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We wish our readers a joyful Christmas



Be bearers of light

THE annual feast of Our Lady and St Vincent took place with heartfelt devotion in Walker on October 27.

The solemn celebration began with a Holy Mass celebrated by Capuchin priest Fr Paul from St Francis Friary, Durham, assisted by Fr Jojo Plappallil CMI. Parishioners, family and friends joined in, honouring their beloved patrons in a day of spiritual unity and joy.

Fr Paul emphasised, in his homily, that like St Vincent, whose charity and compassion have inspired centuries of believers, the faithful are invited to be bearers of light in their communities.

In a homily that touched the hearts of many parishioners, he asked everyone gathered to be that radiant light for others.

Following Mass parishioners

joined in a solemn procession around the church, pictured above, with the traditional umbrella and canopy carrying the beautifully-adorned statue of Mother Mary.

Hymns were sung and the gentle sound of prayer uplifted the solemn atmosphere. It was a moving display of participation incorporating personal prayers and petitioning to Mary for her help and intercession. This concluded with a time of togetherness as parishioners shared snacks and enjoyed each other's fellowship.

Fr Jojo expressed his gratitude to the parishioners for the active participation and support of the community and added that this is a profound reminder of faith in action. He asked everyone to carry Christ's love into their daily lives.

Michael takes the Long Walk to receive his MBE!

IT'S a fine, dry October morning and a car makes its way steadily along the two-and-a-half mile tree-lined avenue to the oldest and largest occupied castle in the world. This is the Long Walk and it leads up to the ancient fortress of Windsor Castle, writes Maria Frazer.

At the wheel is Michael Dickson. In the passenger seat, his wife, Marisa and behind them sons Mike and Matthew, who have journeyed from the North East so that Michael can be awarded the MBE for his outstanding work in the food industry and the communities of Tyne and Wear.

For the award ceremony one family at a time went into the Grand Reception Room. This is where Michael came face to face with William, Prince of Wales.

Michael was taken aback at how tall Prince William is in real life – a giant of a man, Michael reckons.

So, what was the conversation?

The talk was of Michael's 70-year-old third generation family business... and Michael pointed out to the prince that they both share a common ancestry – in Germany.

Long drive, Long Walk, long check-in and next, long photo shoot.

Michael says that this waiting time gave him the opportunity to chat to other recipients who were present. He describes them as: "A fascinating collection of people who had the most amazing stories to tell."

Michael returned to his parish of St Gregory's Church in South Shields with his MBE and a great many memories. He reflected on the people he'd met and on the outstanding welcome offered to all by the castle staff who put everyone at their ease with their warmth and humour.

Congratulations from us all, Michael! Keep up your great work.



Michael with His Royal Highness, William, Prince of Wales.



Fr William Nichol, Dave Pepper, Frank Hodges and Ian Lord, with 1102 following their form class Mass.

Share your memories of St Cuthbert's

"Come then boys, come rally round her."

THE opening words of St Cuthbert's Catholic High School's hymn, above, will be familiar to many readers of the Northern Cross and to old boys of St Cuthbert's, writes deputy head teacher David Swindells.

Former teachers Frank Hodges, Ian Lord and Dave Pepper were welcomed back to St Cuthbert's in mid-November to begin an archive

project which will include an interactive timeline, documented records and the creation and filming of a docu-drama about how the experience of being a Cuthbertian has changed from 1881 to 2024.

If any old boys of the school – students or staff – from any era of the school's history have any videos, photographs or documents they wish to share, please contact Frank Hodges on 0191 2131790 or email Frank at frank85hodges@btinternet.com