

# 40<sup>th</sup>

SPIRITUALITY

MISSION

FRIENDSHIP

ANNIVERSARY 1980 2020

Journal Spring 2020



Ross Roberts with Monique Ptak, European Coordinator VMI [left] and Monique Bodhuin [right], International President VMI

## World Congress – Care of the Elderly

The first man to be President of Life Ascending UK (formerly Ascent) and the first to shake hands with the Pope. I was proud to represent Life Ascending at the First International Conference on 'The Pastoral Care of the Elderly' held at the Augustinarium Convention Centre at the Vatican, from January 29th to 31st 2020.

I had arranged to meet Monique Ptak at Fiumicino Airport and share a taxi to our hotel but we arrived at different terminals and my plane was 30 minutes early and hers 30 minutes late. An inauspicious start but I decided to get into Central Rome by train which I achieved at a cost of €8 as opposed to €42 for

a taxi so was quietly pleased by the financial saving and my own sense of direction. And met up with Monique and the rest of the national Presidents who formed the VMI delegation for our evening meal. We had B&B at the hotel and ate at the same restaurant every night on advantageous terms. There were thirty in our group mostly from European countries augmented by delegates from Japan, Canada, Senegal and Angola.

The Working Title of the congress was 'The richness of many years of life' and our group certainly had that and diverse life experiences as well. When we had Mass in St Peter's Basilica on 31st January we had to

queue up for Airport-style security and the delegate from Canada told me it was her second time in Rome, the first being in May 1981 when the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II took place 20 metres from where she was sitting.

But I have run ahead of myself, the conference itself was a strange beast; there were three sessions;

- The church with and for the Elderly
- Family and the Elderly
- The vocation of the Elderly

There were three speakers (each had 30 minutes) in each session followed by a question and answer session. There were three microphones for delegates but these were located in the aisles and effectively only those sitting at the end of the rows could access them.

As only six questions were taken, the vast majority of the 550 delegates from 60 countries were unable to get their voices heard and the questions were mostly speeches about conditions in that person's country.



Monique Bodhuin, International President VMI

Thus leaving the 'panellists' at a loss and in the session where Monique Bodhuin participated (topic: The Elderly, a generation to accompany spirituality), the Moderator asked her to answer the second question and Monique said she didn't know what the question was (like most of the delegates, despite wearing headphones translating into a choice of five languages).

And so it went on for the three sessions: talks, non-questions and little feedback from the delegates. There were no motions debated and no way of recording one's view. As the saying goes 'fine words butter no parsnips' and I fail to see how the Congress can have advanced Church thinking in any way, shape or form.



VMI-Vie Montante internationale  
VAI-Vida Ascendente internacional  
LAI-Life Ascending international





But then again it was the first such congress and one would hope lessons have been learned. I, myself, took on board different ideas and procedures in different countries.

Just a few things which struck a nerve with me:

- Peter Kevern, Staffordshire University, UK – Old people are going to overwhelm our economy, like a grey tsunami.
- Mary Cohen, Archdiocese of Atlanta, USA – I know what it is like to be a young girl, but you don't know what it's like to be an old lady
- Gabriella Gambino, Under Secretary of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and life – Curb the throwaway culture particularly euthanasia.
- Every day 10,000 people turn 65
- In 1935 Life expectancy was 61, in 2020 it is 78
- Age is a statistical category not an identity
- Old age starts at 50 in Africa, but it is 65 in the rest of the world
- Catherine Wiley, founder of the Catholic Grandparents Association “When I was young, people lived in small houses and had big families; now they live in big houses and have small families”

Just a few of the views expressed over a quite demanding congress and the next and final day we had to be up bright and early for Mass in St



Many Priests concelebrated the Mass in St Peters.

Peter's Basilica at 9am. Afterwards we were directed to what seemed to be the back door of the Basilica and slowly walked through the normally unseen parts of Vatican City to a room where the audience with the Holy Father took place. At the end of which he shook hands with all 550 delegates, a marathon effort for a man of 83 who remained standing for the whole exercise.



Alvaro Medina, President of Vida Ascendente España, speaking with Sister Nayda from Santo Domingo

That afternoon was free but most of it was spent in the photo shop elsewhere in the Vatican to locate and pay for the photos taken continuously during the audience.

The next day the VMI contingent had a special mass at 8.15am concelebrated by the three priests who were part of our group and then a plenary session of the Group to discuss the congress and what it would mean going forward. For most of us the event concluded with lunch and we said our goodbyes about 2pm but the Steering Committee of VMI stayed on in Rome for another 2 and a half days to discuss ongoing matters.

It was great to meet up with Presidents from other countries,



Monika Ptak & Msgr François Maupu, Spiritual Assistant of Life Ascending International

particularly Canada and Japan who spoke English, and sad that Brexit Day took place whilst I was there. But I had taken with me a t-shirt which said “Don't blame me, I voted Remain” which was greeted with acclaim by the European delegates, but was utterly meaningless to those from elsewhere.

The official Prayer For the Elderly, used to start and finish the congress, is printed on the back cover.



Ross meets Pope Francis



# 40<sup>th</sup>

## ANNIVERSARY 1980 2020

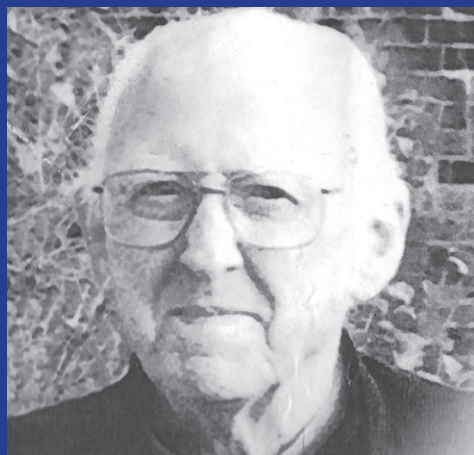
Life Ascending (The Ascent) began life, here in England 40 years ago.

Editing this special Spring Journal has been quite daunting as I rarely throw away a photo, a letter or tiny fragment that could prove useful.

So many incredibly valued people who have dedicated their time to contribute, were there in the photos and listed on Days of Recollection or on our retreats. All deserve a mention as part of our journey.

Then the countless, devoted members, all so precious, who are remembered for their smiles and uniqueness, who were all valued. Yet to name them all would be impossible.

**1980** From the tiny seed planted in May 1980, to the first group meetings in Maidstone and Upper Norwood, during that November, much was achieved and the movement flourished over the years.



Fr Gerard Meath OP



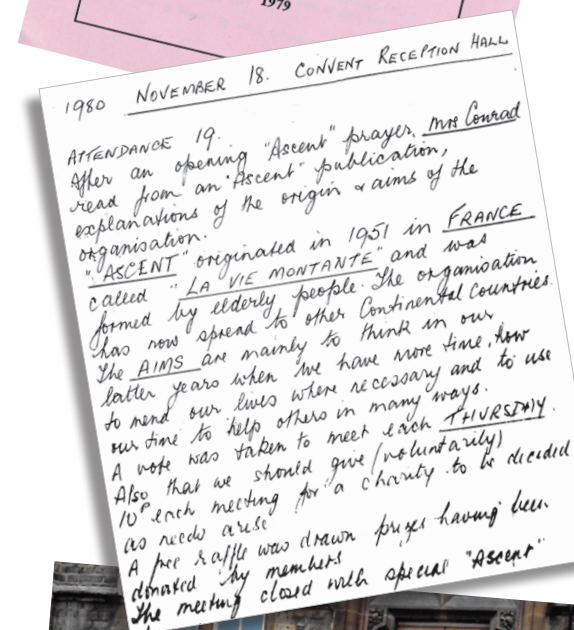
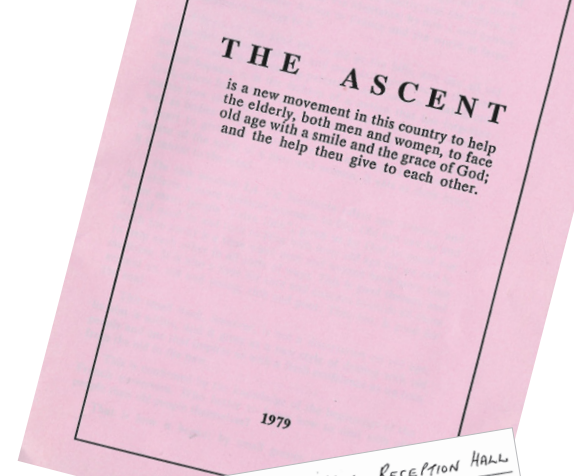
Fr 'Harry' Pownall

The Community of Our Lady of Fidelity gave great encouragement to Mrs Paula Conrad to start a group and offered her one of the rooms in the convent. Sr Thiéry, a Belgian sister, knew well the movement La Vie Montante and supported Paula by frequently handing her little notes after Mass. There would be addresses of 'useful people' to contact, telephone numbers and an occasional prayer of encouragement like "Lord, help me to do my thing".

Sr Thiéry, wasn't happy to know that Paula would serve tea and cakes saying "This is not Vie Montante". Sister started a serious 'proper' Vie Montante group with no frills until one day she came to Paula and said "You are right, this is England and of course, the English love their cup of tea". A small group of parish friends promised to help during the meetings which began on 1 November 1980.

A complete record of members, content of meetings, guest speakers and more, was beautifully kept by Elsa Woodward. The very first page is reproduced here. Sr Thiéry, had come across a pink handbook titled 'The Ascent', an English translation produced in Liverpool and with the address of The Little Sisters of the Poor.

This had been published in 1979 by a Fr Harry Pownall. Fr Harry had died in March 1980 so could



First Ascent group - Upper Norwood, 1980



not be contacted but somehow Fr Gerard Meath OP found himself with hundreds of these handbooks and with little idea of what to do with them. Although they were wordy and rather heavy going, they were at least something in English.



Mary Willson & Bishop Howard Tripp

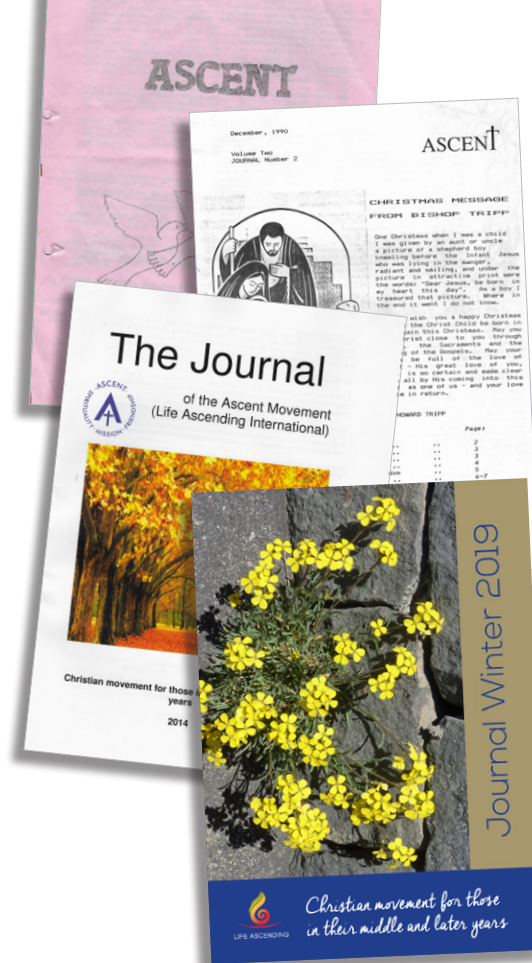
It was after a parish visitation by Bishop Howard Tripp, that things started moving. Bishop Howard said he would like to see the movement spread and that there was no need to worry about this daunting task – “Just dig your roots deep, just where you are and with the help of the Holy Spirit you will see this movement spread”. Fr Gerard suggested coming to meet Paula with Bishop Howard and so the scene was set.

Correspondence was soon flying between Peter McCaffrey in Maidstone and Life Ascending in Dun Laoghaire, Ireland. Everyone was enthusiastic and keen to help promote The Ascent.

**1982** Paula was invited to attend the French pilgrimage to Rome. Amazingly 10,000 French speaking pilgrims attended, as well as representatives from 14 countries. While there, Paula was able to attend the Beatification of Jeanne Jugan, the foundress of The Little Sisters of the Poor, thus igniting a special flame for the work of the Little Sisters. In the years to follow many happy days were spent at their London homes where groups of Ascent were set up.



Mme Nouvel, Pope John Paul II & Gerard Ziegler (1st President of La Vie Montante) in Rome, 1982



Through prayer and action wonderful, extraordinary things happened and became possible. Just after Paula had promised to give the European Fund £100, an unknown, local lady left £4,180 to Vie Montante in her will. A policeman raised £300 by running the marathon and we were awarded £200 by the police from money raised from unclaimed property. So much was raised to send representatives to Panama that it also enabled a new handbook to be published.

**1984** The first Journal was produced. It was a rather poor attempt but it was a start. The Journal is an important part of the movement. Every member receives this and it is a way of linking frail and housebound, as well as Associate members (not in a group).

Since then we have had some very talented Journal editors including Molly Hukin, our second National President. Molly ran the CTS stall in her parish and became inspired when she read our CTS publication.

‘Time to Reflect’, translated by Mrs Joyce Neill – a retired teacher of French, was a book of meditations and reflections by Bishop René Kérautret. This was followed by a further translation titled ‘More Time’.



Bishop René Kérautret



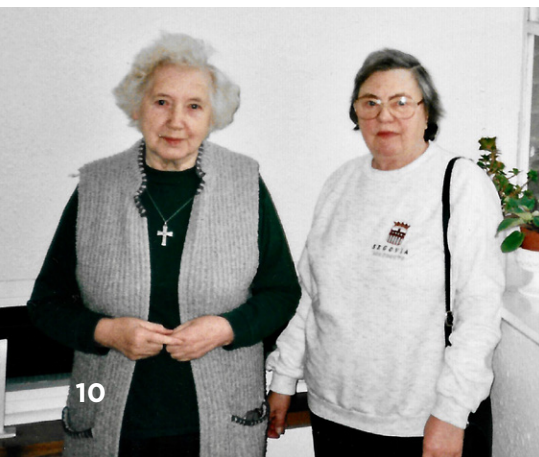
By now we had a definite and recognisable identity with an Ascent logo (designed by Mike Conrad) and badges for our members.



**1986** The first conference was held to launch the Ascent. News of this was published and Sr Mary Connor from the Westminster diocese was totally inspired by what she heard, that she immediately started to spread the word and set up numbers of Ascent groups in her diocese.

Sr Mary's loving zeal lasted until Our Lord called her this February. That Autumn Mary Coles and Paula attended the European meeting in Fatima where Fr Jean-Marie Patois said "It is Autumn that gives the fruit its full maturity, its flavour and its beauty" highlighting the theme 'The elderly in the world today'.

*Sr Mary Cairns with Joyce Neill*



**1987** To celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Vie Montante (France) we organised a Mass at St Georges Cathedral Southwark. We invited Dr Rene Tardy, Vie Montante's president and Sr Marie Benoit. Fr Gerard's tender and moving account of this day can be found on pages 20 to 21.



*Paula Conrad with Sr Marie Benoit of The Community of Our Lady of Fidelity, Rome 1982*

**1989** Joyce Neill and Paula represented England at the World Meeting in Panama. It took place between the coup and the war. There was heavy security on the Pan Am flight and armed soldiers stood on guard outside the hotel.

This Third World country was really welcoming and we happily accepted the rice and peas at each meal feeling the warmth and generosity of the people.

**1990** was the Ascent's 10th Anniversary a quite momentous occasion as a Roman Catholic Mass was said by Bishop Howard Tripp in

the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral. Diocesan Ascent groups processed at the Offertory carrying banners. Each diocese's banner bore different coloured ribbons.

**1991** Molly set up retreats and La vie Montante had requested that we host The European Conference "Living Together in Europe Today", with delegates from 17 countries including Canada and Africa.

Interpreters had to be found, hotels for delegates who wanted to also visit London, airport pick-ups, key speakers and so on. For Joyce and Paula, it was a huge undertaking but with God's help it all took place at London Colney, St Albans with Archbishop Derek Worlock spending



*Archbishop Derek Worlock and priests at the European Conference, London Colney*

one day there. The Wood Green group played host at the end of the delegates day in London.

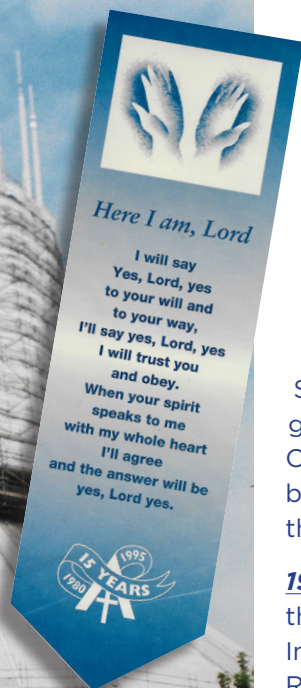
**1992** The Little Sisters in Leeds invited Paula to launch the movement in the North from their home and one of the residents was Bishop Gordon Wheeler. After Paula's talk on Ascent he said "I could have listened all day to you."

Sr Mary Cairns was a young Salesian sister and teacher who said "the ageing process was very remote when I met Fr Harry; I just wasn't interested". It wasn't until his requiem that she realised all that Father had been saying. So she started a group at Our Lady Queen of Martyrs in Croxteth Liverpool. Her explanation of The Ascent was "Our life is like a mountain and as we go higher, we drop a lot of the things we no longer need. We are people on the way to the Lord and prayer, love and mutual support become more important".

Bishop John Crowley, inspired by Sr Mary Conner, launched the movement in the Middlesbrough diocese, greatly aided by Pauline and Pat Kiely.

**1995** We decided to have a big celebration and, keen to get things really going in the North of England, we managed to book our 15th anniversary Mass at Christ the King Cathedral in Liverpool.





176 members booked to stay the weekend in Carnatic Hall and Bishop Howard said our Mass. The International President Alberto Marxuach (Catalonia, Spain) had become a good friend and was a valued guest. Anne Forbes of the Catholic Social Services was our key speaker. A group of nuns attached to the Cathedral embroidered a beautiful banner for us and everyone received the 'Here I am Lord' bookmark.

**1996** The Pontifical Council of the Laity, gave Vie Montante International the Decree of Recognition.

**1997** Molly was elected President and organised the first National Planning Team at Wistaston Hall in Crewe. She immediately reorganised and pulled the whole of Ascent into shape. She tirelessly worked for the good of the Ascent, dividing the country into five areas with a Vice President for each area. Paula became Honorary Life President after a momentous celebration at St Georges Cathedral Southwark and beautiful lunch in London.

**1999** Ascent groups study the Pope's document in preparation for the World meeting in Senegal, Africa and Joyce Neill, Stella Onyende and Mary Willson represented us there. All these events involve a lot of preparation and correspondence, but all worthwhile as we were

Alberto Marxuach, Helena Thias and Mary Freeman at Christ the King Cathedral in Liverpool



1997 - Molly and Tony (far right) with the first National gathering of North and South Group Leaders, Crewe

becoming more recognised by other organisations. Sr Margaret Brown SCJM as Vice President of the North West region set up a team to look into themes for groups to study. She represented Ascent in Brussels and, with Sr Kathleen Standish SCJM, produced many inspiring and visually beautiful portfolios.

**2001** Sr Margaret Brown SCJM became the third president. The 21st birthday celebration in Ripon - 'Hope and Joy', was the other big event. Bishop John Crowley said the Ascent had been a blessing in his Middlesbrough diocese. 200 members stayed for the four days.



Margaret Snowdon, Gabriella Olaniran (Group Leader of Stroud Green) and a local priest in Popowa, Poland





*Sr Margaret Brown SCJM and Margaret Snowdon*

**2004** Poland hosted the European conference 'How to live the Commitment?' Our delegates in Popowa were Gabriella Olaniran (Stroud Green), Margaret Snowdon (York West), Sr Margaret Brown and Sr Kathleen Standish SCJM and Paula.

They worked really well together and provided a great strength to the National Planning Team; as it was now called.

**2005** Margaret Snowdon, Group Leader of York, West, became our next president. She bravely took up the reins to take Ascent into the electronic age.

**2006** 'Seniors - A sign of hope for

today's world' was the theme for Sixth International Meeting of Life Ascending International in Lourdes. Margaret and Maureen Potter (Vice President) represent England.

Silver Jubilee Celebrations at Newman College Birmingham. Pope Benedict XVI addressed 400,000 members of the Ecclesial Communities and New Movements, including The Ascent Movement, on the Vigil of Pentecost in St Peter's Square.

Marie Ryde takes over from dear Kathleen Venting as competent National Secretary

**2008** Our European Conference is held in Lourdes with the theme

'The role of Life Ascending in a secularized world'.

**2010** 30th Anniversary of the Ascent. Celebrations in York, Surrey, Maidstone and Welwyn Garden City. International Conference in Canada 'Life Ascending, a Witness in a World Crisis'. It was too expensive for us to send a representative.

**2011** Glasgow reps attend National Meeting in York. Mike Palowkar joins the team and becomes Treasurer.

**2014** Namur, Belgium for the 8th World Meeting on 14 - 17 October 2014. Margaret Snowdon is our valued representative

**2015** The Ascent Movement (UK) renames itself as Life Ascending.

A new logo and graphics are introduced together with a badge, leaflets and poster. Several groups are not happy about the change.

**2016** Margaret retires after 12 productive years as President in December.

**2017** Ross Roberts becomes new President in January.

**2018** Marie Ryde steps aside as National Secretary.

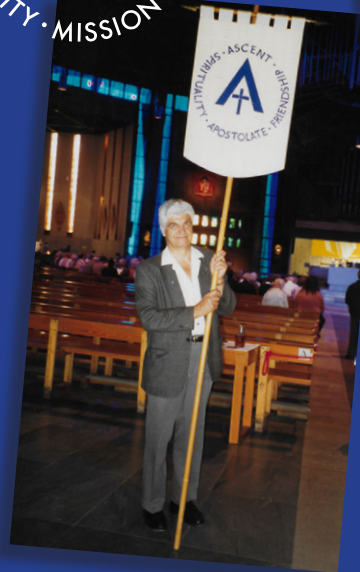
**2019** Day of Recollection at St Georges Cathedral SE1.

**2020** Ross joins 27 Life Ascending delegates at the First International Congress on The Care of the Elderly in Rome.



*Our Bangkok delegates: Rosemary Traynor, Kathleen Venting, Sr Janet Norman and Sr Mary Connor*





Tony Hukin, ex-National Treasurer and husband of Molly, holding our banner



Clare at our 10th Anniversary celebration before Mass in the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral



The Briery Retreat & Conference Centre, Ilkley, West Yorkshire, where the Northern Retreat is held each Autumn.



# Faces & Places



Mike Palowkar, our National Treasurer and the Newsletter he produces



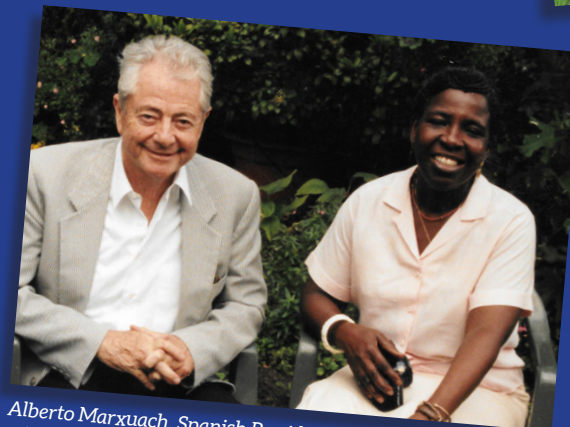
Fr André Tanguy with Paula Conrad in Rome 1982



Keith and Angela Hunter, group leaders of Maidstone and organisers of the Aylesford retreats for many years



Very Rev Mgr Seamus Kilbane having lunch with the members of Saltburn Life Ascending



Alberto Marxuach, Spanish President of Vida Ascendente with Stella Onyendi, preparing for Dakar 1999





## 40th Anniversary Contd.

During these 40 years we have experienced many, many happy days together. Study Days, Days of Recollection, beautiful Masses, visits to shrines, cathedrals and even a fun few days in Portsmouth.

We have seen the numbers of groups develop in diocese up and down the country and for a while a group in Wales and Scotland.

Living in this world today, with all its concerns there is an even greater need for a movement like ours.

It is all too easy to feel 'there is nothing we can do about this' but as Christians we must first of all see our value and how precious we are to God. He wants us to be happy during these years; He has everything worked out and He is relying on us to share His love with others, to be His light in the midst of the family, the community and beyond.

Indeed, we must rejoice in our faith and greet every new day as God given time. For these years can so often be the most fruitful time of our lives.

**Paula Conrad**

Honorary Life President & Archivist

## Bishop John Crowley writes...

*Thanks so much, dear Paula.*

*Ascent is a wonderful movement. I have huge admiration for what you and others did to launch it into a needy Church and wider world. Our mutual friend and great supporter of Ascent Sr Mary Connor has just sadly died and her funeral is on 27 February at her Barnet parish.*

*Affectionately,  
Bishop John*

A message from Bishop Emeritus John Crowley, who lovingly implanted Ascent in the Middlesbrough diocese from 1992

ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE,  
WESTMINSTER, LONDON, SW1P 1QJ

19 February 2020

Dear Mrs Conrad

Thank you for your letter of 17th February which I was delighted to receive together with the two pamphlets succinctly describing the work of "Life Ascending".

Of course, I remember well our meeting and I must express my thanks to you for the hard work that you have undertaken in promoting "Life Ascending".

I am glad that you still have plenty of enthusiasm for this important work.

As you sit down to edit the 40th Anniversary Spring edition of the Journal perhaps I could offer you this following simple message:

*I am so pleased to greet members of "Life Ascending" and all those who are reading this Anniversary edition of the Journal. Every stage of life has its riches and I am so grateful to you for exploring, emphasising and sharing the riches of later life. I hope and trust that this 40th Anniversary celebration is not only a time of joy but also a time of deepened enthusiasm for the gifts brought by "Life Ascending" and for sharing those gifts with many more. I assure you of my prayers and blessing at this time.*

H.E. Cardinal Vincent Nichols  
Archbishop of Westminster

Again, I offer you my warmest greetings and assurances of prayers.

Yours sincerely

*+ Vincent Nichols*

\* Cardinal Vincent Nichols  
Archbishop of Westminster





## Seeing is Believing

**Mass for Silver Jubilee of La Vie Montante, St George's Cathedral, Southwark, London, October 1986**

The most moving moment in our anniversary Mass at St George's Cathedral, Southwark was at the Offertory procession. Following the bread and wine were the older people with their gifts. Very much their own gifts they were, bought with their own money and made with their own hands or both. Chosen with their own imagination and understanding of other people. After Mass these gifts were to go to The Little Sisters of the Poor.

I was totally captivated: the procession seemed it would never end and the heap of gifts laid by their own hands at the foot of the altar grew and grew. Everything from a half pound packet of tea to a brilliantly coloured knitted shawl, baskets of fruit dressed with ribbons and a homemade cake, trays of pastries, slippers, gloves and that was only part of what I saw.

Then the hands that carried these gifts, with or without arthritis, all bore the 'lived in' marks of a long life. Hands marked with hard work, tenderness, endurance, years of sewing, writing, typing, washing, ironing, opening and closing doors, greeting and greeting friends and others along the way of life.

Hands exposed to every kind of weather, hands that have held back, hands that have reached out, loving, comforting, enduring. The human hand is the most evocative of our members; it speaks of touch, the first experience we all have, even in the womb. Touch can say what escapes words and even what baffles the mind.

As I watched these hands laying these gifts at the foot of Christ, I thought of a year ago when we spoke about the needs of older people and their need to be needed. Now, today, these hands were taking me a step further. Actions speak louder than words and these actions



*Sheila Brennan filling a shoebox for Samaritan's Purse*

spoke of ministry. It is not enough to speak about what older people need, we should be talking about what they can give. Only they can give the fruit of years of joy and sorrow, of success and failure, of tears and laughter.

We give the older generation's contribution to life names like patience, understanding, the capacity to listen; but they are only drop in a whole ocean of experience. At a moment like that anniversary Mass, we are allowed to see a little further into the depths of that ocean and to realise how deprived are the parishes and communities

that do not receive this ministry from the elderly.

This is what Ascent is about; elderly people's ministry to the community around them. I hear much about what society does for the elderly but precious little about what the elderly can do for society. Perhaps that is what we should be preaching about now: showing the deep patina of understanding, listening and prayer that only time can engender.

How to show this to parishes and local communities is the challenge.

**Fr Gerard Meath OP**





## A light for our path by Bishop John Crowley

It is a joy to provide this word of testimony on Life Ascending's 40th anniversary.

When appointed Bishop of Middlesbrough's diocese in 1992, I was already convinced of one apostolate which might prove to be a real blessing for people of faith in the middle and later years, namely the Ascent Movement, as it then was. Whilst still an auxiliary bishop in the Westminster diocese, I had been introduced to Ascent by Sr Mary Conner, a member of the Congregation of Christian Education, who had inspired a thriving group in her local parish.

The experience convinced me of its rich possibilities. Here was a movement, which fitted perfectly

for persons of faith, with plenty of life's experience, which would enable them to deepen their prayer life and love for the scriptures within the context of nourishing and consoling friendships.

God blessed its growth throughout the Middlesbrough diocese and for that, great credit is due to Mrs Pauline Kiely, who galvanised its spread with huge dedication and commitment. Pauline died some years back and even more recently Sr Mary Connor has also reached the end of her journey into the presence of God.

Such persons are indeed 'A lamp for our steps and a light for our path' [Ps 119] and with so many other sung and unsung, have provided a deeply life enhancing legacy, during Life Ascending's 40 years. Ad multos annos.

*Faith is when you  
close your eyes &  
open your heart...*

*Anon*



## Welcoming your contributions...

It is so sad that our planned celebrations for this 40th Anniversary have had to be cancelled. Perhaps some of you may yet decide to have a celebration Mass or find a way of marking this year, before October 2020.

If this has been possible, following the coronavirus lockdown, the Editor would love to hear about the occasion. Any good digital photos that reflect the happiness of the day are always welcome.

Please email Paula Conrad, Journal Editor, by mid September 2020 at [paula@theconrads.co.uk](mailto:paula@theconrads.co.uk)



## Easter Praise

*Forth He came at Easter,  
like the risen grain*

*He that for three days in  
the grave had lain*

*Quick from the dead my  
risen Lord is seen;*

*Love is come again like  
wheat that springeth green.*

*Wishing you every joy  
and blessing this Easter.*





## Reflections on a Pandemic

It is with deep regret and after much soul searching that we have had to cancel the annual Retreat at Aylesford. There has been very little interest shown so far, with few people booking and we cannot see this changing now that the coronavirus has taken hold in this country.

Fr Peter Griffiths SJ has sent a generous message from Edinburgh saying he will be spending the next few months in a 'Safe House' in Wales. He will go on preparing his talks etc. for the retreat as he would under normal conditions. It will not be a lost cause since, if there has to be a change in plans, he can use the material he has gathered either later or in some other way. It will not worry him if the retreat is cancelled or postponed at the last minute and is prepared to lead our retreat in June if things change.

Fr Peter closed his email saying;

*"The main thing at the moment is for you, me and all the members of the 'Life Ascending' movement to possess our souls in peace and tranquillity and pray for one another and our relatives and friends who are at risk or actually unwell."*

It is quite extraordinary to reflect on all the goodness that has come about through this horrible virus. To take in the extreme beauty of the Spring and hear the birds sing, in the stillness of life beyond the confines of our homes.

To see the skies, empty of aircraft, thus the air being cleared of pollutants. The roads free from fumes and less car accidents. Families have come together and inspired many to use their latent gifts. To have the calm and time to spend contacting our loved ones, neighbours, our isolated and lonely friends, giving them hope and having a laugh.

The many ways in which people are helping and caring for one another.

The value of the internet has come into its own with the Holy Mass and a multitude of prayers, being streamed into our homes. An opportunity to focus on our prayer life.

We are being made to live more simply and thanking God for waking us up to reality and helping us to concentrate on the things that really matter.

Whether we are at home or abroad, surrounded by many people, suffering from this illness, or only a few, Lord Jesus Christ, stay with us as we endure and mourn, persist and prepare. In place of our anxiety, give us your peace

Dearest Lord, heal us and hear our prayer. Amen.







Her insights into the needs of older people to meet together and grow spiritually led her to starting the Ascent Movement, latterly Life Ascending. She also initiated other groups in North London.

Sr Mary's gift of enabling people to feel wanted and loved, has left a beautiful legacy inspired by her deep faith and compassion especially for those less favoured.

We thank God for the gift she was to us.

**Sr Anne Hogan** – An adapted obituary, on behalf of the Sisters of St Gilda's.



## In Loving Memory

**Sr Mary Connor**  
(1 April 1930 – 13 February 2020)

Sr Mary was born into a loving and profoundly Catholic family in Clonenagh, Co. Laois, Ireland on the 1st April 1930.

In France, 1948 an encounter with the sisters of St Gilda's led her to enter their novitiate. 1950 she pronounced her First Vows, serving as cook at St Gildas Convent school, London. She gave herself generously, catering and caring for her beloved children for years.

With love and generosity, Sr Mary later reached out and visited the sick, housebound and elderly of the parish of St Peter-in-Chains.



## In Loving Memory

**Sheila Margaret Miles**  
(12 July 1931 – 15 October 2019)

Sheila Miles was a welcome member of the Eastcote Life Ascending group for many years. She passed quite suddenly in October 2019, suffering from pneumonia after a fall and hip operation. Sheila worked for the NHS and fulfilled many roles in the neighbouring Sacred Heart parish, during her lifetime, including the youth club, the registrar's deputy and minister of the Eucharist among other things.

Her husband was disabled and they had four children. She loved her large family, many friends and loved going out for a jolly, visiting art galleries and the cinema. Her favourite Turkish restaurant called her "The most beautiful flower in our garden". A lady of extraordinary cheerfulness, good humour and was the most positive and encouraging person I have ever met.

**By Annegirt Hill**

## USEFUL CONTACTS

### President – **Ross Roberts**

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## Prayer for the Elderley

Lord Jesus Christ, You gave us life by making it shine with Your divine reflection and You reserve a special gift to the elderly who benefit from a long life.

We entrust and consecrate them to You: make them witnesses of the Gospel values and devoted custodians of Christian traditions. Protect them and preserve their spirit with Your loving gaze and Your mercy.

Make them sure of Your faithfulness, messengers of Your love, humble apostles of Your forgiveness, welcoming and life-giving arms for children and young people who seek in the eyes of their grandparents

a safe guide in their pilgrimage to eternal life.

Make us capable of giving them the love, care and respect they deserve in our families and communities.

And grant each of us the blessing of a long life in order to one day be able to unite with You, in Heaven. You who live, and reign in love forever and ever. Amen.

**We always welcome and encourage your editorial content contributions or suggestions. Please email these to:**

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