

VENERABILE VIEW

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The English College Rome



FROM THE RECTOR'S WINDOW

Autumn 2021



It's good to be in Rome at the start of the new formation year. There is always a sense of excitement as the College comes together again, but this year there is also a feeling of relief that we can (almost) get back to normal life after these last eighteen months of Covid. Italy is open; the parishes are open; the universities are open. On Sunday 17 October we opened our doors to the public for Sunday Mass for the first time since March 2020. Guests are now welcome to join us for meals in the refectory. It is such a joy to welcome people and re-connect again with the wider world.

I arrived in Rome at the end of July. The photo here is not the view from my window but the view from our roof, looking west towards Sant' Andrea della Valle. I sent this photo to friends back home just to prove to them that I really had moved to Rome!



I had two very precious weeks overlapping with Mgr Philip Whitmore. He is having a few months' much deserved rest and sabbatical before he starts a new appointment after Christmas. We are all so grateful for everything he has brought to the College over these last eight years, and I am full of gratitude for the support and encouragement he has given to me personally. Let us keep him very much in our prayers.

When Mgr Philip had left, I went to Assisi for two weeks to perfect my Italian; or rather, to bring it up a notch from where I left it in 1997. We then had a wonderful three days at Palazzola as a formation team: myself, Fr John Flynn (the Vice Rector), Fr Konrad Grech (Spiritual Director), Fr James McAuley (Coordinator of Intellectual Formation), and Fr Michael Doody (Coordinator of Pastoral Formation). Time to pray, to get to know each other and share our faith, and to prepare for the coming year.

The new men arrived mid-September for a fortnight of induction, Italian lessons and orientation. Luke Theobald from Birmingham Diocese, Ludvig Hareide from Oslo Diocese, and Charles Cowper from Ridley College – our Anglican exchange student. They were soon joined by Fr Christopher Warren (Hexham & Newcastle) and Fr Ansel D’Mello (Portsmouth) who are here for further studies, and Fr David Grant who is on a short sabbatical. In total we are now twenty-two seminarians, plus five priests for studies or sabbatical, and five members of the formation team – a total of thirty-two residents in the house.

The highlight of the induction period was undoubtedly meeting Pope Francis. We went to the general audience expecting to wave at him from a distance. But right at the last minute one of the security guards called the English College group to come forward and we had a few minutes alone with Pope Francis. He greeted me as the new rector, and spoke to each of the new men personally. It was a real privilege to meet him, and it certainly deepened our sense of communion with him, and through him with the universal Church.



We stuck to our tradition of having our annual retreat at Palazzola just before the semester began. The retreat giver was Fr Gerry Sheehan, a priest of Opus Dei who is well known to many of us through his ministry of spiritual direction in England. There were some great conferences, and during meals we listened to a recording of the Screwtape Letters by CS Lewis – very amusing and very sobering, in equal measure. The Sunday after the retreat we went to the Church of Santa Maria in Trastevere to consecrate our year and our lives to the Virgin Mary – a very beautiful tradition at the College.

And yes we had a magnificent lunch in a local restaurant too!



As a new rector, I didn't arrive with a big list of revolutionary changes to impose on the College. Of course I bring some of my own convictions about formation, and I have been influenced by my own experiences at the VEC and at Allen Hall Seminary in Westminster Diocese. But I'm very conscious that I am arriving at a College with its own extraordinary history - a place that has been shaped, for the good, by so many others. It instils a healthy sense of humility in a new rector!

I'm grateful that I am joining a very experienced team here. Together, as a community, we want to do a lot of listening and learning. Listening to everyone involved in the life of the College, to what the Church is saying about priestly formation today, and above all listening to the Holy Spirit together.

One of the priorities coming from the Congregation for Clergy in the Vatican is that seminaries find a better balance of the four fundamental dimensions of priestly formation: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. How can we acknowledge the continuing importance of intellectual formation without letting the academic timetable dominate everything, to the exclusion of the other areas? How can we put more focus, for example, on pastoral formation and the rich learning that takes place through a regular pastoral placement?

How can we give proper time and space to human development, to fraternity, and to deepening our spiritual lives?

Just a small example: As a formation team we had some good discussion about the structure of the week and decided to experiment with a few small tweaks to the timetable. We used to have early morning Mass, but now on most weekdays we have Mass before lunch (and a slightly later lunch as a consequence). This gives us time to have half an hour of silent prayer in the Church together each morning, before we pray the Divine Office.

We have also started to pray the rosary before supper each Monday, and have an hour of Exposition on Sunday evenings which includes Vespers and Benediction. It seems important to put Eucharistic Adoration and Devotion to Our Lady at the heart of our seminary community, and to start each day with a period of silence and contemplation.

We are trying to respond to Pope Francis’s insistent call for a more missionary and outward looking Church. Our weekly pastoral classes are now structured around three phases of pastoral formation that have the headings: “Missionary Disciples”, “Missionary Communities”, and “Missionary Priests”. In the same vein, our seminarians have started their weekly pastoral placements: working in local parishes, helping with social action projects, welcoming pilgrims to Rome, etc.

The VEC has always been a place of hospitality and a focus for English-speaking visitors in Rome, both Catholic and non-Catholic alike. October saw a number of distinguished people visiting the College, including Lord McFall (the Lord Speaker), Sir Lindsay Hoyle (the Speaker of the House of Commons—pictured on the right) and Helen Wood his Chief of Staff, Cardinal Anders Arborelius (Archbishop of Stockholm), Archbishop Justin Welby (Archbishop of Canterbury), Archbishop Ian Ernest (Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome), and our own Cardinal Vincent Nichols.



Recent graduate William Jolleys has taken up a Persons Fellowship at the College which involves archival research supervised by Prof Maurice Whitehead, our Director of Heritage Collections.

We have been very sad to hear of the recent death of Sr Gertrude Standring. She was at the heart of the Palazzola community for many years when the Sisters of Mercy were there. She was such a warm, loving and wise friend to so many of us. May she rest in peace.

The most recent event has been the “New Men’s Dinner”. Our Italian kitchen team fought valiantly against their genetically programmed need to cook pasta, and instead gave us an English pub supper of fish and chips - even with mushy peas - followed



by apple crumble and ice cream.

After dinner we went down to the Crypt for some entertainment. The evening marked the end of the beginning of the new formation year. There are no longer "new men" and "old men" but just a fantastic community of English College seminarians and priests looking forward to the year ahead. Please pray for us! We are praying for you too. We are so grateful to the Friends – for all the support that you give us in so many ways.



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Fr Stephen Wang

A message from the Senior Student.

I had hoped to join you all online for your recent AGM but I was unexpectedly waylaid by pastoral responsibilities. In lieu of that time please let me take this opportunity to thank all of the *Friends of the Venerable* for their ongoing support of the student body. Your very generous gifts really do make a big difference to our daily life here in Rome. During this last year alone, you have gifted us a new car, restocked the kitchen with crockery, glassware and all manner of pots and pans, not to mention that you bought us a couple of bikes too.

The new hybrid car is perfect for life in Rome, keeping our emissions as low as possible whilst sat in the Roman traffic jams. These cars really do help us to get around to our various places of pastoral work, to dear old Palazzola, and even to get way to all matter of exciting places on our unscheduled weekends. For the first time in years, we have an entirely matching set of crockery and glassware in the student kitchen, rather than it being stocked by mere odds and ends. Not to mention it now having all the pots, pans, chopping boards and accessories also needed to make sumptuous meals in groups of varying sizes come an evening or day off. Thanks for empowering our culinary creativity. As for the bikes, they're super useful for getting around the city whilst staying in good shape, and having a couple of communal bikes is easier for us to store than lots of people getting their own only to use it once or twice.

In short, many thanks for your recent gifts. They are truly appreciated and help to make our time spent here at the *Venerable* a little more comfortable. Please know that we're very grateful and indeed pray regularly in thanksgiving for you all.

**Peace,
Deacon Toby.**

If you hold any FOV documentation which might be of interest to all members then please let me know and I will arrange for it to be archived on the website.

Please note that our website archive now holds copies of all Venerable View in my possession.

Annual Meeting Report

Having not held our Annual Meeting in 2020, due to Covid, we were very pleased to be able to hold this year's Annual Meeting on Saturday September 11th on ZOOM. Whilst not as many members as expected were able to join us it was still great to see some friendly faces after all this time of lockdowns and restrictions.

Fr. Francis Murphy, who has replaced Fr. Phil Andrews as our Chaplain, opened the meeting with prayer and explained that he will be celebrating a special Mass for the **Friends** (probably in January in St Georges Cathedral Southwark – details to be circulated).

Our chairman Mike Lang was delighted to welcome the new Rector, Fr. Stephen Wang who, together with the Vice Rector, Fr. John Flynn, was joining us direct from the College in Rome. He also welcomed, as a guest, Mr. Christopher Trott, the newly appointed HM Ambassador to the Holy See.

Fr. Stephen introduced himself and thanked everyone for the welcome that his appointment had received.

In paying tribute to his predecessor, Mgr. Whitmore, he was looking forward to the challenges ahead which would begin this very weekend with the arrival of the new Students.

Fr. John gave us a presentation highlighting the past 12 months and explained how the College had coped successfully with all the problems surrounding the Covid pandemic. We were treated to an excellent visual tour of the College showing the various changes and Improvements that have taken place.

He thanked all the **Friends** for their continued support of the College, both spiritual and practical, and showed photographs of some of the things we have purchased for them.

He detailed the problems facing Palazzola due to the lack of visitors during the past 18 months but was confident that the future was beginning to look good and that bookings were starting to return.

In his Chairman's Report Mike Lang thanked Mgr. Philip Whitmore for his advice and support during the past 8 years. He also thanked Lady Sarah Gough who was standing down from the committee after 10 years. Her contribution to the committee will be greatly missed.

As for next year, the Annual Meeting will take place on Saturday September 3rd 2022. It is hoped that by then we will be able to meet live and so the venue will be Amigo Hall, St. George's Cathedral, Southwark. Please put the date in your diary and pray that Covid will be behind us.

Jim Holroyd
Secretary

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CHAIR REPORT

Earlier this year Mgr. Philip informed us that he was to be replaced as Rector at the end of the Academic year. I would like to put on record my thanks to Mgr. Whitmore for the support that he has given to me as Chairman of the Friends and wish him well as he returns to Westminster after eight years as Rector. Sadly, I have not been able to meet up with Mgr. Philip since his announcement but I hope to make contact once he has settled into his new appointment.

We welcome Fr. Stephen Wang as the new Rector.

We held the Annual Meeting using ZOOM techniques on 11th September.

Sadly only 27 members, plus 1 guest, “attended” with a further 24 sending their apologies. We were very pleased to welcome the guest who was the new British Ambassador to the Holy See, Mr Christopher Trott.

In my report to the meeting I recorded my thanks to Lady Sarah Gough who is standing down after ten years on the committee. Following her election at the AGM in Leeds in November 2011, Sarah’s contribution to the committee has always been positive and invaluable.

Thank you, and God Bless you Sarah from us all.

Let us look at some positive happenings:



We were able to provide the funds to enable the College to buy a new car for the students and I am pleased to report that they chose to purchase a hybrid car which enables them to use it within the City without restrictions.



We contacted a used postage stamp company and started to collect used stamps. This is an easy way to make some money and so I appeal to you all to collect stamps from any mail which you might receive. At the moment there is a shortage of British stamps so the price is high and the price for Vatican stamps is even higher! Most of us receive a large number of Christmas Cards— Please collect the stamps and then send them to me after Christmas.



We also contacted Amazon and joined the range of Charities using their SMILE.AMAZON scheme. And so I appeal to you please use the website “www.smile.amazon” and not “www.amazon” and select Friends of the Venerable as your chosen charity when you go to purchase anything from the Amazon group. Thank you to the few members who have used “smile.amazon” as we have already received a refund of £26.07 (to the end of August).

And now some negatives:



We need to address the falling membership as we have lost members (some due to the direct effects of Covid and some due to the indirect effects with people having to review their charitable donations). Please do your best to attract new members by guiding interested people to our website which has just been updated.



Due to the Covid “restrictions” we (the committee) were unable to attend the Priestly Ordinations but to use an old proverb, “It’s an ill wind.....”. As a result of “streaming” we were “alongside” the Bishop as he ordained the new Priest.

And lastly back to a positive:



It is now only seven months until, with luck, we can all be together in DOP.

M. A. Lang

THE FRIENDS AND THE VENERABLE

The *Friends of the Venerabile* was founded in 1985 to support the work of the Venerable English College in Rome through prayer, friendship and funds. Since its foundation, the Friends have contributed over £400,000.00 to the Venerabile and Palazzola for recreational equipment, refurbishment of rooms, vehicles, liturgical items, books, computers, Seminarian support, College publicity and the Pilgrim Fund. Earlier this year, the Rector presented a 2020 Toyota Corolla Hybrid to the Senior Student on our behalf.

Please see the article and photograph in the Spring 2021 edition of the Venerabile View.

The Friends, aims, membership and benefits

Our aims are to support the students of the College with our prayers, encouragement and financial help and to foster knowledge of the history of the College and its martyrs. Membership, currently just over 350 worldwide, is invited from: past and present members of the College and their families; participants on pilgrimage and visitors to the College and Palazzola; and all those who wish to be associated spiritually and culturally with the College. Membership Subscription is £25 for an individual and £40 for a family

The benefits of membership of the Friends of the Venerabile include: invitations to attend the Annual General Meeting with speakers from the College; a free copy of the College Journal, "The Venerabile"; a regular newsletter with latest information from the College and Palazzola; visits to Rome and to places of interest in England and Wales.

AGM venues:

Each year our Annual General Meeting takes place, usually in September, alternating between London and various venues throughout the country. This enables our Members to have a fair chance of attending at least some of the Meetings. Our last AGM, at which we met, was held in September 2019 in Burntwood, Staffordshire. Of course, since the arrival of the Covid Pandemic the AGM of 2020 was cancelled and the AGM of 2021 was held on Zoom. We sincerely hope that our September 2022 AGM will be held at Southwark Cathedral.

Day trips:

We also gather for day trips to places of interest such as Chichester, Canterbury Cathedral, Arundel Castle, Syon House, Lambeth Palace, Stonor, The Tower of London, Birmingham Oratory and Tyburn Convent. In 2018 and 2019 a number of us joined with Members of the Guild of St. John Southworth from Westminster for a five-day Pilgrimage to York and Durham and South Wales respectively. There are also, of course, opportunities to visit the College in Rome and a good number of us were there to help the College, staff and seminarians celebrate its 650th Anniversary in January 2012.

The Venerabile:

An English pilgrim visiting the College on the Via di Monserrato, Rome, is part of a long tradition. The first recorded English pilgrim to Rome was St. Wilfred in 653. By the time of the second "Holy Year" in 1350, the number of pilgrims from all over Western Christendom had increased: the English Hospice in the Via di Monserrato was one of a number of national hospices for pilgrims that sprang up at this time. It was actually founded on the 27th January 1362 on the initiative of a "guild of the English in Rome" who bought a house on this site from John Shepherd and his wife Alice who were rosary sellers. They offered to run it as a hospice for the welfare of English pilgrims and visitors to Rome, for the use of "the poor, sick, needy and distressed people coming from England to the Eternal City".

The following year a church dedicated to St. Thomas of Canterbury was raised on the site which it still occupies making this Hospice the oldest British Institution in Europe. The Hospice became the spiritual centre of the English in the city and extensive rebuilding began in 1450. By the end of the 15th century the hospice had become a focus for other visitors alongside the pilgrims honouring

Sts. Peter and Paul. Many eminent English scholars visited, such as Thomas Linacre, John Colet and William Lily, who were associates of John Fisher, Thomas Moore and Erasmus. Royal ambassadors and envoys representing the English kings at the Papal Court also visited and the Hospice, under Henry VII, was known as "The King's Hospice" and became an informal Embassy in Rome. However, these close relations between the Tudor monarchy and the English Hospice in Rome made the breach between Henry VIII and the papacy particularly shocking.

By 1538 Henry VIII had no further interest in, or use for, ambassadors in Rome and abandoned the hospice to its fate. Pope Paul II then appointed the exiled Reginald Pole as Warden of the hospice. Pole and his household maintained an English presence in the hospice during the mid-16th century and it became less a haven for willing pilgrims and more a refuge for exiles. He returned to England as Papal Legate and Archbishop of Canterbury in the 1550s under Mary Tudor.

The accession of Elizabeth I in 1558 and the rejection of her by the surviving Catholic recusants who maintained loyalty to the Pope and her excommunication in 1570, ensured that there was no way back for the recusants and, in order to survive, it became vital for English Catholics to secure a succession of priests to serve the minority of Catholics in England.

The English Hospice in Rome then became The Venerable English College in 1579 and was one of the "Seminary Colleges" founded at the birth of the Counter-Reformation by Pope Gregory XIII and Cardinal William Allen established to educate and train young men from England and Wales to return to their own countries as missionaries and martyrs. In 1581, St. Ralph Sherwin became the protomartyr priest of the new college - the first of forty-four.

The training of English and Welsh men for the priesthood continues to this day and on the 27th January 2012 the College celebrated its 650th anniversary.

In 1920 Cardinal Hinsley, whilst Rector of the College purchased Villa Palazzola 18 miles south of Rome in the Alban Hills for use by the seminarians as an escape from the searing heat of Rome in the summer months. It continues to be used by the seminarians but it is also open to families, parish and school groups and individuals for a week or two of peace and quiet. Do check it out on www.palazzola.net.

Mgr. Philip Whitmore, who took over as Rector in mid-August 2013 from Mgr. Nicholas Hudson has now been replaced by Fr. Stephen Wang. The *Friends* would like to put on record their thanks to Mgr. Whitmore for the support he has given the organisation and wish him well as he returns to the Westminster Diocese. Fr Stephen began his new ministry as Rector in September 2021 having been a Senior University Chaplain at the London School of Economics and also Vocations Director for the Diocese of Westminster for the last two years. The Friends send Fr. Stephen their best wishes for a fruitful ministry as Rector and feel, following his presentation as the September AGM, that they are very blessed to have him at the helm.

Unfortunately, our membership numbers have fallen very considerably since the beginning of the Covid pandemic. We desperately need new Priests and, if, after reading this article, you would like to join us in praying for and supporting the seminarians, please contact our Chairman for a Membership Form.

Mike Lang,

St. Angelo, Grange Road, Buckfast, Devon TQ11 0EH. Tel: 01364 644811. Mobile: 0777 286 7029.

E-mail: mikelang537@btinternet.com

Alternatively, please visit our website www.friendsofenglishcollegerome.org.uk.

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Louise Sage, Committee Member

SISTER MARY GERTRUDE STANDRING RIP

by Sr. Assumpta Walsh



Sr. Gertrude
16/08/1933 - 31/10/2021
Professed 64 years
May she Rest in Peace

Sister Mary Gertrude Standring was born into a very devout Catholic Family in Lancashire. She was an only girl and had two brothers. Her Primary and Secondary Education was under the auspicious of the Sisters of Mercy in Paddock House, Oldham. Gertrude was a very apt pupil. On leaving school she joined the Oldham Community where she made her novitiate and finally her Religious Profession

After her Profession she went to University in Belfast where she graduated with a Science Degree.

During her career as a teacher and head teacher she was greatly respected by thousands of pupils, many of whom on hearing of her death, paid amazing tributes to her. Gertrude was, hardworking and keen that every pupil under her care should receive the best possible education to develop as a whole person in mind, body and spirit.

Much to her amazement when she retired as Head teacher she was asked to go and live in the community at Palazzola. Such appointments were looked upon as “a reward” for excellent service back home in the UK or so some members of the Order imagined! Gertrude would not have found it easy to face such a challenging mission but always conscious of her commitment to her Vows she faced the unknown in a spirit of faith and obedience.

To say that Gertrude excelled herself at Palazzola is an understatement. She will be remembered by thousands of visitors to DOP as being prayerful, welcoming, hospitable, hardworking and always ready to give a listening ear and huge smile to a troubled pilgrim or an unsure seminarian. Gertrude fulfilled this outstanding role for fifteen years and the tributes paid to her, especially by Riccardo Piacentini, speak volumes.

Well it is no exaggeration to say that one of the saddest days in Gertrude’s life was the day the news broke that the Sisters were to be withdrawn from Palazzola, having fulfilled the contract the Order had made to commit to this ministry for twenty years.

Goodbyes are never easy, but memories last a lifetime and cultivated friendships are very special. It is no accident that I am writing this on the eve of the Feast of St Gertrude the Great.

Is it too much to hope for our own St Gertrude RSM?

Gertrude had prepared well for her end days and the hymns and readings she had chosen spoke of a woman of outstanding faith.

Rest in Peace Gertrude and wait for us on the other side!



Riccardo remembers:

Sr. Gertrude is not with us anymore' after having served our Lord with great dedication on this earth, she now rests in His house next to Him....

I've spent more or less than half of my life with her and I must say she always showed a lot of patience with me, especially when I was a little boy and I used to get in trouble every day.

As I was growing up, day by day, I have learned a lot from her. She showed me what it means to love unconditionally the others, she taught me to be humble and kind.

She always had the right words at the right time, always a smile on her face and an immeasurable faith in each one of her actions, even the simplest ones. I couldn't have had a better teacher.

The day she left Palazzola had been very sad for me: sometimes, in the corridors, in the garden, I can still feel her presence, because she is Palazzola, she

embodies all its values, those values that nowadays have become so rare: the warm hospitality, the friendship, the benevolence, the spirituality, the altruism. People who visited Palazzola can confirm this.

Dear Sr. Gertrude, indelible memories will remain etched in my mind: Christmases spent together in the refectory, parties that you always took part to as part of the family, like one of us... you will always have a special place in my heart. Today another corner stone as gone together with the ones of Fr. Terence and Sr. Madeleine.

Even though I have never said loud, you cannot imagine how much you are and always will be important for me...

Thank you for giving me the honour to grow up beside youWith immense love .., rest in peace .., and say hello to Grandad from me.

Riccardo

**MAY YOU
REST IN PEACE**

My Father, John Broun, was a member of the ***Friends*** since 1988 and was secretary for fourteen years.

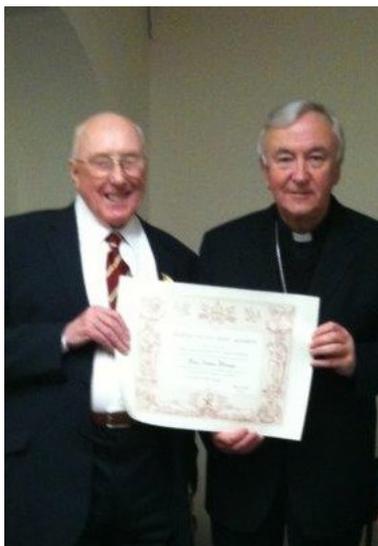
I am so proud of my father's involvement with the ***Friends***, which he considered a privilege. I think he almost saw it as God's Will, that he should support the English College, which has served the Church he loved over the centuries and also prepared me for God's Priesthood. May he rest in peace.

Fr. Pat Broun

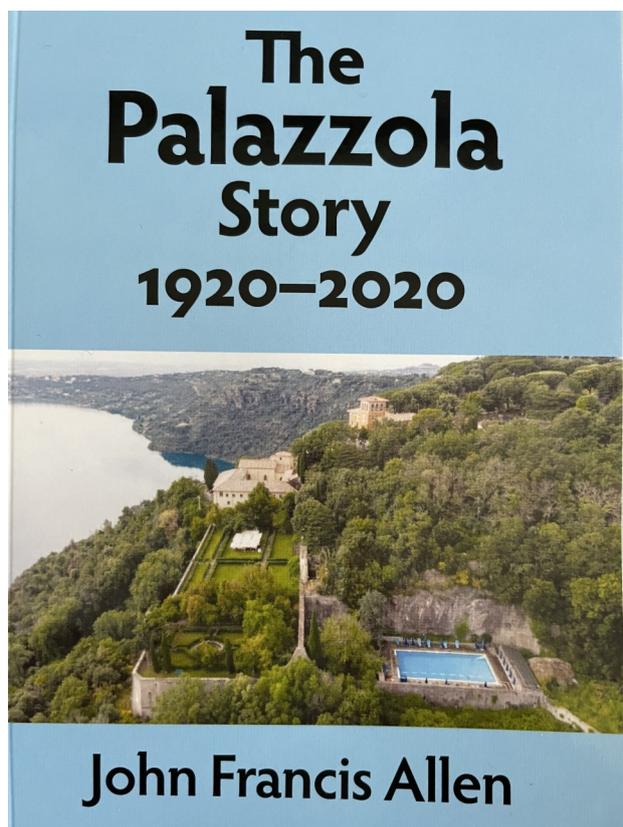
An extract from VV Spring 2011

At our November 2010 Committee Meeting, Archbishop Vincent Nichols presented John with the Papal Medal ***Pro Ecclesiae et Pontifice*** and Certificate and we will celebrate this at our AGM in September.

JWe wish him a very happy retirement with our grateful thanks for his sterling work over the years.



Mr. J. Broun with Cardinal Nichols
Secretary FOV 1996 - 2010



The Palazzola Story

was written by

Mgr. John Allen

to celebrate

Palazzola's centenary.

It is available from

Our Lady of Grace (Ref: Palazzola)

11 Fairfax Road, Prestwich

Manchester M25 1AS

Price £7.00

Includes P&P. Cheque payable to *Our Lady of Grace*. [All proceeds to the *Venerable English College*.]

Another new book which you might like to read is available from www.smile.amazon.co.uk

The author's name should be familiar by now (so this is a chance to kill two birds with one stone).

<https://www.smile.amazon.co.uk/Sycamore-Catholic-Explained-Stephen-Wang/dp/1784696161>

A REQUEST

Modern banking regulations require the bank to check that the payee on the cheque is the same name as the account into which it is to be paid. The tightened procedures mean that the Banks will only accept cheques made out to either "Friends of the Venerable" or "FOV".

As a result I have to send the cheque back to the member asking for another cheque with the correct payee. And so if you donate by cheque please get your "payee" correct.

As you will see in my report I have located a Stamp Dealer
so please will you collect

USED POSTAGE STAMPS (both British and Foreign)

Please collect all stamps you (and your friends) receive and send them to me.

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