

- 1 Britain's first stretch of motorway was opened on this day in 1958. This 8-mile length of the M6 motorway by-passed Preston in Lancashire, and was opened by the then Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan.
- 2 When another motorway (the M62) was being built across the Pennine hills between Lancashire and Yorkshire, it was often the case that the tops of hills would be pushed into valleys, filling them in. This helped to create level ground and a smooth path for vehicles to travel along.
- 3 Between Junctions 22 and 23 of the M62, one farmer stubbornly resisted the "compulsory purchase order" which would have led to good financial compensation for the forced purchase of his land, through which the motorway was to be built. As was his right, he appealed against that compulsory purchase order, causing delays for the completion of the road. He refused to move out of his house.
- 4 It was then decided simply to by-pass his farmhouse. And so the motorway splits at that point, with the two carriageways isolating the farmhouse in the middle of the motorway, but giving access by tunnels to fields on either side.
- 5 The building techniques of the M62 across the Pennines are similar to images used by the prophet Isaiah. During the Church's Season of Advent, his words are often read, because they point the way forward to God coming amongst us.
- 6 This is what Isaiah says:
*A voice cries out:
 "In the wilderness
 prepare a way for the Lord.
 Level the mountains
 and fill in the valleys.*

*Make the uneven ground level
 and so make a straight road in the desert
 for our God to approach
 and come amongst us.*

*From the top of a high mountain
 we proclaim
 that God is approaching:
 he is coming amongst us.*

*This is his promise,
 and he is faithful to what he says."*

Is 40⁵⁻⁹, 42¹⁶

7 *Let us pray:*

**Loving Father,
 we ask you
 to show us how to level
 any 'mountains' we might have
 of feeling 'superior'
 or 'better' than others,
 or of making judgements
 about people.**

**Raise us from any 'valleys'
 of despair
 or a poor self-image
 or a sense of worthlessness.**

**Lift us up
 from whatever kind of poverty
 may affect our lives.**

**Lift us up, we pray,
 from anything that makes us
 less than fully human.**

**Raise us from sinfulness,
 and lead us to prepare a straight path
 for the coming anew into our lives
 of Jesus, your Son.**

Amen.

👉 The first stretch of the M1 was opened in November 1959 - 11 months after the opening of the M6 Preston By-Pass.

👉 In Britain, the main 'A' ("Arterial" or "Trunk") roads are named as follows, radiating (clockwise) like the spokes of a wheel from the capital cities of England and Scotland:

A1 - London to Edinburgh

A2 - London to Dover

A3 - London to Portsmouth

A4 - London to Bristol

A5 - London to Holyhead (Anglesey)

A6 - London to Carlisle

A7 - Edinburgh to Carlisle

A8 - Edinburgh to Glasgow

A9 - Edinburgh to John O'Groats.

All roads within the sector bounded by two of the above-named roads (e.g. between the A4 and the A5) are named according to the first number. This explains, for example, why most of the roads in Wales start with "A4__" e.g. A479, A483, A44, A4103. The 'B'-roads follow the same pattern as, in a general way, do the Motorways.

👉 Chapters 40-66 of the Book of Isaiah (often called "Second Isaiah") were written about the time of the Fall of Babylon in 593 B.C., as Cyrus of Persia was about to allow the Jews to return to their own land from their Exile in Babylon.

👉 The passage from Isaiah is one of the texts set to music by Handel (see 22 Aug) in his oratorio 'The Messiah', often performed before Christmas and before Easter.

👉 "Prepare ye the way of the Lord" is a song from the musical 'Godspel', being the words of John the Baptist (as he quotes Isaiah), preparing the way for Jesus.



👉 Even on a national road atlas map, the deviation of the M62 around the farm can be seen - between J22 and J23, 4 miles to the west of Huddersfield.

🎵 Come let us go up ("walk in his paths... the mountain"); In your coming and going ("you look at the mountains"); Though the mountains may fall; Walk with me ("the road... the steepest mountain-side")

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in
'Praying Each Day of the Year',
a 3-volume book
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:

<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine
to research this topic further.

This material is part of
the prayer and education website
of the De La Salle Brothers
in Great Britain:
www.prayingeachday.org