This is the last issue of Contra mundum, at least in its present form. It has been published every month since August, 1998. The leader of that first issue was written by C. David Burt, (who was the paper’s first editor.) His article was about my ordination, and the events leading up to, and following, that service. The issue also contained a letter to the Congregation from (then) Monsignor Richard Lennox (who was our first chaplain, and, later, Bishop of Cleveland.) And there was an announcement of a forthcoming parish retreat at St Benedict’s Abbey in Still River, with our longtime friend Fr Joseph Wilson (Diocese of Brooklyn) as retreat leader.

The parish paper was indeed published every month, but there was one month when it was only available online. A print copy was not available for April, 2020 during the Covid lockdown. The paper’s editors have been David Burt, Stephen Cavanaugh, and Susan Russo, and I take this opportunity to express my gratitude publicly to these three parishioners for the care and quality they put into preparing each issue for publication. During its long run, Contra mundum has had three printers, all providing a superior product and service. The most recent printer, Hercules Press in West Roxbury, graciously did our monthly printing free of charge, for which we are very grateful and offer heartfelt thanks. I should add that David Burt put together the first ten years of Contra mundum in two bound volumes, which became a handy reference book.

Over the years Contra mundum has been much appreciated by many, clergy and laypeople alike, who wrote to say how much they looked forward to each issue, some even remarking they sit down and read it cover to cover right away! One priest called it “the most elegant parish paper he received” and others told me they would “borrow” material from our paper to use in their own publications and sermons. All of this was extremely gratifying. Perhaps Contra mundum is one of the gifts our little congregation made to the wider Church.

Over the years technology has provided us with ever-increasing ways to communicate. (Gone are the days when clergy and parish secretaries had to run Rex-Rotary machines and often had to roll up their sleeves to keep printers’ ink off their clothing!)

Our next chaplain, Fr Patrick Armano, will find a way that works best for him and the congregation for providing information and spreading the Gospel good news. May Our Lord Jesus bless those efforts.

Father Bradford.
Remarks by Monsignor William Helmick:

To begin this morning, I thank Father Connolly, our pastor, for inviting me to say these few words at this celebration of Father Bradford’s Ordination as a Catholic Priest 25 years ago in May of 1998. And I thank Father Bradford himself for not saying “no, no, no, not him” when he heard that Father Connolly had asked me to speak today.

Father Bradford’s Ordination to the Priesthood, and his assignment to St Theresa’s have been a great blessing for the priests of the Archdiocese of Boston and for the parishioners of St Theresa’s. I have observed his ministry to the people of this parish from the day it began, and he has been a totally devoted, self-sacrificing, devout Priest, always at the service of God and always available to serve the parishioners of St. Theresa’s and beyond. Among other things, Father Bradford established the Congregation of St. Athanasius, a group of Anglicans (Episcopalians) who have been received into the full communion of the Catholic Church, to whom he ministered tirelessly.

He has been an extraordinary Parish Priest, looking for nothing for himself, looking only to be the instrument of Christ and the instrument of Our Lord’s grace and mercy and love. From the day he arrived here, he dedicated himself to the ministry of the Sacraments, in which he served as Our Lord’s instrument of grace, which is a share in the life of God Himself. He was always available and eager to hear confessions, and in the Sacrament of Penance he was the Lord’s instrument of His mercy, His forgiveness of sin, His pardon, and His peace.

He was extremely dedicated to the work of bringing Holy Communion to the sick in their homes, nursing homes, and hospitals, bringing to them the Sacraments of Penance and the Anointing of the Sick and Dying, bringing the Lord Jesus into the homes of the countless people in this Parish who needed the Presence of Christ when they were sick or dying. He often travelled great distances in New England to visit the sick.

Father Bradford never missed a wake, and he brought great comfort to people who were mourning the death of a loved one, and Father Bradford was always very well prepared for his homilies at the many Funeral Masses he offered in this church.

He inspired the people of this Parish by the reverent way he celebrated Mass, showing you and me his faith in the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. His homilies were well prepared, always on the Faith of the Church. He was always ready to see people who asked to see him, and he helped countless parishioners with his good and sensible advice, and with his wisdom about the way people should love God and one another.

One unforeseen result of Pope Saint John Paul II’s decision to allow for the ordination of Anglican Episcopal Priests to the Catholic Priesthood, and Cardinal Law’s decision to ordain Father Bradford a Catholic Priest was this: I became the only Pastor in the Archdiocese of Boston who could say, on a given day, that the previous evening I was out to dinner with my curate and his wife! I could go on and on, but I won’t, except to congratulate his dear wife, Judie, Rebekah, Jonathan and Corinna, his wife, and Jessica for all they have done for Father Bradford in their loving relationship with him in their home.
SHORT NOTES

- The season of Advent begins on December 3rd. Sunday Mass readings are now taken from Year B in the three-year cycle. Daily Mass readings are taken from Year Two. Advent devotional materials are available on the lower shelves of the tract case (where you get a Sunday service leaflet and Mass booklet). For the Advent reading materials, a nominal price is suggested, which you may leave in the alms basin.

- Christmas Flower envelopes are inserted in the Sunday service leaflets for your memorial and thanksgiving gifts. Proceeds help with the expense of decorating St Lawrence Church for Christmas.

- An Every Member Canvass letter and pledge card were sent this fall to those on our mailing list. Please fill in and return your pledge card at your earliest convenience. Many thanks from the parish finance council.

- The Christmas collections at Masses on the evening of December 24th and on December 25th benefit the Clergy Retirement Trust of The Archdiocese of Boston. These funds provide stipends, housing, and medical insurance for the retired priests of the archdiocese (of which Fr Bradford is one). Please be generous.

- Hercules Press in West Roxbury prints our parish paper, Contra mundum, free of charge. We are very grateful to Michael Macrides and Joe Bailey, proprietors, for their kindness. We encourage you to choose Hercules Press to provide all your printing needs.

- The winter Ember Days in 2023 are Wednesday, December 6th and Saturday, December 9th. (December 8th is the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.) These days are observed quarterly in support of the Sacred Ministry of the Church.

- When he is available, Father Bradford plans to continue offering Mass on Saturday mornings at 8 AM (at the Marian altar in St Theresa of Ávila Church). Worshipers who attend regularly are notified in advance on occasions when no Mass will be offered.

- Saturday Mass on December 23rd is a year’s-mind Mass for Bernard Cardinal Law, who went to God in 2017. May he rest in peace.

- At least one million residents in Massachusetts do not have enough food to eat and therefore go hungry. Most parishes have a food pantry or provide a drop-off site for a neighboring distribution center. St Theresa of Ávila Parish collects non-perishable food items for pick up by Catholic Charities each Tuesday and Thursday. Your nearest parish may have a different schedule. Please consider making a regular donation to a food pantry if you do not already do so.

- Offering envelopes are not available for use in 2024. Your contributions by check will continue to be a matter of record. If you prefer to donate cash and require a receipt for tax purposes, please place your donation in an envelope with your name on it, Contributors of record during 2023 will receive a receipt early in the new year.

SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Friday, December 8, 2023
Holy day of obligation
Solemn High Mass & Sermon
7:30 PM
A reception follows this service

IN CASE OF SNOW, please be careful. The Sunday Mass at St Lawrence Church is rarely cancelled. The parking lot is plowed and treated prior to the parish 9AM Mass. But your local roads might make driving hazardous. In the rare event the Sunday Mass is cancelled, a notice will be posted on the parish website.
WHAT MAN KNOWS all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in Christ, concealed in the poverty of his flesh? Scripture says: Although he was rich he became poor for our sake to enrich us by his poverty. He showed himself poor when he assumed our mortal nature and destroyed death, yet he promised us riches, for he had not been robbed of his wealth but was keeping it in reserve.

How great are the blessings of his goodness which he reserves for those who fear him and shows to those who hope in him! Until he gives them to us in their plenitude, we can have only the faintest conception of them; but to enable us to receive these blessings, he who in his divine nature is the equal of the Father assumed the condition of a slave and became like us, and so restored to us our likeness to God. The only Son of God became a son of man to make many men sons of God.

For we are the sons of God, and although what we shall be has not yet been revealed, we know that when he appears we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is. For what are those treasures of wisdom and knowledge, what those divine riches, if not the one thing that can fulfill our longing? What are the great blessings of his goodness, if not the one thing that will content us? Therefore: Show us the Father; and all our desires will be satisfied.

Christ speaks both in us and for us when, in one of the psalms, he says to the Father: I shall be satisfied when your glory is revealed. For he and the Father are one, and whoever sees him sees the Father also. The Lord of hosts is himself the king of glory. He will transform us and show us his face, and we shall be saved; all our longing will be fulfilled, all our desires will be satisfied.

But this has not yet been accomplished; he has not yet given us the vision that will satisfy every desire; we have not yet drunk our fill of the fountain of life. So while all this remains in the future and we still walk by faith, absent from the Lord, while we still hunger and thirst for justice and with inexpressible longing yearn for God’s beauty, let us reverently celebrate the day he was born into our own servile condition.

Since we can as yet form no conception of his generation by the Father before the daystar, let us keep the festival of his birth of a virgin in the hours of the night. Since it is still beyond our understanding that his name endures for ever and existed before the sun, let us at least recognize his dwelling that he has placed beneath the sun. We cannot yet behold him as the only Son, abiding forever in his Father, so let us recall his coming forth like a bridegroom from his chamber. We are not yet ready for the banquet of our Father, so let us contemplate the manger of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Saint Augustine

Saint Augustine (354-430) was Bishop of Hippo Regius (today’s Annaba, Algeria) and is one of the Four Doctors of the Latin Church with Ambrose, Gregory the Great, and Jerome.) He is universally recognized as one of the greatest Christian theologians since St Paul. This is an excerpt from one of his many sermons that survive.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY AND THE HOLY TRINITY

She is the Tabernacle
Where God became a Child,
She is the great miracle
Of God’s Mighty Arm.
She is the Father’s Daughter,
Mother of Jesus Christ,
And by a great mystery,
Temple of the Spirit.

Saint Louis de Montfort
MARY AND THE CHURCH

The Son of God is the first born of many brothers. Although by nature he is the only-begotten; by grace he has joined many to himself and made them one with him. For to those who receive him he has given the power to become the sons of God.

He became the Son of man and made many men sons of God, uniting them to himself by his love and power, so that they became as one. In themselves they are many by reason of their human descent, but in him they are one by divine rebirth.

The whole Christ and the unique Christ—the body and the head—are one: one because born of the same God in heaven, and of the same mother on earth. They are many sons, yet one son. Head and members are one son, yet many sons; in the same way. Mary and the Church are one mother, yet more than one mother; one virgin, yet more than one virgin.

Both are mothers, both are virgins. Each conceives of the same Spirit, without concupiscence, Each gives birth to a child of God the Father, without sin. Without any sin, Mary gave birth to Christ the head for the sake of his body. By the forgiveness of every sin, the Church gave birth to the body, for the sake of its head. Each is Christ’s mother, but neither gives birth to the whole Christ without the cooperation of the other.

In the inspired Scriptures, what is said in a universal sense of the virgin mother, the Church, is understood in an individual sense of the Virgin Mary, and what is said in a particular sense of the virgin mother Mary is rightly understood in a general sense of the virgin mother, the Church. When either is spoken of, the meaning can be understood of both, almost without qualification.

In a way, every Christian is also believed to be a bride of God’s Word, a mother of Christ, his daughter and sister, at once virginal and fruitful. These words are used in a universal sense of the Church, in a special sense of Mary, in a particular sense of the individual Christian. They are used by God’s Wisdom in person, the Word of the Father.

This is why Scripture says: I will dwell in the inheritance of the Lord. The Lord’s inheritance is, in a general sense, the Church; in a special sense, Mary; in an individual sense, the Christian. Christ dwelt for nine months in the tabernacle of Mary’s womb. He dwells until the end of the ages in the tabernacle of the Church’s faith. He will dwell for ever in the knowledge and love of each faithful soul.

Blessed Isaac of Stella

Blessed Isaac (c.1100-1170s) was an English Cistercian monk, philosopher, and theologian. He was abbot of the monastery at Étoile near Poitiers, France. (Étoile is French for stella or star.) This excerpt is from one of his fifty-five surviving sermons.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR long-time organist and parishioner Jim Reedy on the occasion of his receiving the Bishop Cheverus Award at an afternoon service on November 26th in the Cathedral of the Holy Cross. Lay men and women who have provided their parishes and the archdiocese with outstanding service are nominated for the award by the clergy and the Archbishop of Boston personally presents the medals.

Jim was our organist from the very beginning of our congregation, and played a variety of instruments in the various locations for our Mass. He continued as our organist until his retirement several years ago.

The award is named for Jean-Louis Anne Madelain Lefebvre de Cheverus (1768-1836), the first Bishop of Boston, who later served as Archbishop of Bordeaux. He was named a cardinal five months before his death.
HE ENTERS INTO A SECOND UNION WITH US

The very Son of God, older than the ages, the invisible, the incomprehensible, the incorporeal, the beginning of beginning, the light of light, the fountain of life and immortality, the image of the archetype, the immovable seal, the perfect likeness, the definition and word of the Father: he it is who comes to his own image and takes our nature for the good of our nature, and unites himself to an intelligent soul for the good of my soul, to purify like by like. He takes to himself all that is human, except for sin. He was conceived by the Virgin Mary, who had been first prepared in soul and body by the Spirit; his coming to birth had to be treated with honor, virginity had to receive new honor. He comes forth as God, in the human nature he has taken, one being, made of two contrary elements, flesh and spirit. Spirit gave divinity, flesh received it.

He who makes rich is made poor; he takes on the poverty of my flesh, that I may gain the riches of his divinity. He who is full is made empty; he is emptied for a brief space of his glory, that I may share in his fullness. What is this wealth of goodness? What is this mystery that surrounds me? I received the likeness of God, but failed to keep it. He takes on my flesh, to bring salvation to the image, immortality to the flesh. He enters into a second union with us, a union far more wonderful than the first.

Holiness had to be brought to man by the humanity assumed by one who was God, so that God might overcome the tyrant by force and so deliver us and lead us back to himself through the mediation of his Son. The Son arranged this for the honor of the Father, to whom the Son is clearly obedient in all things.

The Good Shepherd, who lays down his life for the sheep, came in search of the straying sheep to the mountains and hills on which you used to offer sacrifice. When he found it, he took it on the shoulders that bore the wood of the cross, and led it back to the life of heaven.

Christ, the light of all lights, follows John, the lamp that goes before him. The Word of God follows the voice in the wilderness; the bridegroom follows the bridegroom’s friend, who prepares a worthy people for the Lord by cleansing them by water in preparation for the Spirit.

We need God to take our flesh and die, that we might live. We have died with him, that we may be purified. We have risen again with him, because we have died with him. We have been glorified with him, because we have risen again with him.

Saint Gregory Nazianzen

¶ Saint Gregory (c. 329-390) was a theologian and 4th Century Archbishop of Constantinople. He is widely considered the most accomplished rhetorical stylist of the patristic age. He is a Doctor of the Church and with SS Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa is known as one of the Cappadocian Fathers. This is an excerpt from one of his sermons on the Incarnation.

WHOSE ONLY PALACE WAS A STABLE

Dear Jesus,

THOUGH THERE WAS no room for you in the inn, grant this day that I might make abundant room for you in my heart. Though your own did not receive you, grant this hour that I may embrace you with open arms. Though Bethlehem overlooked you in the shuffle of the census, grant me the grace, this quiet moment, to be still and know that you are God. You, whose only palace was a stable, whose only throne was a feeding trough, whose only robes were swaddling clothes.

On my knees I confess that I am too conditioned to this world’s pomp and pageantry to recognize God cooing in a manger.

Forgive me. Please. And help me understand at least some of what your birth has to teach—that divine power is not mediated through strength, but through weakness; that true greatness is not achieved through the assertion of rights, but through their release; and that even the most secular of things can be sacred when you are in their midst.

And for those times when you yearn for my fellowship and stand at the door and knock, grant me a special sensitivity to the sound of that knock so I may be quick to my feet. Keep me from letting you stand out in the cold or from ever sending you away to some stable. May my heart be warm and inviting, so that when you do knock, a worthy place will always be waiting. ...

A Prayer
The name of our parish paper comes from the Latin phrase, "Athanasius contra mundum," meaning "Athanasius against the world." Our patron saint stood firmly for the fullness of the faith. Fr Bradford, the Congregation of Saint Athanasius, and our editors, David Burt, Stephen Cavannaugh, and Susan Russo, have published this paper monthly since 1998. All issues are available on our website under “Parish Paper.”

**CONTRA MUNDUM**

The name of our parish paper comes from the Latin phrase, “Athanasius contra mundum,” meaning “Athanasius against the world.” Our patron saint stood firmly for the fullness of the faith. Fr Bradford, the Congregation of Saint Athanasius, and our editors, David Burt, Stephen Cavannaugh, and Susan Russo, have published this paper monthly since 1998. All issues are available on our website under “Parish Paper.”

**THE CONGREGATION OF SAINT ATHANASIUS**

The Revd Richard Sterling Bradford, Chaplain
Saint Lawrence Church
774 Boylston Ave.
Chestnut Hill, Mass.
(Parking lot behind the church)
Sundays 11:30 AM
Fellowship and Coffee in the Undercroft after Mass
Rectory:
767 West Roxbury Pkwy.
Boston, MA 02132-2121
Tel/Fax: (617) 325-5232
congregationstathanasius.com

**CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE**

**The Fourth Sunday in Advent**
Sunday, December 24, 2023 at 11:30 AM
Sung Mass & Sermon

**Christmas Eve**
Sunday, December 24, 2023 at 8:30 PM
Solemn Mass of Christmas
Roman Martyrology & Blessing of the Crèche

**Christmas Day**
Monday, December 25, 2023 at 10:30 AM
Sung Mass & Sermon

During the Christmas Octave daily Mass is offered in the Ordinary Form in many parishes.
Mass is offered in the Extraordinary form on Saturday, December 30th at 8:00 AM at the Marian altar in St Theresa of Ávila Church, West Roxbury.

**The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph**
Sunday, December 31, 2023 at 11:30 AM
Sung Mass & Sermon

**STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS**

The Incarnation was God’s ‘weak moment’: when Omnipotence becomes a baby in a manger it has ‘weakened’ itself. ... The temptation is precisely a temptation to evade the self-imposed weaknesses, to be strong, omnipotent, again—to make stones into bread, to be emperor of the world, to do ‘levitations.’ The weakness was the strength.

C. S. Lewis

¶ C. S. Lewis (b. 1898) was a British writer and lay theologian. He died on the same day as the assassination of President John F. Kennedy (November 22, 1963) and therefore his passing was not much noticed in the American press. This excerpt is from Collected Letters, III, edited by Walter Hooper, and published in London by Harper Collins, 2006.

**SATURDAY MASS**

Celebrated each week at 8:00 AM at the Marian altar in St Theresa of Ávila Church, 2078 Centre St, West Roxbury. Enter the main church via the pavilion or the St Theresa Avenue side doors. See the Short Note on page 35.
St. Lawrence Church  
774 Boylston Street (Route 9)  
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467

Parking is in the church parking lot behind the Church. Use 30 Reservoir Road, Chestnut Hill 02467 for your GPS.

Directions by Car from the North or South:  
Route 128(95) to Route 9 east. At the signal for Reservoir Road, take the right; the Church parking lot is a short distance on the left.

Directions by Car from Boston:  
From Stuart/Kneeland St, turn left onto Park Plaza. Drive for 0.2 miles. Park Plaza becomes St James Avenue. Drive for 0.3 miles. Turn slight left onto ramp. Drive for 0.1 miles. Go straight on Route 9. Drive for 3.5 miles. Turn left onto Heath Street. Drive for 0.1 miles. Go straight on Reservoir Road. Drive for 0.1 miles. The parking lot is on your right.

Directions by Public Transportation:  
From Kenmore Square station, board Bus #60, which stops in front of the Church. Alternatively, the Church is a 15-minute walk from the Cleveland Circle station on the Green Line C branch.

Contra Mundum  
The Congregation of St. Athanasius  
10 St. Theresa Avenue  
West Roxbury, MA 02132