

Holy Week is bringing the curtain down on this Lent 2023. I hope that you have been able to attend as many of the extra devotions as possible to strengthen your spirit and draw you closer to the Lord of Life.

There is a misconception that Lent is a miserable period full of gloom and doom. Nonsense! The world may be, as we can view every night on the News, but Jesus Christ is the herald of Good News, mankind reconciled with the Creator God through the Sacrifice of Calvary.

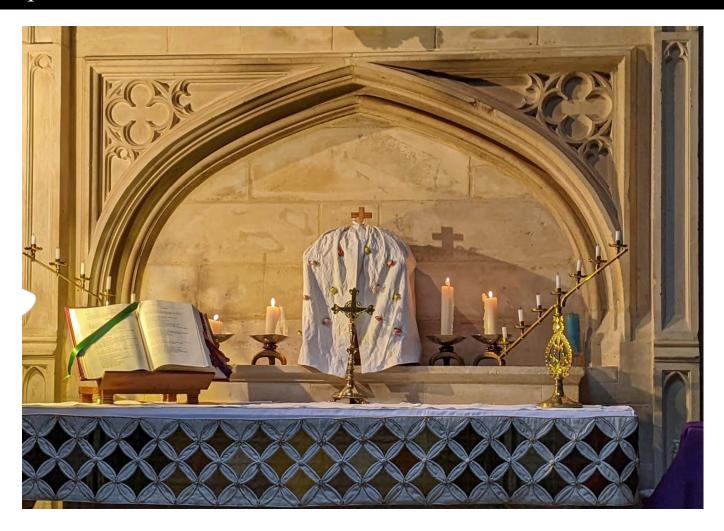
Lent is the time to remember this.. but more importantly, Lent gives way to Easter and the total victory over Death.

"Death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory?"

St Paul wrote these triumphant words 2,000 years ago, and I pray that this Easter they will ring out loud in your heart and mind.

God bless you, and have a very happy Easter.

Father Clive



Thank you to everyone who contributed articles to this 20th edition of the St Teresa's parish magazine and the first where we have invited Holy Trinity parish to combine with us. We produce these once or twice a year around Easter and/or Advent. If you have anything that you would like to contribute to the next magazine, watch out for announcements in the bulletins.

The opinions expressed in the articles in this parish magazine are the opinions of their authors, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of anyone else.

Thank you to Merry, aged 4, for the front cover picture and

Easter 1

SHARING THE CHURCH'S STORY

In February, Sharnalee Foster and Suze Mathews attended a one-day conference in London – SHARING THE CHURCH'S STORY. It was organized by Catholic Voices, Word on Fire Institute and the Guild of Our Lady of Ransom. Over 1300 people attended the conference in the Queen Elizabeth II Centre in Westminster to share the experience of profound personal renewal and to be equipped for the Church's ongoing mission. The Conference's main message was that to face the problems of the future, Catholics must be empowered to share the Church's story with charity, clarity, and confidence. A noticeable feature of the day was the preponderance of young people under 30 which, with their enthusiasm and craving for renewal of faith, gave the day an almost Catholic Evangelist atmosphere.

The Conference opened with prayers from Cardinal Nichols, and an opening address by Brendan Thompson of Catholic Voices set the tone for the day. Keynote speaker American Catholic Evangelist Bishop Robert Barron spoke persuasively and powerfully about how this time of uncertainty and withdrawal from faith challenges God's purpose. His core text was John 15 1:2 I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more.

Bishop Robert articulated God's Universal Call to Holiness by Christifying the world; in other words, we are all to be missionaries in the renewal of the Church's purpose. Bishop Robert reminded us that our lives are not about us; our individual life is to serve God's purpose.

The afternoon offered a rich array of workshops and events, ranging from an update from ACN about their recent projects to learning how to meditate like a Jesuit. The Conference concluded with Eucharistic Adoration, supported by readings and music. The power of 1300 people in silent prayer and devotion was the perfect capstone to a memorable day.

AID TO THE CHURCH IN NEED

St Teresa's Parish's supports the charity Aid to the Church in Need.
As ever, St Teresa's continues to be a very generous parish: recently, together with Holy Trinity, we raised £4400 for victims of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria.

Our 'twin' - le petit seminare - Sainte Thérèse de l'enfant Jésus, Haiti

We are continuing our support for this ACN project in Haiti. Haiti is on the UN's list as one of the poorest countries in the world. It's economy, never stable, has now collapsed which means there are almost no facilities such as electricity and running water. With the collapse of the economy, public services particularly law enforcement: the police and judiciary are almost non-functioning. The cities are almost entirely controlled by gangs who exploit almost every facet of life.

The Church is the only stable institution; it offers not only spiritual succour but practical help and support wherever it can. The young seminarians, whom we are supporting will, as ordained priests in the villages and urban parishes, often be the only stable element in the precarious lives of Haitians. By working with ACN we are helping to ensure that these young men are able to fulfil their vocations to God and thus help their own country.

St Teresa's Parish Feast on 23 April is one of our major fund-raiser events for the seminary, so even if you can't join us, please give a donation so we can help ACN provide all the support needed for the seminary.

Thanks and prayers for your continued support, Suze Mathews St. Teresa's Parish ACN Representative.

HOLY TRINITY FAREWELL TO FR. TONY

Holy Trinity Parishioners are saying our goodbyes to Father Tony after Mass 12:10 hrs on Sunday 30th of April. We will do this in the school hall next door and have drinks and small eats there. A card for people to sign will be available at the back of the church together with a list for people to indicate what they can contribute to eat.

BETHLEHEM, MARCH 2023

I have made some fifteen visits to the West Bank since 2012. This trip was originally delayed by Covid and was a chance to see old friends. For my friend Richard, this was a first opportunity to visit the Holy Land....or some selected bits of it! We stayed with the Brigittine nuns at Mary's House in the old part of Bethlehem and they looked after us very well.

If you make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, try to spend some of your stay in Bethlehem. The people here endured the two years of Covid with no income... no government handouts, no health insurance...nothing! Any contribution to their economy is appreciated. They also happen to be very nice people and you will be made to feel welcome.

Putting aside my selfish reasons, I felt I had to give Richard's 'bucket list' of places a fair effort. I am no professional guide and relied a great deal on Jerome Murphy-O'Connor's book on the Holy Land.

We made Mass at 5am in the Grotto of the Nativity. At that time there are rarely large groups of pilgrims attending. This time there were just ten of us and it was a moving experience. Prayers were said for the people of our parish and for certain individuals. We would have gone the day before, but the nuns inadvertently locked us in Mary's House! The restored Church of the Nativity is excellent... the magnificent altar is Orthodox.

There are other places to visit in and around Bethlehem. Shepherd's Fields of course, but I think Richard found it too much akin to a tourist attraction for pilgrims. The Milk Grotto in Bethlehem is worth a visit and a must (for me anyway!) is the Cremisan Winery. Look it up. Historically important and their products are first rate.

We had two separate day trips to Jerusalem. The first entailed following the Via Dolorosa, which is completed at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The crowds were such that I stayed out of the crush. Richard managed the steep winding staircase to Golgotha in good time, then spent two hours in a queue to visit the Tomb. (It is possible to stay overnight in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with just fourteen other Roman Catholics after the great doors have been locked).

The second day in Jerusalem was focussed on the Mount of Olives. For various reasons, the traffic that day was gridlocked. People told me that they had never seen so many visitors. I'm not too sure that many confused

looking individuals in the larger groups even knew which town they're in! In the event, we visited the many churches, well, Richard did, and we finally made it to the Grotto of Gethsemane, which is the original part of the garden.

The charity I founded and which supported a home and school for children with severe disabilities was a first point of call in Bethlehem. I found it moving to see again many of the young people I knew over a number of years and to see how they had progressed. In the past, we gave lectures at Bethlehem University and it was a pleasure to see old friends there and to be given a tour of the new faculty building. I am hopeful that those facilities will ultimately benefit the children at Hogar Niño Dios (the children's home).

We spent some time with an old friend, a wonderful if slightly eccentric, Coptic nun. She and a colleague proudly showed us the new church they had built over the past three years. It's huge!

A 'must' is Banksie's 'Walled Off Hotel'. It's close by the wall... very close! You can stay there but his artwork apart, it has a fascinating if sobering museum.

I have refrained from any overt political comment. The ever-encroaching illegal settlements are plain to see from Bethlehem or Cremisan. Please pray for the people of the Holy Land and for justice.

Trevor Hodkinson

MANY MANSIONS

A while ago I chanced upon a small booklet in the church entitled 'Many Mansions', produced by the 'I am with you foundation' (www.iamwithyou.co.uk).

For anyone overburdened or in distress, may I recommend this as an inspiring source of encouragement and consolation.

When my brother was approaching death, I recorded and emailed one reading each day, which provided great solace to him and his wife. The final reading, the day before he died, was exceptionally uplifting:

"No stranger to heaven!...a hand of love and warmth to clasp your own as you enter. Well done, good and faithful servant".

Mary Prior

CHIPPING NORTON PARISH PILGRIMAGE 2023 PADUA & VENICE

September sees the reawakening of the parish pilgrimage to Padua and Venice, postponed from the Covid-ravaged plans for 2020 and now very much on track to see the light of day. So far, we have sixteen participants from Holy Trinity accompanying Fr Clive and Fr Tony. Flights and coach transfers are booked, rooms at the pilgrim hotel in Padua are reserved, and Masses have been arranged for the two Fathers to concelebrate, in St Anthony's Basilica in Padua and in St Mark's Basilica amidst the canals and bridges of Venice. There will, of course, also be time for collective and individual reflection and prayer. What better way to recharge spiritual batteries and reset faith and hope for the future.

As well as the opportunity to visit and wander through two of Italy's most charismatic and historic cities, we will also see what Vicenza has to offer with a day trip to the heartland of Palladian architecture. And if you feel like joining us from St Teresa's or Holy Trinity, there are two British Airways seats still available from London Heathrow to Venice Marco airport. Dates are 24-29 September, with a likely cost of around £650 per person including

accommodation. You'd be very welcome.

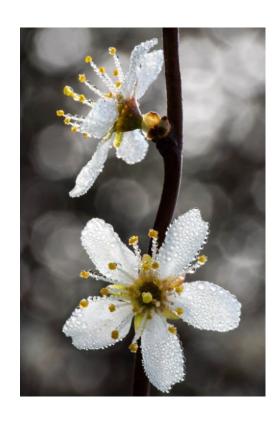
For further details and reservation of a place on the pilgrimage, please contact one of the following:

John Hulme

James Byrne

Paul Branch

(emails and phone numbers in the paper version of the magazine at the back of the churches)



CORPUS CHRISTI 2022



A look back at the feast of Corpus Christi 2022 as celebrated at St. Teresa's.



APPARITIONS OF OUR LADY IN UKRAINE

Kievan Rus, a federation including Ukraine, modern Belarus and parts of Russia, was the first European state to be dedicated, by Prince Yaroslav the Wise in 1037, to the Mother of God. Several apparitions have been reported over the centuries since then, with those of the last century being of particular significance to our times.

On May 12th 1914, shortly before the start of the First World War, it was claimed that Our Lady appeared to twenty-two people working in fields near the Church of the Holy Trinity in Hrushiv, foretelling:

"There will be a war. Russia will become a godless country. Ukraine, as a nation, will suffer terribly for eighty years and will have to live through the world wars but will be free afterwards."

A further apparition was reported in Hrushiv on 26th April 1987, the first anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, witnessed by a twelve-year-old girl, Maria Kyzin. A bright light appeared covering the Church of the Holy Trinity and the surrounding area, and Our Lady appeared, dressed in black, floating above the cupola. The apparitions continued on a daily basis until 15th August 1987, witnessed by half a million people, including KGB officers. She explained that she had come to thank and comfort the Ukrainian people "because you have suffered most for the church of Christ in the last seventy years", assuring them that their suffering would soon end and that Ukraine would become an independent state.

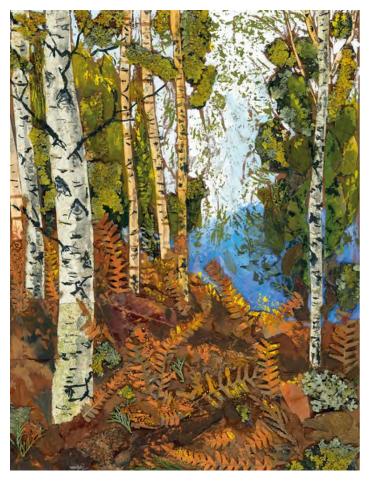
Independence was gained on 24th August 1991 but Ukraine has yet to be blessed with peace. Against the background of the horrors of the current war, however, parts of Mary's message may inspire hope for the Ukrainian people: "You in Ukraine were the first (European) nation to be entrusted to me. Throughout your long persecution you have not lost faith, hope or love. I always pray for you. I shall protect you for the glory and the future of God's kingdom on earth."

Our Lady's exhortations at these apparitions are of relevance to the whole world:

"Pray for Russia and recite the Rosary, the weapon against Satan. If there is not a return to Christianity in Russia, there will be a third world war; the whole world will face ruin."

"Forgive your enemies. Through you and the blood of the martyrs will come the conversion of Russia. Repent and love one another. The times are coming which have been foretold as being those in the end times."

Mary Prior (Chipping Norton)



Parishioner Andrea Bates is holding an exhibition of her paintings during Artweeks at Hillside, Oxford road, Enstone, OX7 4NE (opposite the Harrow Inn on the main A44 through Enstone).

The exhibition will be open on May 13, 14, 19, 20 and 21 from 11 am to 6 pm (and other times by appointment – phone number and email in the paper version of the magazine at the back of the church).

All work to be sold in aid of Ukraine.

DOODLEBUG

The Ukraine is suffering every day – but how can we understand its torment?

It is 1944 and I am living in Acton, London in a large Victorian house with my mother, her 3 sisters, my 2 cousins and grandma. My father is overseas fighting with the RAF and has been since 1939.

"Quickly wake up," says my mother as she pulls me out of bed.

Dressing gown on, we rush downstairs as the wailing 'air raid' sirens scream outside. Through the kitchen with my aunts and cousins we run down to the garden and into the air raid shelter. It always smells of earth and damp, but I am used to it now, as it seems that this happens every night.

We huddle together with a torch, sandwiches and 2 flasks of tea and wait and wait.

Then the sound - getting nearer. Rum, rum, rum, rum, like every night — the V1 or flying bomb or doodlebug. We are used to it now and not frightened by the sound. The scary bit is when the engine stops: and then the whistle as the doodlebug falls out of the sky. We wait. Where will it land?

A whoosh and a crump, but it is some way off. But the rum, rum, rum continues and the whistle and the crump.

We sit there trying to be brave, but we are not. When will it stop?

And then rum, rum, rum and silence. The engine stops and we wait for the whistle. It's loud, very loud and there is no crump, but a huge noise and crashing. The ground moves and the shelter shakes and things fall onto it and then it is quiet, very quiet. But the rum, rum, rum carries on.

Then it stops and the 'all clear' siren sounds and we hear the bells of the fire engines.

It is morning and we push our way out of the shelter. The house is still there but not all the windows, and there is broken glass and bits of wood and trees everywhere.

We all run through the house to the front door and into the street. It is a mess with broken things all over the place. At the bottom of the road, we see the fire engines and we run down towards them.

Yesterday there were 8 houses there. Now there are only 3, next to huge piles of bricks and wood and a broken bed. There are firemen on top of the bricks shouting and others pulling at things.

"What are all those blankets on the road in a line," I ask mother.

"Nothing," she says quietly as she takes my hand and we walk back home.

I am too young to really understand what it happening, but I know that tonight we will again be in the shelter listening to the rum rum!!

Today we think we know what The Ukraine is suffering every day and night, with the continuous bombing and the suffering. But we don't. We can only try and understand what it is like and pray for them.

TRAINS, TECHNOLOGY and GOD

One of the advantages of being a retired priest is that, apart from saying Mass every day, I have none of the commitments of a busy parish priest and that means I am free to take little trips to interesting places. Yes, some of those interesting places are beautiful gardens or fascinating historic sites, but they can also be technological marvels. Many years ago I went to visit a friend in Manchester and when asked what I would like to see, I said "The Barton Swing Aqueduct please." Of course, my friend had never heard of this technological marvel where the Manchester Ship Canal is crossed by the much older Bridgwater Canal in an aqueduct that has to swing open to let big ships through on the canal below. An old Mancunian even encouraged me to climb up into the control tower where Jimmy would be pleased to show me things... and he did! So many levers to pull and buttons to press. Magic!

Last year I awaited the completion of Crossrail with eager anticipation. Now called the Elizabeth Line I was down to London within a week of its Grand Opening to travel the Line and marvel at the magnificent stations they have built with all their connecting tunnels. Previously I had enjoyed another day in London visiting Tower Bridge. This is great fun, as you go up in a Lift and then cross over at the high level able to look down at the cars and buses crossing the Bridge below. But the highlight for me was on the other side when one was able to see the big room in which the original steam engine that used to open and close the Bridge still stands. I gasped with delight when I saw its shining domes and pistons, and said without thinking "Praise God."

The point is that we tend to limit God's presence to the natural world. We admire the flowers and plants and trees that God has given us to make our world beautiful and also to enable us to live and breathe. But God is equally present in the beautiful technological marvels that we humans have made, because engineering relies on our human but God-given minds using God-given mathematics to enable us to create such things. If science and technology didn't work then that would be a sign that there is no unifying creative force. The fact that they do is one good reason for belief. Next time you see some idiot taking pictures of a steam engine, it might be me!

Fr Martin





MATTHEW'S SCANDALOUS GOSPEL: A REFLECTION BY FRANCES FLATMAN

By the time anyone reads this we shall be celebrating Easter. In the Catholic 3 year cycle of Gospel readings we are delving into Matthew's Gospel, so it's appropriate that we appreciate precisely what we are in fact celebrating. Most people are rarely given the opportunity to read an entire gospel, so get tiny snippets which have the effect of distorting our view of Jesus, so for instance miracles become what we would expect of someone from God, but we don't take on board the shocking narrative that runs from start to finish through them and all of Matthew. When one looks at what the Church, particularly that in the West has become, with its rows over different liturgies, its rules over behaviour which tend towards making it an exclusive club, and the history of imperialism we have inherited, there are times when you have to ask yourself if somewhere along the road we might have lost touch with the extremely radical Jesus of the Gospels, and with Matthew's in particular.

Matthew presents Jesus as a scandal! He does it in many ways: by exploring Jesus' behaviour and in the language used by Jesus about the Jewish establishment and their reaction to him which ultimately leads to his crucifixion – the most appalling of deaths and the ultimate shaming and

degradation of a human being. Matthew frequently uses the word 'scandal' for Jesus which is sadly translated into a tepid 'cause offence' or 'stumbling block' in English translations, but we should not allow these efforts to water-down the gospel to detract from the radical sharpness of his gospel and the power with which Matthew paints his portrait as he mourns Jewish rejection of the messiah as the faith goes out to pagans and the temple Judaism he knew lay in ruins.

We begin full on with the Infancy Narrative of Jesus, in which one of my great tutors pointed out that Jesus came from a family of 'liars, cheats, murderers and adulterers!' This should warn us from the start! Indeed, his own birth was equally scandalous. The Jesus of Matthew behaves consistently in a manner which scandalises the Jewish community of which he is a part. His healings appear to take place almost entirly on the Sabbath, the day Jews were forbidden to work; he rejects the Jewish ritual codes about food, washing before meals and consistently and deliberately makes himself ritually impure by physical contact with the leprous, those who are blind; the lame and even worse those psychologically ill, thought demon possessed, and worse still, will visit pagan territory and reach out to them. Jesus' followers include the hated tax collectors, collaborators with Roman occupiers and others of ill repute. Moreover, his attitude to the Jewish cities of Galilee, is little short of abusive as he compares them very unfavourably with the great pagan cities of Tyre and Sidon – or even with Sodom, historically the by-word for depravity. Jesus physically attacks the temple because of its corruption and will forecast its destruction. Finally, he raises the dead.

The Jewish Sadducees and Pharisees, those in charge of the temple who insist that all must keep the Jewish laws on food and ritual purity etc. are scandalised and claim that Jesus' healings are achieved by demonic powers. From early in the Gospels, we find plans to destroy Jesus forming in the hearts and minds of the authorities. Jesus' parables are frequently both anarchic and funny – well they would have been to those who understood that a single talent was worth 15 years labour so that ten thousand was way beyond the dreams of any and full of laughter. Pharisees are criticised as irreverent as he knocks the system, calling them 'blind guides'. In fact when you go through the Gospel, it's hard to find Jesus being really nice to anyone, with the exception of children.

At his Passion his closest disciples desert Jesus and his trial by the Sanhedrin achieves success by the production of 'false witnesses' by the authorities. Utterly rejected, Jesus, God made Man for our salvation dies virtually alone in agony, naked and oozing blood. The crowds who flocked so enthusiastically to him for healing, for food, for help, all call for the release of the robber and murderer Barabbas at his trial before Pilate, the Roman Governor, who, curiously is the only one who wants to release him. It is only with the resurrection appearances that things come together for his followers.

Ruth Burrows, a Carmelite writer remarks 'I would venture to say for most, there would be no significant difference in their religious attitude if the incarnation had not taken place...Instead of looking at Jesus to learn what God is like and how we go to him, we project on to Jesus our ideas of God and so lose sight of him and his essential message.' Well, perhaps it's time for more study of the Gospels, especially of Matthew!

BOOK REVIEW: WHEN SILENCE SPEAKS

When Silence Speaks, by Jennifer Moorcroft, Gracewing 2019

When Silence Speaks is the biography of a late 19th/early 20th century French lay woman called Elisabeth Leseur whose life of prayer and service in the world led to the amazing conversion of her atheist husband after her death.

Elisabeth was raised in a loving, well-off Catholic family and the Faith was very important to her from a young age. Her husband Felix was raised as a Catholic, but during his medical studies became an adamant atheist. Despite their disagreement of faith, they loved each other deeply and Elisabeth devoted her life to praying and offering her many sufferings for his conversion.

Moorcroft breaks down Elisabeth's life into ten chapters, beginning with "Early Life," and ending with "Suffering Accepted and Offered." In each chapter Moorcroft explores different aspects of Elisabeth's life and uses excerpts from Elisabeth's writings throughout to give the reader insight into her ongoing spiritual journey.

Clearly Moorcroft extensively researched Elisabeth's life. She includes such intimate details and elegant descriptions that the book reads like a novel at times. We learn the exact birthdays of every member of the family (parents and four siblings), the address of Elisabeth's family home in Paris and their second home in the countryside, of which Moorcroft writes, "Elisabeth always preferred the country to the city and looked forward to staying there, with its

rustic charm, its trees and flowers and lush gardens." (p. 3)

Elisabeth lived a privileged life of social status and enjoyable travel; however, she also knew suffering. Moorcroft describes her as having a delicate conscience, which she illustrates with various quotes from Elisabeth's childhood journal. As a child and young adult she suffered severe illness; first hepatitis, then typhoid fever, both of which affected her health all throughout her life. The fact that she was unable to conceive children was deeply saddening to her maternal heart. Moorcroft continually illustrates the merit of Elisabeth's suffering by noting that Elisabeth was more deeply pained than she often let on in her writings.

Two years into her marriage Elisabeth's prayer life began to degenerate and she started spending most of her spare time in "broadening her cultural and intellectual life." (p. 23) She and Felix travelled and socialized often. It wasn't until after Elisabeth read two books recommended to her by Felix with the intention of destroying her faith that Elisabeth deeply repented of her spiritual lukewarmness. The atheistic writing made her return to the Gospels, of which she wrote, "I read the Gospel, and by that sweet light I discover in myself many a nook of egotism and vanity. Unique book, perpetually new, supremely beautiful, resplendent with truth, of exquisite grace and charm, from which one can draw unendingly and never exhaust it!" (p. 29) From here she went on to build up a library of Catholic books to expand her knowledge and strengthen her faith.

After her deeper conversion, Felix became even more critical of her faith. Moorcroft writes, "[S]he had to tread a path of living with someone she loved deeply, who not only failed to understand what was now most precious to her but who was actively and resolutely opposed to it." This lack of unity with and criticism from her husband pained Elisabeth greatly, but she did not allow it to steal her joy, instead she spent more and more time in prayer and discerned for herself that God was calling her to an "intellectual apostolate," (p. 49) to be lived out amongst her and Felix's atheistic social circle. Moorcroft uses another quote to beautifully summarize her mission: "Not to accept everything, but to understand everything; not to approve of everything, but to forgive everything; not to adopt everything, but to search for the grain of truth that is contained in everything." (p. 50)

Elisabeth experienced great loneliness and isolation on account of her faithfulness, especially after losing her sister Juliette, a kindred spirit to her who gave her much support in her Christian vocation. Later in life, she found deep friendship with a religious sister and Moorcroft devotes a chapter to this relationship, referencing letters exchanged by them.

In the last two (of twelve) chapters of the book, Moorcroft describes Felix's conversion. I found these last chapters the most compelling. After Elisabeth's death, Felix feels the presence of Elisabeth and is convinced that she is alive in the communion of saints, leading to his dramatic conversion and reconciliation with the Church. There is not much detail given about this, which initially disappointed me as it seemed to be the climax of the book, however as I began to reflect upon this I realised the profound and humbling truth that Elisabeth's entire adult life was an offering for her beloved husband's conversion. In sacrifice and love, she sowed seeds which she would never see flourish with her mortal eyes.

Although the book was very enlightening and I enjoyed reading it, I did find the writing style and composition, especially the insertion of quotations from Elisabeth's journal and letters, somewhat awkward at times. However, Elisabeth's deepening conversion throughout her life and Moorcroft's attention to detail in her storytelling kept me wanting to read on.

I would definitely recommend this book as a thorough and enjoyable

introduction to Elisabeth Leseur. I know I am inspired by Elisabeth's life and want to read more of her writings. Her life can serve as an inspiration and encouragement for many, but especially for women unable to have children or women in an unequally yoked marriage. "The perfect union of two souls-how beautiful a harmony that would make! With him I love best in the world, let me one day make this harmony, O my God!" (68) Elisabeth longed for unity with her husband on earth, but obviously God had other plans, which she humbly accepted with grace. This life is not the end— When Silence Speaks is a beautiful reminder of that.





Picture by Morty, aged 7