

T H E B U L L E T I N .

The Annunciation Marble Arch

A welcoming and international community centred around a devotional life rich in worship, prayer and music

DECEMBER 2017

‘In the beginning was the tree.’ Well, not quite. According to the opening words of Genesis, ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.’ St John’s Gospel, echoing the sentiment declares that ‘In the beginning was the Word.’

But trees have an honoured place in creation and redemption. There was one in the centre of the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve eating its fruit lead to the need for recreation. The Word became flesh and finally hoisted on the wood of a tree for our salvation.

This complex imagery is woven into the tradition of bringing in trees and evergreens to decorate our homes and public spaces at Christmas.

In the northern hemisphere, it’s the darkest time of the year. The earth is ‘dying’. Evergreens promise that the darkness will not overcome the light. So, trees are decorated with lights and shiny decorations keep hope alive.

In some churches the trunks of Christmas trees are saved and made into a cross. This is then decorated with images of the Passion during Lent such as dice, nails and a crown of thorns before being covered with flowers at Easter.

‘Rage, rage against the dying of the light’ wrote the poet Dylan Thomas. But anger tends to fuel anger. The Christmas tree with all its family rituals and kitsch has a way of defusing the darker feelings and generating some fun.

The cross completes the task: reaching into the core of our being and transforming death into life. Christmas fun becomes Easter joy.

Some people bemoan the lack of ‘real religion’ at Christmas but surely all we have to do is to scratch beneath the surface. Perhaps that’s the way to greet the New Year: make a promise to go deeper.

I hope that you’ve all had a wonderful Christmas and will face the challenges of 2018 with a well-rooted faith.

Yours in Christ

Fr Gerald

FR GERALD'S SERMON AT THE SPRINGBOARD CHARITY CAROL SERVICE ON MONDAY 4TH DECEMBER 2017

Springboard enables people to start a career in the hospitality industry

Ever since human beings have been on this earth we've been on the move. Our ancient forebears were hunter-gatherers roaming across the landscape looking for food. Then people settled: building villages; growing crops; keeping their animals. But folk didn't just stay put. Roaming became traveling: sailing the seas; traversing continents. There was adventure, trade and tourism. Busy people, on the go need sustenance, rest and play.

So, the industry that we celebrate tonight isn't just an add-on to people's lives. It's not a luxury however luxurious your offering may be. It's part of life's rich tapestry; an essential part of what it means to be human. Being on the move and away from home, people need a bed and a place to stay; a table to sit at; people to manage the establishments, clean the rooms, cook the food, serve it and keep everyone (guests and staff alike) safe and secure.

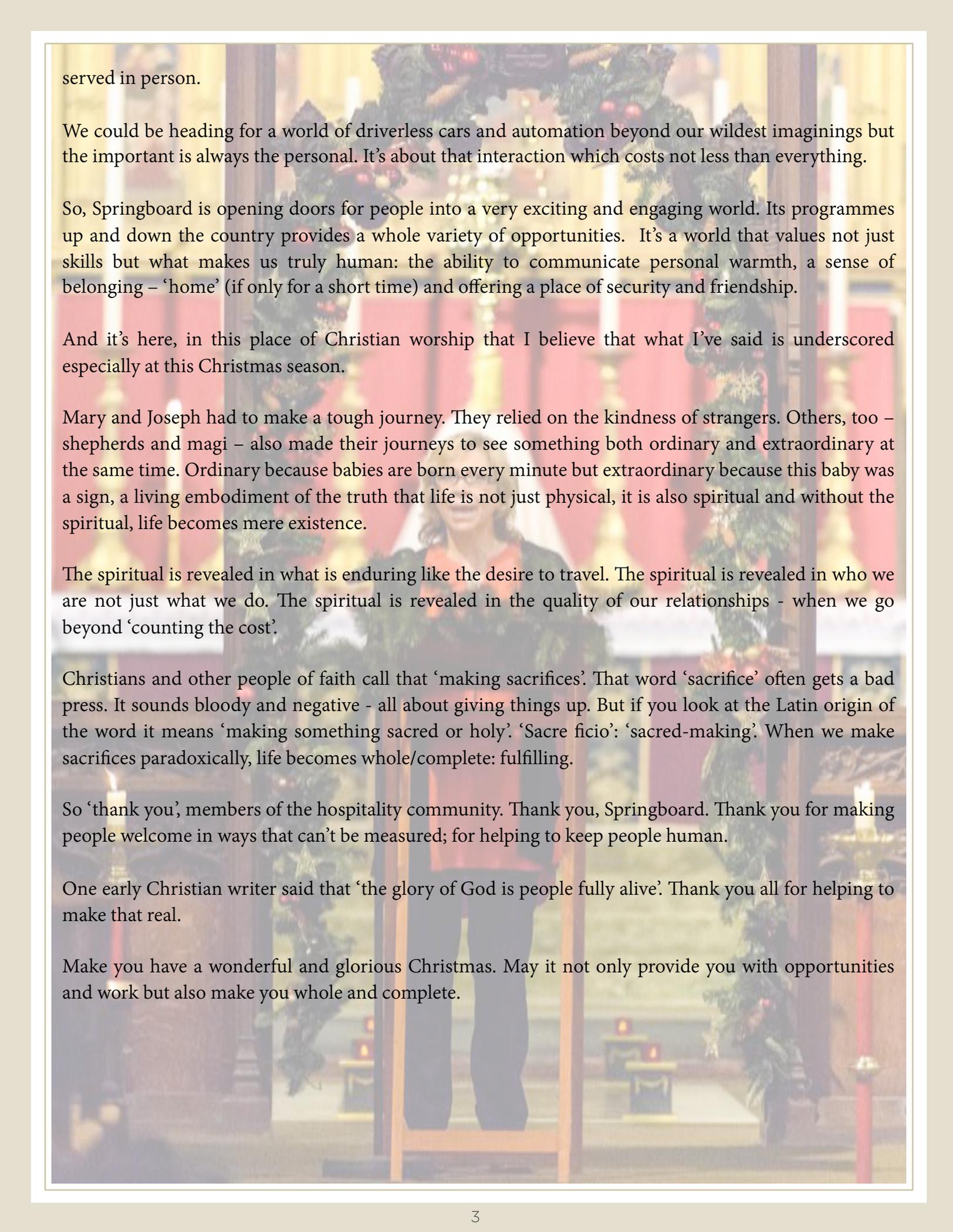
What you offer is perennial in human life. And at its heart it seems to me to be something that is deeply spiritual. Spiritual because whatever your business model or financial structures what most people remember about their times in hotels, bars and restaurants isn't just the décor and the ambience and how much it cost but the quality of the service and the friendliness of the staff.

You just can't put a price tag on a greeting, a warm smile, a polite 'good evening'. There's no budget line for helpfulness or thoughtfulness; for an open disposition that encourages customers and clients to ask for what they really want and so have the kind of experience that isn't just about customer satisfaction but about peoples' fulfillment.

But what we also know is that although you can't pay for a smile with cash, card or contactless there are occasions when it costs the giver everything: the days when it's hard to get out of bed and go to work; the days when we've left a sick child in someone else's care; the days when we've had a row with a partner or colleagues and then have to face the public; the unsocial hours; the times when we're working in a foreign country and feel homesick.

This is when what you do, I believe is a calling. It's a vocation. It's about being professional – yes, but its more than that. To be in this industry is not just for our sake; it's for the sake of others. Treating others as we would wish to be treated ourselves: when we go and stay somewhere; when we're out for a meal; when we're taking a break, and having some leisure time.

And the good news in all this is that the hospitality industry will always need people. However much life is being changed by new technology: however quick it may be to check out at the supermarket at an automated till; when we go to a hotel or restaurant or pub we want to be served by *someone* and not *something*. We may book online but when we arrive at our destination we want to be greeted and



served in person.

We could be heading for a world of driverless cars and automation beyond our wildest imaginings but the important is always the personal. It's about that interaction which costs not less than everything.

So, Springboard is opening doors for people into a very exciting and engaging world. Its programmes up and down the country provides a whole variety of opportunities. It's a world that values not just skills but what makes us truly human: the ability to communicate personal warmth, a sense of belonging – 'home' (if only for a short time) and offering a place of security and friendship.

And it's here, in this place of Christian worship that I believe that what I've said is underscored especially at this Christmas season.

Mary and Joseph had to make a tough journey. They relied on the kindness of strangers. Others, too – shepherds and magi – also made their journeys to see something both ordinary and extraordinary at the same time. Ordinary because babies are born every minute but extraordinary because this baby was a sign, a living embodiment of the truth that life is not just physical, it is also spiritual and without the spiritual, life becomes mere existence.

The spiritual is revealed in what is enduring like the desire to travel. The spiritual is revealed in who we are not just what we do. The spiritual is revealed in the quality of our relationships - when we go beyond 'counting the cost'.

Christians and other people of faith call that 'making sacrifices'. That word 'sacrifice' often gets a bad press. It sounds bloody and negative - all about giving things up. But if you look at the Latin origin of the word it means 'making something sacred or holy'. 'Sacre ficio': 'sacred-making'. When we make sacrifices paradoxically, life becomes whole/complete: fulfilling.

So 'thank you', members of the hospitality community. Thank you, Springboard. Thank you for making people welcome in ways that can't be measured; for helping to keep people human.

One early Christian writer said that 'the glory of God is people fully alive'. Thank you all for helping to make that real.

Make you have a wonderful and glorious Christmas. May it not only provide you with opportunities and work but also make you whole and complete.

SERVICES & EVENTS

7 JAN Sunday 7 January
Epiphany Sunday

9 JAN Children's Choir rehearsals begin again on Tuesday 9 January, 3.45pm in church

16 JAN Tuesday 16 January, 7.30pm
Parochial Church Council Meeting in church.

Local business

La Petite Poissonnerie 19 New Quebec St. London W1H 7RY

How would you describe your business? *London's Fusion Fishmonger: French in the spirit and Japanese for the quality.*

How long have you been in the neighbourhood? *A couple of years.*

What is your clientele? *We attract both local people as well as being a destination especially for Japanese and Asian customers.*

Do you have an online presence? If so what is your website address?

www.lapetitepoissonnerie.com

What would you like people to know about your business?

We aim to give a comfortable and an inspiring shopping experience with a stunning show of handpicked fresh fish on our boat and culinary advice. As complimentary to fresh fish and sashimi platters, we offer our own selection of French Epicerie and Wines, and a range of Japanese groceries. We are also producing our very own fishfingers, smoked haddock quiche, St. Jacques Gratinee, and fish pie with yet more to come.

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