Son of God. God was enfolded in her arms, he fed her from her breast, he was clothed, put to bed, carried about by this poor woman, the carpenter’s wife of Nazareth (the Virgin of the Poor. God was disciplined by her, called her mother, obeyed her. It was God who made himself her true Son.

Mary is the Mother of God, and it is therefore natural to think of her as having a special place among the saints. As she prayed for her Son at the foot of the cross, so might she intercede for us now, we who are brothers of Jesus - and she who was given to us as our mother at the cross through John, when Jesus said, “Behold your mother” (John19:27).

Mary is ‘most highly favoured’ (Luke1:28) and ‘blessed among women’ (Luke1:42). In our devotion to her at her shrine here in Egmonton we contemplate particularly the mystery of the Incarnation. We bring her special honour due to a woman chosen by God to bring into the world a spotless saviour (cf *Book of Common Prayer* 1662 Christmas Preface at Holy Communion). In her we contemplate the depth and extremity of the capability of human love, in humility, in suffering, in devotion. We for the

AVE

honour bestowed upon us, that as God chose Mary to be his Mother, he has chosen us to be his brothers and sisters.

Mary in her humanity figures and gathers up all the hopes of Christians as we seek for the holiness, the wholeness and integrity of life 'in Christ', to which God calls us in living in the 'secular' world today.

Like the beauty of the forget-me-not, the person of Mary the Mother of Jesus is a very attractive figure and effective sign, because she communicates the motherly love we know in our own experience, and because she is an accessible model of gentleness. Her place in the life of Jesus introduces us to the complexities and sacrifices of unselfish love - her giving up her Son to the will of God's call, her suffering at the death of Jesus, and her joy at his Resurrection.

Devotion to Mary as a person, not sentimental but gentle, communicates to us the unsentimental nature of Christian faith, a sense of how close to human persons God has come.

The story of the Annunciation encourages us to consider the wonder of the workings of God, and also the opportunity given each of us to say 'YES' to God. John Keble's hymn *Bless'd are the pure in heart*, included in *The Christian Year* (a Devotional Book of Poems, intended as a Companion to the *Book of Common Prayer*) for the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, eloquently takes up this theme.

Blest are the pure in heart,
For they shall see our God;
The secret of the Lord is theirs,
Their soul is Christ's abode. (*E.H.370*)

Jesus said: "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see," and "whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother," (Matthew12:50) ... "and shall enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew7:21).

This is our heritage in Christ. Forget-me-not: and I will not forget thee!

S.O.M. – Merchandise

Order Form

Please send this form, together with your remittance which should be made payable to **The Society of Mary, to the Treasurer**, Mr Tom Middleton, Flat 1, Cedar House, 1 Woodland Crescent, LONDON SE16 6YL.

Enquiries should be directed to tom.middleton@london.gov.uk

Quantity	Item	Price (inc P&P)	Total
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	Mary – A focus for Unity for all Christians & People, Places and Things	£5.00	
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SUBSCRIPTIONS 2015

Members are reminded that subscriptions are due on 1st January 2015.

1. Individual subscriptions: £15
2. Life Membership: £150
3. Children under 16 free, but at age 16 full rate applies
4. Families of 2 Adults: A minimum of £25 provided they only receive a single copy of *Ave*.

5. New Members receive a Medal and a Society Manual.

Headquarters registered members pay directly to the Membership Secretary, and she would be pleased to receive these as soon as possible and preferably by 30th April 2015. Members in arrears will not receive *Ave* after March.

Please would all members inform me when they move house. We still cannot always trace some copies of *Ave* returned by the Post Office. Life members are kept on file with the hope that a new address for them will eventually be established.

It would be helpful if members who change an email address could let me know by sending an email to **membershipsecretary@societyofmary.net**

Please advise me when Members die, in order that I can ensure that they are recorded in the Chantry Book.

Brigid Reeve, *Membership and Grants Secretary*.

A list of Wards, with Superiors may be found on pages 15 and 16 of the Annunciationtide Ave. The following Ward was omitted:

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Secretary: Mrs M. Ferguson **Phone:** 01205 359685

Future Council Meetings of the Society

Friday 6th February, 2015 at 2.30 pm

Preceded by Benediction at 2.15 pm

Monday 12th October, 2015 at 2.30 pm

*Preceded by Rosary at 2.00 pm
and Benediction at 2.15 pm*

The Executive meets at 11.00 am on the above dates
and also on Wednesday 3rd July, 2015.

Visit the Society of Mary Website

www.societyofmary.net

E-mail: webmaster@societyofmary.net

THE CHANTRY BOOK

Philip Biles, D S O'Brien (priest), Colin Cresswell,
Andrea Entwistle, Edna Ladbury,
George P Stretton (priest),
Canon James Rone, Mrs H Statham,
Katherine Monseque-Dixon, Brian Dodds (priest),
Florence White, Derek Ward

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The Society of Mary

(Established 1931)

The Society of Mary springs from two similar societies founded in 1880 and 1901 respectively, which united in 1931. It has members all over the world and is not confined to Anglicans. Where there are sufficient members in one place or area, they combine to form a Ward, with a priest as Superior and an elected Secretary. They can organise regular services, meetings and many other activities. Five or more members may form a Cell, and organise joint prayer and fellowship.

Isolated members are joined to the Headquarters Ward.

The Society publishes its magazine *Ave* twice each year with details of pilgrimages, retreats, festival services etc. It is free to all members and is the effective link between the various Regions.

The Society is not affiliated to any single Shrine or Marian institution, and is the only organisation endeavouring to promote equally all the different aspects of devotion to Mary.

The Society of Mary

The Society is dedicated to the glory of God and in honour of the Holy Incarnation under the invocation of Our Lady, Help of Christians.

1. Members shall keep a Rule of Life, which will include such special devotions as the Angelus, the Rosary, the Litany and Anthems of Our Lady.
2. They will pray for Departed Members of the Society and offer Mass for them.
3. They will take part in the Mass on the principal Feasts of Our Lady.
4. They will engage in apostolic and pastoral work, according to opportunity, under the guidance of the local Ward Officers and the General Council.

Objects and Membership of the Society

The Society was founded as an Anglican Society with these Objects:

1. To love and honour Mary.
2. To spread devotion to her in reparation for past neglect and misunderstanding, and in the cause of Christian Unity.
3. To take Mary as a model in purity, personal relationships and family life.



**The Superior-General, the Chaplain-General,
Officers and General-Council of the Society
wish you all a Happy Christmaside.**