

THE PARISHES OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST AND ST MARY MAGDALENE

35 Brighton Place, Edinburgh EH15 1LL

Bingham Avenue, Edinburgh EH15 3HY

Parish Priest:

Fr Jock Dalrymple:

0131 669 5447

Deacon:

Revd Eddie White:

07986 015772

Sacrament of Reconciliation: after the Vigil Mass (7.30pm on Saturday) or any time by appointment

Pastoral Team: Jennifer Morris and Chris Vinestock

Shared Parish House: 3 Sandford Gardens, Edinburgh, EH15 1LP

Parish Administrator: Enrico Fertini

(Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday: 10.00am to 3.00pm & Friday 11.00am to 4.00pm)

Web address:

<https://www.stjohnsandstmarymagdalenes.com>

Joint Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/StJohnsandStMaryMagdalenes>

Joint e-mail address for our sister parishes:

stjohnsandstmarymagdalenes@gmail.com

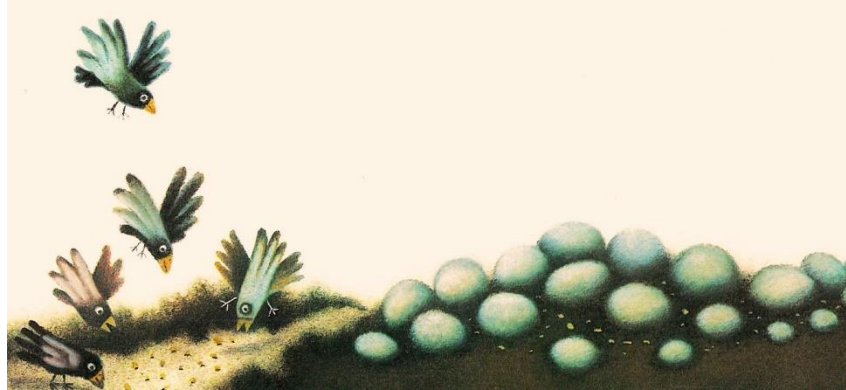


16 JULY 2023

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY
OF THE YEAR

Jesus said, 'Imagine a sower going out to sow. As he sowed, some seeds fell on the edge of the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on patches of rock ... others fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Others fell on rich soil and produced their crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.'

(Matthew 13:4-8)



Very sadly, we have to announce the death of Maureen Brogan, who died on the afternoon of Thursday 13 July in St Columba's Hospice after the bravest of fights against cancer. Her contribution to the life of St John's in particular was immense, whether as a member of the 9.30am Music Group, the co-ordinator of the St John's Liturgy Committee, as Hall Co-ordinator and member of the Parish House Team and so much else. Her faithfulness, generosity and willingness to go the extra mile for anyone and everyone will be greatly missed. May she rest in peace.

A warm welcome to Fr Jimmy Smith celebrating our Masses for the next two Sundays (while Fr Jock is away- with several parishioners - on pilgrimage to Lourdes, and then celebrating a friend's wedding in Italy).

East Edinburgh Synodality Conversations: What Next?

‘The theme for our **fourth East Edinburgh Conversation on Inclusion in the Catholic Church** is “**What Next?**”. We will start with a short video input about Canon Law in the faith life of the church. This is the final early evening meeting in this short series organised by a group from St John’s and St Mary Magdalene. All are very welcome. The meeting is on **Wednesday 26 July from 6.15pm to 7.45pm in the Bellfield small hall, Bellfield, 16b Bellfield St, Portobello, EH15 2BP**. Tea and coffee available from 5.45pm.’

WOULD ANY OF OUR FIRST COMMUNICANTS – OR ANYONE ELSE - LIKE TO BECOME AN ALTAR SERVER?

Deacon Eddie writes: ‘We are ever grateful to our altar server teams at both parishes. It is so much more than merely a ‘ceremonial’ role, as they help with anything from helping the Sacristan with preparing the altar to sneaking through to the parish house to pick up photocopying, and often grow considerably in confidence as a result. In addition, hopefully soon, they will be involved in helping start up a youth version of the St Vincent De Paul group....’

A call, then, to all young people from P5 upwards...would you be willing to join us? If so, speak to John Lauder or me to find out more.’

THIS WEEK

Saturday 15 July - 6.30pm – St John’s – Vigil Mass - livestreamed

Sunday 16 July - 15th SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

9.30am - St John’s - **Mass** - livestreamed

11.15am – St Mary Magdalene’s – **Mass** – livestreamed

Monday 17 July

10.00am – St John’s – **Mass** – livestreamed

7.00pm – Zoom – **Gospel Sharing** – please click [HERE](#) (or type <https://bit.ly/3D6gYWB> into your browser)

Tuesday 18 July - 10.00am – St John’s – Mass – livestreamed

Wednesday 19 July - 10.00am – St John’s – Mass – livestreamed

Thursday 20 July - 10.00am – St Mary Magdalene’s – Mass - livestreamed

Friday 21 July

10.00am – St John’s – **Mass** – livestreamed

11.00am – Seafield Crematorium – **Funeral Service for John Martin** (Fr Jim)

Saturday 22 July – FEAST OF ST MARY MAGDALENE

6.30pm – St John’s – **Vigil Mass** - livestreamed

Sunday 23 July - 16th SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

9.30am - St John’s - **Mass** - livestreamed

11.15am – St Mary Magdalene’s – **Mass** – livestreamed

View the **links for the Masses** by visiting our webpage:

<http://bit.ly/2023Mass> - or by scanning the QR code → → → →



From Archbishop Leo’s Weekly ‘Ad Clerum’

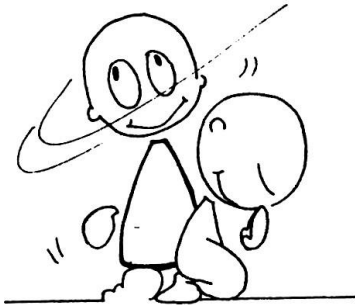
Voting Rights - Edinburgh City Council is considering a proposal to remove voting rights of Church Representatives on its Education, Children and Families Committee. If passed, it means school reps won’t have a say in decisions affecting faith schools. **Contact your councillor ahead of the vote, which is now on 3 August.** Postcards are available at the back of the church. Find out who your councillor is at: bit.ly/edinburghcouncillors

NOTICEBOARD

Date		St John's Eucharistic Ministers rota		
July	15	Tracy Burgess	Pat Whyte	Jim Roarty
	16		Bernie Gallagher	Eliza Veitch
	22	Jim Roarty	Patrick Shannon	Bozena Tansey
	23		Linda Moran	Penelope McLellan Hawkes

Administrator wanted for St. Mark's Episcopal Church - St. Mark's are looking for a PT (6hrs.) Church Administrator. Information can be found here: <https://stmarksportobello.org/part-time-church-administrator/> **Application:** Please send a CV with covering letter to the Rector, Rev Dr Sophia Marriage, St Mark's Church, 287 Portobello High Street, Edinburgh, EH15 2AR Closing Date: 30 July 2023.

*Happy
are those
who believe
without seeing!*



John 20:29

*Happy
are those
who have
no doubts
about me. JESUS*



Matthew 11:6

*Humanity has always sought happiness.
The scriptures, especially the Psalms,
assure us that we can find happiness;
but we must believe and pursue it.*

*Many people are desperate
to find happiness;
but they must stop waiting around
and set out in search of happiness.*

(Sr Mariarosa Guerrini O.S.A.)



My Beloved is the mountains,
and lonely wooded valleys,
strange islands,
and resounding rivers,
the whistling of
love-stirring breezes,

the tranquil night
at the time of rising dawn,
silent music,
sounding solitude,
the supper that refreshes
and deepens love.

(St John of the Cross, 1542-1591)

'SAINT' OF THE WEEK (1) – BARTOLOMÉ de LAS CASAS

“Defender of the Indians” (1484-1566) - Feast Day: 18 July

"Christ did not come into the world for gold."



Bartolomé de Las Casas was the most distinguished of a number of Dominican friars who raised their voices against the rapacious violence inflicted on the Indians of the Americas. Las Casas was not content to denounce the excesses of the Conquest. Reading the gospel from the perspective of what he called *"the scourged Christ of the Indies,"* he articulated a theological understanding of religious freedom, human rights, and the relation between salvation and social justice, that was scarcely matched again in the Catholic Church before the Second Vatican Council. Five hundred years after the collision of cultures in the Americas, Las Casas is chiefly recognized as a prophet, who anticipated by many centuries the church's *"preferential option for the poor."*

As a boy of eight, Las Casas witnessed the return of Columbus to Seville after his first voyage to the New World. He made his own first trip to Hispaniola in

1502. After studies in Rome for the priesthood he returned to the New World, where he served as chaplain in the Spanish conquest of Cuba. Though a priest, he also benefited from the Conquest as the owner of an *encomienda*, a plantation with Indian indentured laborers.

In 1514 however, he underwent a dramatic conversion, prompted by his witnessing the genocidal cruelty inflicted on the Indians. He soon joined the Dominican order and became a passionate and prophetic defender of the indigenous peoples. For more than fifty years he travelled back and forth between the New World and the court of Spain, attempting through his books, letters, and preaching to expose the cruelties of the Conquest, whose very legitimacy, and not merely excesses, he disavowed.

Although the main attraction for the Spanish in the New World was gold, the Conquest was ostensibly justified by evangelical motivations. The pope had authorized the subjugation of the Indian populations for the purpose of implanting the gospel and securing their salvation. Las Casas claimed that the deeds of the conquistadors revealed their true religion:

In order to gild a very cruel and harsh tyranny that destroys so many villages and people, solely for the sake of satisfying the greed of men and giving them gold, the latter, who themselves do not know the faith, use the pretext of teaching it to others and thereby deliver up the innocent in order to extract from their blood the wealth which these men regard as their god.

Las Casas vehemently opposed the notion that the gospel could be spread through slaughter or compulsion of any kind. While others claimed that the Indians were a lesser race, he affirmed their full humanity, and thus their entitlement to all human rights. For his writings on human equality and his defence of the right to religious freedom, Las Casas deserves to be remembered as a political philosopher of extreme significance in the history of ideas.

But Las Casas's theological insights went far beyond a simple affirmation of the Indians' human dignity. Identifying the Indians with the poor, in the gospel sense, he argued that in their sufferings they represented the crucified Christ. He wrote, *"I leave in the Indies Jesus Christ, our God, scourged and afflicted and beaten and crucified not once, but thousands of times."*

For Las Casas there could be no salvation in Jesus Christ apart from social justice. Thus, the question was not whether the Indians were to be "saved"; the more serious question was the salvation of the Spanish who were persecuting Christ in his poor.

In 1543, with court officials in Spain eager to be rid of him, Las Casas was named bishop of the impoverished region of Chiapas in southern Mexico. There he immediately alienated his flock by refusing absolution to any Spaniard who would not free his Indian slaves. He was denounced to the Spanish court as a "lunatic" and received numerous death threats. Eventually he resigned his bishopric and returned to Spain, where he felt he could more effectively prosecute his cause. There he died on July 18, 1566, at the age of eighty-two.

See: George Sanderlin, ed., Witness: Writings of Bartolomé de Las Casas, 2d ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1992); Gustavo Gutiérrez, Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1993).

‘SAINT’ OF THE WEEK (2) – ALBERT LUTHULI Zulu Chief, Nobel Laureate - (1898-1967) - Feast Day: 21 July

"It is inevitable that in working for Freedom some individuals and some families must take the lead and suffer: The Road to Freedom is via the CROSS."



Among those who prepared the way to freedom in South Africa, the name of Chief Albert Luthuli is highly honoured. A member of the Zulu tribe and the son of local chiefs, he was raised in Groutville, a village in a Christian mission reserve in Natal. He studied at Adams College, where he met his wife and began a career as a teacher. Eventually he was elected chief in Groutville, an office which enabled him to promote the rights of his poor and oppressed people. To the white-minority government, chiefs were principally regarded as useful intermediaries in their management and control of the black masses. Luthuli, however, had come to believe that the ultimate interests of his people could be served only by the overthrow of the system of apartheid. As a result, he became active in the African National Congress (ANC), spearhead of the freedom struggle in South Africa. In 1952 the government "dismissed" him as chief of Groutville. This only freed Luthuli from tribal affairs to become fully engaged in the activity of the ANC, ultimately emerging as its national leader.

The activities of the ANC combined political education and active non-violent resistance in the form of strikes, boycotts, and civil disobedience. As a result of his work Luthuli was repeatedly arrested, "banned," and confined to house arrest. In 1955, after the Congress issued its "Freedom Charter," Luthuli and the ANC leadership were arrested en masse and charged with high treason. The charges were absurd, and Luthuli was eventually freed. But the trial, in which the young Nelson Mandela conducted the defence, offered an opportunity for the ANC leaders to present their case against apartheid to the world. In 1960 Luthuli was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

He returned to lead a public protest against the hated passbooks - internal passports - that blacks were required to carry in South Africa. These were used to enforce restrictions on where blacks were allowed to live in their own country. Luthuli publicly burned his passbook and urged others to do the same. He was once again arrested, and then released under another five-year "banning" order.

Throughout his life Luthuli held on to the deep Christian faith in which he had been raised. This posed a conflict in the minds of some black activists. They dismissed Christianity as nothing more than the religion of the oppressors. But Luthuli disagreed: "*We know Christianity for what it is, we know it is not a white preserve.*" Nevertheless, he challenged the churches to join in the struggle: "*We do not expect to see the Church organizing political movements. But it must be with people, in their lives.*"

Speaking for himself he stated, "*I am in Congress precisely because I am a Christian. My Christian belief about society must find expression here and now, and Congress is the spearhead of the real struggle.... My own urge, because I am a Christian, is to get into the thick of the struggle with other Christians, taking my Christianity with me and praying that it may be used to influence for good the character of the resistance.*"

Luthuli died in a train accident on July 21, 1967. At that time the goal for which he had laboured seemed impossibly far. The African National Congress had been declared illegal. Its leader, Nelson Mandela, and the rest of the ANC leadership were imprisoned on Robben Island, serving life sentences from which they were not expected to return. The system of apartheid was entrenched, and the black population seemed to be abandoned by God and the rest of the world.

And yet men and women like Luthuli, because of their faith in God, were convinced that justice would one day triumph. And so, they were able to carry on the struggle, inspired by the vision of a South Africa that might one day, but did not yet, exist. So, Luthuli concluded his autobiography with these hopeful words:

The struggle must go on - the struggle to make the opportunity for the building to begin. The struggle will go on. I speak humbly and without levity when I say that, God giving me strength and courage enough, I shall die, if need be, for this cause. But I do not want to die until I have seen the building begun.
Mayibuye i Afrika! Come Africa, come!

See: Albert Luthuli, Let My People Go (New York: McGraw Hill, 1962).

Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." - Matthew 16:24

What does it mean to follow Jesus? I believe that we are invited to gaze upon the image of the crucified Jesus to soften our hearts toward all suffering, to help us see how we ourselves have been "bitten" by hatred and violence, and to know that God's heart has always been softened toward us.

In turning our gaze to this divine truth - in dropping our many modes of scapegoating and self-justification - we gain compassion toward ourselves and all others who suffer.

Following Jesus is a vocation to share the fate of God for the life of the world.

To allow what God for some reason allows - and uses.

And to suffer ever so slightly what God suffers eternally.

This has little to do with believing the right things about God - beyond the fact that God is love. Those who agree to carry and love what God loves, both the good and the bad, and to pay the price for its reconciliation within themselves - these are the followers of Jesus Christ.

They are the leaven, the salt, the remnant, the mustard seed that God uses to transform the world.

Richard Rohr OFM, Daily Meditations

Gratitude is the heart's memory

Thankfulness is a way to experience the world, a way to perceive, a way to be surprised. Thankfulness is having open eyes and a short distance between the eyes and the heart. Remembrance is the most precious feature of the virtue of gratitude. One of the most important qualities is the ability to say "thank you" to others and to take no one and nothing for granted. Those who possess the virtue of gratitude are truly rich. They not only know they have been blessed, but they continuously remember that all good things come from God.

To acknowledge others, to say thank you, is a mark of greatness. If our colleagues and volunteers are dispirited and unmotivated, might it have something to do with the fact that we have never expressed our gratitude to them for who they are and what they do?

The courage to thank - that is, the courage to see the gifts and experiences of this world all together as a gift - changes not only the person who gains this insight. It also changes the environment, the world, and those who surround that person.

Gratitude is creative. People bound together by gratitude are always discovering and awakening abundant sources of strength. The more thankful a person is, the richer he or she is within. Thankful people store up in their grateful memory all the good experiences of the past, just as the French proverb states: "Gratitude is the heart's memory."

Fr Thomas Rosica, CSB Priest in New York, A Meditation on Thanksgiving.

PARISH REGISTER

Warm birthday greetings to Carolynne McCann, 60, last Friday, 7 July

Please pray for those who have died recently:

*Maureen Brogan
Greta Guthrie - Denise Kennedy*

Please pray for those whose anniversaries occur around this time:

*Armando Volpe - Pat Hunter
Fr Tony McDonald - Jimmy Kesson
Paddy McCafferty - Andrew Banks
Anna Reid - Inge Downey
Patrick Roarty - Sally O'Connor
Jane Norton - Willie Whyte*

Please pray for those Parishioners who are sick:

St. John's:

Lorraine Syme, young Sienna McDonald, Frank Phillips, Bernadette Henderson, Ann O'Brien, Kathie Gallagher, Diane McCarthy, Violet Paterson, Raymond Walker, Margaret Duffy, Valentino Raviele, Una Laing, Mike and Patricia Lawler, Mike Burns, Harry Allan, May Thomson, Carol Simpson, Charlotte and Fred McGregor, Kenny O'Connor, Gerry Gallagher, John Cregan, Rose Thornton, Kathleen Brown, Mike Noonan, John Whyte, Maria Pacitti, Fiona Connel, Ann Dobie, Sheelagh Dobson, Chloe Sutherland, Norah Bruce, Ruth Vizer, Mary Grady, Pauli Walker, Anna Butler, May Flynn, Vincent Knowles, young Saoirse Golden, Frances Cunningham, David Reid, Betty Dougal, Anne Thomson, Sarah McManus, Sr Jennifer Lindsay, Maureen Low, Mary Slight, Norman Telfer, Erin Corbett, Roz Byers and Marie Angela Crolla.

St Mary Magdalene's:

Monica Gorman, George Tait, Allan Guthrie, John McLaughlin, Mary McGovern (jnr), Carolynne McCann, Tom Bauld, Sam Burns, Jacqueline Marinello, Sandra Watt, Chris English, Andrew Farmer, Maria Scott Jnr, Louise Gorman, Bridget Malone, Charles Malcolm, Margaret Ryan, Jacqueline Hannan, Julie Keegan, Annie Watson, David O'Donnell, Jude Ferguson and Mary and James Muir.

Offertory 9 July 2023

St Mary Magdalene's, £172.90 total, including £86.90 Offertory and £86.00 Gift Aid.

St John's, £1556.45 total, including £358.05 Offertory, £374.40 Gift Aid and £797.00 online donations.

**Sea Sunday leaving Collection:
£174.20 + £369.25**

Anniversaries:

St John's:

July 15: Armando Volpe (2013); Patricia Pringle (2002); James Hamilton (1989); **July 16:** Pat Hunter (2021); Paddy McCafferty (2019); Kathleen McColl (2006); Philomena Donnelly; Maria Howieson; **July 17:** Inge Downey (2022); Patrick Dourley (2005); Joseph O'Brien (2000); Margaret D'Inverno (1988); John Sandham (1985); **July 19:** Cardinal Gordon J Gray (1993); Eileen Walsh (1975); Domenica Andreucetti; **July 20:** Charles Bowyer (2013); Ellen Brennan (2005); Margaret Robertson (1995); Patrick Roarty (1992); William Holligan; **July 21:** Sally O'Connor (2020); William Whyte (2020); Bernard Flynn (1997); Bridget Ginnelly (1986);

St Mary Magdalene's:

July 15: Hannah Halliday (2007); Frederick Burns (1970); **July 16:** Thomas Dewar (2008); **July 17:** Owen Barrett (1997); **July 19:** James Harvey (1996); Mary McQueen (1996); Angelina Risi (1968); **July 20:** Jimmy Kesson (2018); Sheila Foster (1975); Patrick Burns (1968);

Please pray for sick friends and relatives of our Parishioners:

Shirley Robertson, Mary Madden, Neil Boyle, John Wiggins, Lucy Pagett, Mary Atherton, Fr Willy Slavin, Jim Gray, Angela McKenna, John Curran, Eugene Grant, Veronica Telfer, Saramma Samuel, Margaret Troupe, John Wynn, Caitlin Mair, Barry Thomson, Robert Clark, Peter Robinson, Stuart Goddard, Win Veitch, Peter Hanley, Margaret Williams, Kate Titterington, Ann Currie, Sandy Ferguson, Chris White, Douglas Edington, Helen Robertson baby Josh Simpson, Desire Bascon, Janet Haring, Shona Killin, Tom Heaney, Mary Whyte, Mgr Gerry Hand, Tish Deacon, Elizabeth McGrath and Granny Elizabeth, Andrew Muldoon, John Havard, Mary Wallace, Ellen Green, Sophie Robinson, Louise Young, Tricia Scott, Harriet Wingfield Digby (aged 9), Alan Proudlock, Evelyn Walsh, Grace Stuart, Stephen Norwood, John Miller, Agnes Clarke, David Fenwick, Maurice McAllister, Rita Noonan, baby Lucas McCourt, Ellen Dow, members of the McGrath Family, Maureen Hutchinson, Hans Zaunbrecher, Judith Franklin, Clare Johnston, Mary and Derek Lamarque, Keiran Smart (aged 15), Michael Doherty, Carol Turnbull, Jean Wylie, Angela Khan, George and Ann McDermott, Tara Kuppinger, Jessica Haggerty, Charlotte O'Brien, young Martha Moyes (aged 5), Jennifer Kay, Seval and Kazim Kazimoglu, Ann Watt (Mgr Rae's sister), Jan Meise, Mary Taygarth, Roger Bromley, Tony Rigg, Henrietta Fraser, Stuart Falconer, Elizabeth, Colin Sandham, Elizabeth and Gordon Marron, Katie McAnenny, John Kellagher, Ann Thorp, Dani Miniette, Peter Millar, Joan Murray Hamilton, Sr Margaret Mary, Betty Blyth, Lauren Fitzpatrick, Michael Igoe, Clare Richardson, Laura Anderson, Richard Reid, James O'Rourke, Tommy Muir, James Shepherd, Andrew Franklin, Jamie Mitchell, Edward Caulfield, Igor Rekowski, Joan Brooks, Mary Turnbull and young Ray Donovan Syme.

THANK YOU!

A REFLECTION ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – MATTHEW 18: 1-23

(The author of this reflection is a friend of Fr Jock who lives in Northumberland)

I've been a little confused this week. The vets wrote to us to remind us that Aoife is due their annual booster this week. Their? Surely not. We chose the name Aoife deliberately. It's a girls' name of Irish Gaelic origin meaning radiant, beautiful. Her papers determine that she is female. We had thought that she and Stanley might have a dober-family together. Aoife decided otherwise and somewhere between leaving her mother and arriving in Hexham she seems to have taken a vow of consecrated virginity. She happily plays with Stanley all year but come the onset of her season, she turns into a snarling, protector of girl-power. Stanley looks forlorn, loses weight and pines for what might have been. He looks at us in a state of utter confusion. "How could she not fancy me? I'm gorgeous!" His confusion matched mine as I re-read the Vet's letter: "Aoife is due their annual booster." Their? It was time for a heart to heart with Aoife. Had she been hiding a secret from us. Was she indeed binary? Is this why she didn't want a family? So far, she is refusing to talk, and my confusion remains.

My confusion was added to after several visits to the GP and Hexham Hospital this week. I've experienced a period of rapid weight loss since the operation to repair my humerus. "We'd better test for cancer" advises the Doctor who is never one to dress things up. Several sleepless nights later he telephoned me with the 'good' news that "It's OK! There is no cancer - you just have an overactive thyroid. Can you pop in and see me?" The land speed record was broken as I screeched into the Surgery Car Park to receive the detail. "I'm just turned 70. Why has my thyroid decided to become over-active? There is nothing about me that is over-active!" "That, I don't know. I'll have to run some more tests but take this prescription in the meantime. Oh! And double your Bisoprolol to be on the safe side". Safe side? He was beginning to sound like the Tyre mechanic who advises replacing a list of parts as long as your arm 'to be on the safe side' when all you wanted was a replacement tyre! The Doctor had reassured me, but my confusion remained.

Whilst down in Hexham, I decided I might as well pop into Tesco. My earlier confusions were added to as I discovered that Tesco had moved the tinned Tuna – again! I've noticed lately, when doing my weekly shop, that there are many aisles in the Supermarket that I no longer visit. I know what products I need, their location, there is no need to visit anywhere else. I have a set route that is followed, week after week. The luxury of browsing shelves and aisles is but a distant memory of days gone by 'when I could be indulgent'. Now 'getting by' can be a struggle. From time-to-time Tesco move everything around. They do it on purpose. It's a sales technique. The purpose is to momentarily disorientate the shopper. If I cannot find the tuna, I'll go looking for it. I'll be forced to visit 'strange' aisles, where I haven't set foot for a while. I might see something I fancy – another sale - kerching! Improved sales figures lead to happy management.

Apparently, I am not alone in having established aisles that are visited week after week. Tesco purposely move things around to force shoppers to walk past other shelves, visit other aisles, expose us to other products. They want us to buy more. I can't afford to buy any more. Battle lines are drawn. The shelves are full, filled to overflowing (usually), the night shift have restocked and replenished the display stands – but the pressures of budget and finance mean that their efforts are wasted on me. Now where the **** is that tuna? Jesus in telling this weekend's parable advises that God's word, His Grace, His Love are an ever present in our lives – like a well-stocked hypermarket. He is speaking – can we hear Him? Sshh! Listen. The issue is that other pressures creep in to distract us and erect barriers between Him and us. And then there is Satan, the Devil, the force for evil in its many forms. Like the manager relocating the tinned tuna, He is always looking to lead us astray, make us lose our bearings, add to the disorientation that assails us from all sides.

Our response to God's word and his presence in our lives is ever changing. The innocence of First Communion, the cynicism and rebellion of our teenage years, the re-booting of our spirituality after a sudden bereavement or personal crisis. We are all a mixture. Sometimes our faith is rich and deep and gives peace and direction, other times the pressures of the world or relationships threatens to strangle and suffocate our faith. We seem to be hanging on by our finger-tips. No matter what our individual response might be, He is there. He is a constant. Like a well-stocked shelf or display stand, He is there whenever we need Him and He will never abandon us.