

# VENERABILE VIEW

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The English College Rome

## FROM THE RECTOR'S WINDOW

Spring 2015

As I write, there's a touch of irony in the title of my column in the *Venerabile View* – because all that can be seen from the Rector's window is the scaffolding and the canvas that's been put in place so that the façades of the *cortile* can be cleaned and repainted. From September through to December we had scaffolding on the via di Monserrato, covering the whole of the street front of the College from the main entrance to the corner with via Montoro. The results are magnificent. It's almost worth a trip to Rome just to admire the new look. And if the *cortile* looks even half as good when it's finished, it will make all the pain worthwhile.

So when the new students arrived in Rome in September after their month of Italian study, they had to pick their way through the scaffolding to get into the College. Undaunted, they threw themselves into the task of settling into seminary life. There were eight new faces in all. Two were transferring from other major seminaries, one came from Valladolid and five were starting out. Deacon Kevin Athaide (Nottingham) joined us from Allen Hall in order to begin a licence in Biblical Theology. Mark Paver (Salford) had been studying for New York at the North American College in Rome, but he had asked to transfer to his native diocese and this meant switching seminary. Dominic Jenkinson (Hallam) had just completed the propaedeutic year in Spain. The other five were Alexander Balzanella (Westminster), Andy Clarke (Nottingham), Simon Jones and Matthew King (Portsmouth) and Piotr Wygnanski (East Anglia). This brought the total up to 40 resident seminarians – with Deacon Tony Rosso our one non-resident, as he was spending a semester in Florida to be close to his mother during her grave illness.

Many of the Friends will be sad to learn of the death of Carlo Benvenuti, who worked in the *portineria* for almost forty years. The last of his many services to the College came during the summer months while the College was virtually empty, when he arranged for the reupholstering of the sofas in the Student Common Room – last year's gift from the Friends of the Venerabile. He was very proud of the results. Sadly, by the time the students returned it was too late to thank him personally. His funeral took place on 22 September, and by a remarkable stroke of Providence, Cardinal Cormac was in Rome at the time. It was he who had first employed Carlo as porter on 1 January 1975 and it was fitting that he was able to preside at the Requiem Mass held in the College Church.



A week later, when all the students had returned, we set off on our pilgrimage to the Holy Land. This was made possible by the generosity of Pamela and Nicholas Coote, and we were delighted that Pam was able to join us. Our indefatigable guide, Fr Mervyn Tower, took us to Jerusalem for our first three nights, followed by two in Galilee. For many of us it was our first visit to the Holy Land and it was deeply moving to be able to celebrate Mass in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Garden of Gethsemane,

the Basilica of the Nativity, the Mount of the Beatitudes and the church on the shores of the Sea of Galilee associated with the events of John 21.



The Saturday coincided with the Jewish festival *Yom Kippur* and we had to ensure that we did not travel by coach during daylight hours. This gave us an unexpected opportunity for a rest on the Mount of the Beatitudes after our morning walk to Tabgha

and Capernaum, and by that stage we were ready for it. The whole experience has given a new dimension to our understanding of the Scriptures and it has brought to life many of the events we read about in the Gospels. We feel a deeper closeness to Our Lord now that we have walked where he walked and seen what he saw. Jerusalem, of course, has changed significantly since his time, but the Sea of Galilee with the surrounding hills must have looked very similar when he and his first disciples were there. For me one of the most moving moments was our boat ride on the Sea of Galilee early on the Sunday morning, our last day in the Holy Land. We were the only boat on the lake at the time. What a wonderful way to renew our commitment to “put out into the deep”!



Sadly, we weren't able to be present when Cardinal Vincent Nichols took possession of his titular church in Rome, Sant' Alfonso, as this happened while we were in Jerusalem.

But on our first Sunday back in Rome, we made a short pilgrimage to his church in order to dedicate the year to the Blessed Virgin with prayers before the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. We were delighted to be joined on this occasion by the Cardinal himself, as he had stayed on in Rome to take part in the Synod on the Family.

It is good to be able to welcome Father Martin Kelly onto the staff of the College. For two years he has been part of the community as a student priest and now, during the final year of his three year canon law licence, he has assumed the role of Pastoral Director, bringing the staff back up to five. Welcome, Father Martin! No sooner do we fill one vacancy, though, than another appears. Father Bruce had to return to the UK after Christmas, in order to be in a position to apply for British citizenship by the summer. His place has been taken, from January to the summer of 2015, by Monsignor Peter Fleetwood, an old friend of many of us in Rome, with years of experience of seminary formation. Welcome, Father Peter!



Mgr. Peter Fleetwood with the Rector

One of the significant projects that we are currently carrying forward concerns the College Archives. Like the work on the restoration of the façades, this has been made possible by the generosity of our great benefactors Urs and Francesca Schwarzenbach, who have been so good to the College over the years. Back in 2007, it was they who enabled us to rehouse the Archives in a secure location with top quality storage and conservation facilities. It was they, too, who funded the Schwarzenbach Fellowship, held in 2013 by Professor Maurice Whitehead of Swansea University and culminating in the fascinating lecture that he delivered in May 2014.

Professor Whitehead has just returned and is about to spend three years as Director of a new project aimed at bringing the catalogue up to modern professional standards and making it available online. We have long been conscious of the many hidden treasures in the College's historic archive and we look forward to exploring them further and opening them up to Catholic historians.

In accordance with tradition, the last day before the Christmas vacation saw some of our students admitted to candidacy. This year there were four: Philip Andrews (Southwark), Richard Howard (Salford), Peter Stoddart (Hexham and Newcastle) and Elliott Wright (Leeds). Presiding over the ceremony was Bishop Seamus Cunningham of Hexham and Newcastle. We keep the new candidates very much in our prayers as they commit themselves to the final stage of preparation for orders.

The end of January saw Rector and Vice-Rector setting off on a journey to Naples. No, I don't mean

*la bella Napoli* under the shadow of Vesuvius, but Naples in Florida, where Deacon Tony Rosso was ordained to the priesthood on Monday 2 February by Bishop Marcus Stock of Leeds. How many English College ordinations have taken place across the Atlantic, I wonder? This one was occasioned by the illness of Deacon Tony's mother. As she was unable to travel to Europe, we made the journey over there. *Ad multos annos*, Father Tony. We look forward to having you back with us for the second semester of this year, as you complete your licence in fundamental theology.

It remains only for me to thank all the Friends of the College for their support to us in so many ways. Your kindness and your prayers are greatly appreciated. Please continue to pray for vocations and for all our students.

**Mgr. Philip Whitmore**

**Rector**

### **A VEC Ordination in the Sunshine**

The feast of the Presentation of the Lord, February 2nd has always been one of my favourite celebrations in the church's calendar: the wonderful description of Mary and Joseph taking the baby Jesus, to Temple; their meeting with the prayerful souls of Simeon and Anna; the lighting and blessing of candles; a procession into church; and also, it just so happens to be my birthday! When I heard that one of our top year students, Tony Rosso was to be ordained as a priest on that day this year I was thrilled; an ordination to the priesthood is a wonderful celebration of Church and how appropriate for it to take place on the day we celebrate Christ being revealed a light for the peoples.

When you hear that the ordination took place in Naples you may imagine that we journeyed down the *autostrada del sole* a couple of hours south of Rome. However, Tony's family currently live in Naples, Florida, USA and it was there, in his home parish of St Agnes, in the diocese of Venice, that Tony was ordained on 2<sup>nd</sup> February. The ordination was arranged there to enable his mother, who had to cancel her trip to Tony's diaconate last July due to ill health, to be present at the ordination. Because it was during exam time in Rome, his fellow students were not able to make the journey, however the college was represented by the Rector and Vice Rector. As a student of Leeds diocese, Tony was delighted that the ordination was celebrated by his own, recently appointed ordinary, Bishop Marcus Stock, himself a former VEC student. The diocese of Leeds was also represented by the Vocations' Director, Mgr Paul Grogan, and three priests with whom Tony had been on parish placements, Fr Ian Smith, Fr John Aveyard and Fr Chris Angel. The VEC / Leeds presence was further increased by the presence of Fr Russell Wright who is currently serving in a parish in Florida.

The Parish and Church of St Agnes was founded just nine years ago but it is already a large and vibrant community. We received a very warm welcome from everyone, especially the Pastor, Fr Bob Cantor. It was the first ordination to the priesthood to take place in Naples and virtually the whole parish turned out join the celebration. It was estimated that almost 2000 people filled the church.

The ceremony was incredibly uplifting and beautifully celebrated by Bishop Marcus; his first ordination as a bishop. He related how he had visited the oldest priest in the diocese before he set off and asked what advice he should pass on to the newest priest in the diocese; "tell him to smile and be good ... and not to get into



any trouble with his bishop”, came the wise and amusing reply! The music was inspirational, led by the parish choir which numbers some ninety people. The full time music director of the parish is none other than Tony’s own father; it was remarkable to see him moving from leading the choir to sitting with the family to witness the rite of ordination. Tony’s family, his Mother and Father, two sisters and his brother looked on with great love and much emotion. The guests from Rome and Leeds were offered wonderful hospitality by Tony’s family and friends; the warmth and generosity of the welcome will live long in the memory.

Fr Tony completes his studies in Rome this summer and then will be appointed to a parish in the diocese of Leeds. Please pray for him and all our priests in their ministry.

Ad multos annos, Fr Anthony Rosso.

**Fr. Mark Harold**

**Vice Rector**

## PALAZZOLA

I’m glad to say 2014 was a very busy year at Villa Palazzola so I thought it’s time to bring all the Friends of the Venerabile up to date with what’s going on at Palazzola, who’s been staying here and what we offer to our guests, in particular the Friends.

Early in the year we hosted the Swiss Guard’s annual retreat, consisting of 42 recruits and existing members.



The Swiss Guard on duty

Coming from the different cantons the groups were divided by language, the first being the German speakers for 3 days, followed by the Italian and French speakers and the final group the German speakers. Each group has its own mother tongue chaplain and facilitator. The Swiss Guard brought a certain amount of precision as one would expect from the Swiss! Lunch began on the dot of 1pm and finished precisely at 2pm. Chillingly, as part of their facilitation they received briefings on responding to possible terrorist attacks. It seems they were highly satisfied with their stay on the shores of Lake Albano as they have just confirmed their booking with us for next year.

### Wedding bells

Palazzola continues to host weddings and this year we have six booked, starting in May and finishing in September.

Weddings fill Palazzola with a wonderful atmosphere of happiness and hope. The look on the guests’ faces as they walk through our doors is priceless, most have never seen this kind of venue before and many are in awe. The special aspect to weddings at Palazzola is the fact that the couple can be married in our beautiful church, have their dream reception here and dance to the early hours with all their family and friends, without any need for taxis or transport. The day after the wedding is also wonderful for family and friends. They stay together and have a chance to catch up and talk with relatives they may not have seen for years. This is just perfect since otherwise couples tend to wave goodbye to their guests at the reception and dash off on their honeymoon.





Most of our weddings are for UK residents but this year we have a couple from Dubai (British) and Thailand, which created lots of bureaucratic problems. However, the couple were intent on having their Catholic wedding with us and so it will be! We also have an American couple from Los Angeles who were looking for just the right kind of Catholic venue for their wedding. Their big day is in August 2016.

Weddings are always a joy and are great for Palazzola as they often bring us new business. Many of our guests, the families and friends of the happy couple enjoy the wedding so much they decide to come back again.

#### **St Edward's Conference Room**

Has been a great success during 2014 and is now a very popular venue for conferences among all denominations.

Participants enjoy superb facilities and being able to have their coffee breaks while absorbing the stunning panoramic views from the terrace. A chance to bask in the sunshine while reflecting on their deliberations. This year we host many different groups, among them the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales for their Spring Plenary Assembly and In-service Study Meeting. They too will make full use of St Edward's conference and terrace area.



May I suggest St Edward's would be the perfect venue for a Friends' AGM in the future?

St Edward's Conference Room

#### **Swimming pool and tennis courts.**

Our swimming pool needs some loving care, and thanks to a fundraising project we arranged via our guests we have raised a few thousand Euros to carry out a general tidy up, provide new sun beds, paint the changing rooms and extend our small pool kiosk. The pool opens officially on 1 May and we hope to have everything finished by then.

The tennis court is our next project, it badly needs resurfacing. We are in the process of seeking estimates for this job as many of the College students really miss not having somewhere to play tennis. Lots of our guests would also like to be able to play a game or two of tennis.

#### **The Albano path.**

You may have heard of the landslide which took place 14 months ago and closed the lakeside path to Albano. Sadly little has happened in the meantime and the path still awaits remedial works by the local National Parks Association and the Council architectural offices. However it has not discouraged our guests and the students who have devised another route that involves going round the "top field" and the tennis court area to descend onto the path on the far side of the landslide. Hopefully the authorities will address the problem of restoring the path this year.

#### **Finally**

I wish all the Friends of the Venerabile a very happy summer and I want to thank you for all you do for our students who visit Palazzola and for your support of so many other projects in the College. We want you to come and enjoy Palazzola so let me urge you to look at some of the very special offers we have on our website [www.palazzola.it](http://www.palazzola.it). We have some great promotions such as Art and Vino, 18-22 May, a chance to explore some of the cultural riches to be found in Italy.

Pope Francis has declared 2016 a Holy Year so keep an eye on our website for lots of special deals for parishes, schools and groups of Friends who would like to be in Rome for this special event in the life of the Church. Outside high season we will continue to offer our usual fantastic hospitality for greatly discounted prices, especially to the Friends. Right now the exchange rate is very much in favour of sterling so there's no better time to book your stay in Palazzola. We hope to see you all very soon!

**Joyce Hunter**     **Director, Villa Palazzola**

## Each Febuary the Students elect the new Senior Student

Senior Student  
Tom Cunnah



Deputy Senior Student  
Mike Deas

It is a real pleasure to be able to write these few words to introduce Mike and myself as the 'new team' of Senior and Deputy Senior student. I know that we both feel honoured, and not a little surprised, to be elected by the community and we recognise that it's a wonderful time for the community here with Mgr Whitmore now very much settled in as Rector and with all the challenges and possibilities that lie ahead in discernment and in preparing for priesthood and ministry. Your kind support to us in that process, both spiritual and practical, is very much appreciated by the students here and I'm looking forward to meeting those of you who will be at the AGM this summer.

Mike and I are good friends having actually started seminary together at Valladolid in 2008. We're both keen sportsmen (though, in my case 'keen' means enthusiastic rather than 'impressive') and big film fans. I came here to the Venerabile in 2009 and Mike joined the community here in 2011 after two years at Ushaw.

After six years of formation, that first year seems, at one and the same time to be just yesterday but also a world away! We're due to be ordained as deacons this July and we've both started licence courses this year: In each case, our Bishops have asked us to build on knowledge and skills that we had before coming to seminary; Mike in following his Classics studies at Oxford with a degree in Scripture at the Biblicum, and, in my case, with a Canon Law licence at the Gregorian after years of practicing as a solicitor in London and then in Manchester. The latter is Mike's home town, so we have that in common too.....though I don't share Mike's passionate support for Manchester United.

Please keep the community here in your prayers as we prepare hearts and minds in the hope of responding to Christ's call to serve his people.

**Tom Cunnah**

### **Have you ever wondered...?**

**Every day people use picturesque phrases without always realising their origins. Have you ever wondered where some of the sayings come from? Below you will find some everyday sayings which are actually quotations from the Bible. Check them out.**

**A wolf in sheep's clothing...** Jesus used this phrase to warn his disciples against people who pretended to be their friends, but whose intention was to destroy them. Today the same phrase is often used to describe a person who hides evil intentions under an innocent manner. (Matthew 7:15)

**An olive branch...**After a serious quarrel, one side may say or do something to show they wish to be friends again. We say they have held out an olive branch. The reference is to the dove which returned to Noah's ark carrying an olive leaf. This was taken as a sign that God was again at peace with the world. (Genesis 8: 10-11)

**The writing on the wall...** It is sometimes said that a person who has heeded signs of imminent disaster or downfall has seen the writing on the wall. Such was the vivid experience of King Belshazzar at the feast.. (Daniel 5).

More next time.

**Louise Sage**

## Chairman's Report

My Autumn report ended at the point where Teresa and I were just about to move from Wiltshire to Devon.

We are now settled into our new home at Buckfast and although, as many of you will already know, a move to a new house means lots of work, I have to say that I am enjoying getting back to the DIY scene - even if it is disconcerting to discover water leaks and to have to fathom out unfamiliar electrical circuits! The worst aspect of this move to Devon is the technology; having been used to "super fast" broadband in Wiltshire, I can only describe the offering here in Devon as "super slow".

Activities relating to the *Friends* have also slowed down. After the frequent visits to Rome during my first year as Chairman, I have only visited Rome once this year, for the regular meeting with the Rector. This was a only short trip (just two days), but as well as meeting the Rector I was able see the vast improvement to the Students' Common Room and also to meet one or two of the new students.

Back in Buckfast, I have spent much time arranging for the Buckfast "away weekend" scheduled for 12 -14 June. We now have 28 people signed up for the visit when we will spend time on diverse sacred and secular activities, ranging from beautiful Benedictine liturgies though to a ride on one of the older steam trains now operated along the Dart Valley by the South Devon Railway Trust. On Saturday evening we will be joined at Dinner by the Right Honourable Ann Widdecombe DSG, who will also be our After Dinner Speaker. We are grateful that she has agreed to join us and it should be a splendid evening! If you would like to join us in June please either email or phone me because there are still rooms available in the newly appointed Northgate accommodation.

Sadly, as usual, I have to tell you that our numbers are still reducing. People are dying, or resigning when they have to go into care homes, and meanwhile we are failing to recruit new members. Once again I appeal to you all – please each of you try to find a friend who would like to support our Student Priests.

Whilst talking about recruitment to one of our members I asked whether she would be prepared to write a paragraph for publication – Please see her suggestions below together with my response.

Meanwhile, I look forward to seeing those who are coming to the Buckfast weekend, and trust that you all had a joyous and blessed Easter season.

### Mike Lang.

Tina writes: –

Would it be an idea for some parishes to consider "adopting" the College in the same way as projects in the mission field have been adopted in the past. People in this country are gradually waking up to the implications of the shortage of priests, as parishes have to amalgamate or to accept the need to share a priest with another parish, and this might be a very opportune moment to float the idea of helping ordinands from this country, where our need is almost as great now as in the overseas areas to which we have been accustomed to direct our efforts. If we trained speakers and prepared display material – perhaps even a DVD showing the life of the College – it might be possible to put on local coffee mornings/evenings to encourage our fellow-parishioners to get involved.

Chairman's response:-

Before we undertake anything expensive or time-consuming, I would like to get your reactions to the suggestion. Would you be willing to organise an event in your parish? Do you think the response would be favourable? Is your Diocese (like ours!) holding special Vocations events with which this could be tied in? Please let me have your thoughts in due course, and if it seems worthwhile I will put forward more detailed proposals in my next report.

**TOWARDS ADVENT 2015**  
Annual Festival of Catholic Culture

**Saturday 28th November**

Westminster Cathedral Hall

**10.00 am - 4.00 pm**

Details of Opening Ceremony,  
talks and workshops to follow

Displays by Catholic groups,  
organisations and charities  
Refreshments available all day

Play corner for children

Books, DVDs, CDs and cards on sale

**ENTRY FREE**

As in the previous four years  
*Friends of the Venerable* will again be  
taking a stand at this Festival

If you are in the area on that day, do  
please call in and meet us  
We would be delighted to see you

**Ordinations to the Priesthood**

We have received notification that the following  
students from the VEC will be Ordained as  
follows:

Sat 18<sup>th</sup> July 2015      1200  
Rev. Matthew O’Gorman  
St. George’s Cathedral Southwark.

Sat 25<sup>th</sup> July 2015      1000  
Rev. Sean Crawley  
The Cathedral Church of Saint Anne    Leeds

20th June 2015  
Rev. Tao Nguyen  
Oslo

12th September 2015  
Rev. Kevin Athaide  
Leicester

In association with the *Friends of the Venerable*,  
we offer you the opportunity to purchase sterling  
silver hall-marked jewellery relief engraved  
bearing the details of the shield of the *Venerable*.

Cheques (payable to Rev Thomas Wood) with  
order to Fr Thomas Wood, LACE, Croxteth  
Drive, Sefton Park, Liverpool, L17 1AA. Prices  
include UK P&P. Profits to the *Friends*.



Cuff links - £55



Ornate lapel badge £30



Pendant with College  
crest £40.  
22" silver chain £22



Ornate Pendant with  
College shield £35  
22" Silver chain £22



Plain lapel badge £25

**We welcome the following new members (since November 2014)**

Mrs K. Newton (Elsted)  
Mrs M Tomlin (Caterham)  
Mr & Mrs M King (Hereford)  
Mr T Tyler (Sevenoaks)  
Mr & Mrs P Hennessey (Bristol)

Mr & Mrs D. R. Wood (Dawlish)  
Mrs E Coughlan (Preston)  
Mr & Mrs P Jenkinson (Rotherham)  
Mr. M McEvoy (Gretton)

Compiled by Mike Lang. Many thanks to all who have contributed text and photographs.