

God qualifies the Chosen

We are all blind, our ability to see depends on the availability of light. If there is no light, there is no sight. God Himself is light, which is why the first gift He gave the world at creation was light, because every creative endeavour begins with positive vision. God is the source of our light, because *in His light we see light*. No one is capable of anything at birth; a child is like a blank slate that grows to maturity through a journey of discovery with a vision of realising God's light within. In this way, His word is the light for our paths, and we are all light bearers following in His ways.

Our qualifications come from God. Samuel went to the house of Jesse with a vague vision of who should become king. But guided by God's light, he listened and followed God's instructions, exhausting all possibilities and realising that if God has chosen you, He will prepare you even when you feel you are not qualified, because He does not choose the qualified, but qualifies the chosen. If we follow His instructions, we have nothing to worry about, because with Him we are no longer darkness, but children of the light, working to discover what the Lord wants of us, in total goodness, right living and truth. God will be our light when we use our inner sight.

God's light is always available to everyone, we just need to use our inner sight to discover it. In this faith journey, we look like a blind man who needs the help of others, but not always. Just as a driver at night, who can see the streetlights and headlights of other vehicles, but must put on his own light to see and be seen. To discover our own light, we need to learn to follow Jesus and do things differently, working hard at every moment. When you do this, people will notice the difference, just as they noticed the blind man who received his sight from the Lord. Everything will look strange at first, but over time we grow in maturity and faith, just like the blind man who went from calling him *the man Jesus* to calling him *Lord*. You will grow from being a blind stranger to being a passionate disciple. People may doubt you, but your life will show them that our qualifications come from God. *Fr Anthony C Ohaekwusi*

Rest in Peace: Maureen Aston, John Barlow.

Next week-end: Collection of biscuits, tomatoes, chick peas etc for **refugees** (final collection before Easter).

This week-end: St Mary's SVP **Easter Chocolate Raffle.**

CREDIT UNION: At the recent AGM a dividend of 5% was agreed. Would members please hand in books for update as soon as possible. A copy of the AGM minutes is available on St Mary's Church notice board.

Please bring **Red Mission Box** money to Ferryhill and Chilton when convenient.

The Diocesan investigation anonymous survey:

<https://forms.gle/wevQ6zrj1t8SCxNq5>. (it works now!)

Friday 31 March, 10.15am at Ushaw College: A Lenten Day of Reflection. Includes Mass and Stations of the Cross. £10 (includes car parking but not lunch); 0191 373 8500.

Saturday 1 April: St Thomas' spring raffle. Proceeds to church funds.

Monday 11—14 September: WALSINGHAM PILGRIMAGE – Please contact Ann Thompson 01325 318649.

Saint Mary, Aycliffe
Saint Thomas, Shildon
All Saints, Ferryhill
Sacred Heart, Chilton
Saint Joseph, Coundon



*All are welcome
in all of our
churches —
no exceptions!*

Fr Anthony Cornforth, 01325 313611, 07923683046

Fr Deni Mary,

Fr Augustine Ofoma, 01740 651343

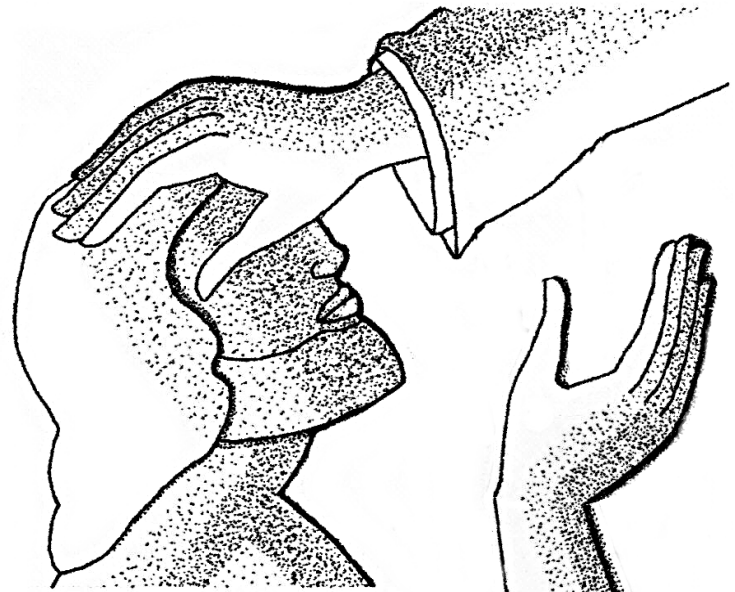
Sister Anna Ryan, 01388 602030

anthony.cornforth@gmail.com

www.aycliffeshildoncatholic.com

allsaints.ferryhill@gmail.com

18 / 19 March 2023: Lent 4A



The Price of Healing

I once invited someone to attend a healing service. He refused because, he said, he couldn't manage without his disability support. Apart from showing tremendous faith, he also demonstrated the fear of change. Healing can be challenging: the first steps of someone after a joint replacement; going back among people after Covid; learning to speak again after a stroke. It is all too easy to hold back but, as the saying goes: shy bairns get nothing! Step out in faith.

Sat	09.30	Coundon	Brown and Harnett families
18	10.00	Coundon	Exposition and Confession
Mar	12.00	Aycliffe	Mary Moran (LD)
	16.00	Shildon	Peggy and Anthony Martindale
	18.00	Chilton	Mary Moran (LD)
Sun	09.00	Coundon	Father Paddy McMahon
19	10.00	Aycliffe	Tommy McGreachen
Mar	10.30	Ferryhill	Austin and Mary Franey
	<u>13.00</u>	<u>Aycliffe</u>	Polish Community Mass
	<u>15.00</u>	<u>Ferryhill</u>	<u>Stations of the Cross</u>
	<u>16.00</u>	<u>Coundon</u>	<u>Stations of the Cross</u>
	18.00	Aycliffe	Our parish family

Open your eyes - and see

Alice is blind and deaf. I tried to finger spell on her hand, but she sussed out the remainder of my slowly evolving sentence and replied with a firm staccato voice. Over time I got to know her as a well-travelled, very intelligent woman who read two or three braille books a week.

We all contrive to manage whatever infirmities or handicaps we have - we're not perfect. But I'm impressed frequently by the skills and practical ways individuals develop to get through the day or the next hour or the next few minutes even. The inventiveness and sheer application to tasks requiring simple or complex efforts leaves me feeling frankly humbled.

Alice interprets textures, winds and weather, tastes of liquids, sweets and savouries, picking up geographical clues from the smell of a hot dog stall or the local takeaway. I asked her once whether sight or sound would be the sense she'd most prefer. Her answer was quick and direct - sight. She'd known both as a child before illness robbed her of sight and hearing, setting her on a radical path of re-learning. Dependent and grateful as she is, she teaches us - if we're ready to learn.

Jesus gives sight to a man born blind. Close your eyes.

Think how you'd get to your front door, manage the stairs or walk down the street without. The enormity of this gift is stunning. The religious authorities of the time didn't appreciate it. Wrongly, they attributed blindness to sins of his parents. Instead of rejoicing in this man's miracle they were incensed that he'd been healed on the Sabbath. Who's blind here?

Perhaps lack of familiarity with blind people leaves us not knowing whether to offer or how to help. Do we see a person lacking something or appreciate the dignity of someone who challenges us to think and to serve? Individuals can be too readily boxed and labelled as this or that without our taking time and steps to engage and to learn about specific needs and strengths, rather than to assume generalised notions gained from wherever. Jesus sees individuals. He inspires faith and trust, enabling us to see differently.

I've always been inspired by the life of Helen Keller, by David Blunkett's sense of public service, but Alice grounded me because I met her and had to relate, to learn, to be taught and challenged. Some of our Church prayers ask the Lord to 'open the eyes of our minds'. It's not comfortable to admit that our minds are closed, that we live with our eyes shut or have mental cataracts. The man in the Gospel story lived a long time ago. He's still challenging us. That is, if we we're able to see him.

(Escomb Partnership Note)

Please pray for all the sick

Mary Eales, Eileen Walsh, Mark Hugill, Lynda Whelbourn, Phyllis Musgrave, Terry Cheesmond, Savannah Philips, Claire, Eileen Brownbridge, Paula Cruddace, Pat Copeland, Raymond Lowey, Julie Kirkbride, Helen Hall, Vilna Woolhead, Doris Irwin, John Regan, Elaine McCartney, John Garnham, Frank Morrell, Coulson family, Coleen Ogden, Janet Holmes, Alfie Pennington, Suzanne Winship, Eleanor Goundry, Jamie Spence, Hannibal Gonsalves, Anne Nicholson, Mary Horton, Bernard Molyneux, Lola Rose, Stephen Russ, Heather Belcher, Benjamin.

This week

Mon	09.30	Coundon	Terence O'Neil
20	09.40	Aycliffe	Rosary
Mar	10.00	<u>Aycliffe</u>	Rose McQuillan (A)
Tue	09.15	Ferryhill	No intention requested
21	09.45	Aycliffe	Divine Mercy
Mar	10.00	Aycliffe	In Thanksgiving (P)
	<u>11.00</u>	<u>Coundon</u>	<u>Stations of the Cross</u>
	<u>13.30</u>	<u>Coundon</u>	<u>Holy Hour (in the house)</u>
	<u>19.00</u>	<u>Coundon</u>	<u>Holy Hour (in the house)</u>
	19.00	Aycliffe	Prayer Group (in the house)
Wed	09.15	Ferryhill	No intention requested
22	<u>09.30</u>	<u>Shildon</u>	<u>Stations of the Cross</u>
Mar	10am	Shildon	Margery Hornan and Anne Clarkson (sick)
Thu	09.30	Coundon	Catherine and John Ryan
23	10.00	Aycliffe	
	19.00	Aycliffe	Stations of the Cross and Mass
Fri	09.15	Chilton	No intention requested
24	<u>10.30</u>	<u>Aycliffe</u>	<u>Funeral Service Anthony (Ned) Kelly</u>
Mar	<u>11.30</u>	<u>Aycliffe</u>	Special Intention (PC)
	<u>12.00</u>	Aycliffe	Lunch (in the hall)
	<u>18.30</u>	<u>Aycliffe</u>	<u>Stations of the Cross (Polish)</u>
Sat	09.30	Coundon	Fr McMahon
25	10.00	Coundon	Exposition and Confession
Mar	12.00	Aycliffe	Jo Murphy
	<u>13.00</u>	<u>Aycliffe</u>	<u>Baptism Luca Robert Brown</u>
	16.00	Shildon	Stephen and Kate Johnson
	18.00	Chilton	No intention requested
Sun	09.00	Coundon	Michael Atkinson
26	10.00	Aycliffe	Our parish family
Mar	10.30	Ferryhill	Kevin and Michael Dunlavey
	<u>13.00</u>	<u>Aycliffe</u>	Polish Community Mass
	<u>15.00</u>	<u>Ferryhill</u>	<u>Stations of the Cross</u>
	<u>16.00</u>	<u>Coundon</u>	<u>Stations of the Cross</u>
	18.00	Aycliffe	Joan nad Maureen Orsburn

This Sunday, 10am at St Mary: Baptism **Benjamin Tuck**

Wednesday, 12 noon Salvation Army, Shildon: **Lent Lunch**

Thursday, 7pm at St Mary: **Biblical Stations of the Cross** and mass. There will not be stations on Friday morning.

Saturday, 10 am at the Cathedral: **Day of Prayer for Life** (the unborn and pregnant women). Finishes 4pm.