



# All Saints Parish Paper

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## **FR MICHAEL WRITES:**

After the excitement of the announcement of a new Vicar on Advent 2, fortuitously also the Sunday on which we were able to welcome congregations back to church in person, we have much to look forward to over the next few months. Fr Peter will be joining us in May, near the end of Eastertide, but before that we have the full cycle of salvation history to celebrate. By the time you read this we'll have marked Christmas slightly differently from past years with a Vigil Mass on the Eve and a Sung Mass on Christmas Day but no Carol services (whether that is a loss lamented or unlamented I leave to your various prejudices). In the New Year the Feasts of

the Epiphany and Candlemas complete the Christmas cycle and we are launched into the Lenten preparation for Holy Week and Easter.

You may remember that I had arranged for Fr John Behr, the Professor of Humanities at St Andrews and an Orthodox priest, to give us an Advent day this year. He and I agreed that it would be best, given lockdowns and tiers, to put that off until Lent in the hope that we may be able to offer it to a group of people in church as well as online. He will give talks based on his accessible and engaging book *Becoming Human*, the fruit of his researches on the early Christian Father, S Irenaeus. The date of the Lent day will be

advised soon.

In Passion Week the Lenten discipline is interrupted by the Solemnity of The Annunciation, the great mystery in which we give thanks again for the Word being made Flesh, the great mystery and miracle that underlies all our salvation history: we were deprived of the restored High Mass for that Feast in 2020 and look forward in hope to offering it in 2021. I am delighted that Fr Peter Anthony has agreed to be our preacher that evening.

Then, for Holy Week we are extremely fortunate that Bishop Rowan Williams has accepted my reissued invitation to be with us from Palm Sunday until Easter Day. This will be an inspiring Holy Week at the end of which we hope to celebrate some baptisms and confirmations as is fitting at Easter. The Ascension and Pentecost are then on the horizon with, just before Pentecost, the Collation and Induction of our new Vicar on 20<sup>th</sup> May.

There is much to do, not least to the Vicarage, before then: I am personally

thankful for the support of servers, musicians and PCC members and, not least, Frs Peter McGeary and Jack Noble for covering my days off, as we keep offering the *opus Dei* at All Saints; also that the hard work of the Churchwardens, Treasurer and others keeps the administration of the parish in good shape as we move towards some sense of normality in time for this much anticipated new beginning.

With prayers and best wishes,

*Fr Michael*

This month I have asked Fr Peter to contribute a piece about himself and also an article about the Transfiguration. I have also been asked to include a sermon for Advent Sunday in addition to the third part of my series on the Catholicity of Anglicanism. There are also some suggestions of reading matter for those who are looking for it. I hope you enjoy the photo of this year's splendidly decorated Christmas tree, which prompts so many admiring comments from passersby and helpfully draws attention to the church at this season.

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## **FR PETER ANTHONY WRITES:**

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Dear friends,

Now that the formal announcement of my appointment as your next vicar is public, I am grateful for the opportunity to write at slightly greater length to introduce myself to you all and to say what a hugely exciting privilege it is to be called as your next parish priest.

My first memory of encountering All Saints Margaret Street was when I came to London at the age of 22 as a pastoral assistant at St Paul's, Tottenham.

I remember exploring London on days off — visiting museums, going window shopping in the West End and so on. I particularly recall one Saturday afternoon making my way to All Saints. I have a vivid memory of pushing open the heavy door and entering into the lovely, mystic gloom inside. Everything was infused with the holy smell of incense and candle wax, and as my eyes became accustomed to the dim light, I beheld the jewel box of glory within. I remember being so struck by a strong sense of God's presence and love,

and the beauty of the worship that took place in this church, that I lingered to pray and offer my sense of vocation to God.

What a beautiful serendipity that nearly twenty years later, this should be the place that God is now calling me to serve as a priest. I am sure many of you will have similar memories about your first experience of All Saints — a chance visit on a busy shopping day, or the first liturgy you attended, or witnessing one of All Saints processions in Oxford Street. One of my most fervent hopes is that through the life of our parish, others might have a similar experience of God’s presence through the life and worship of All Saints and so be drawn closer to Christ.

Over the past seven years I have been vicar of St Benet’s, Kentish Town. It has been a joy to work in Camden in a residential parish with extensive children’s and school ministries. I realise All Saints offers a very different range of opportunities for mission and ministry, with a more “gathered” congregation. I can’t wait to learn more about those dynamics and get to know you all. I look forward to exploring with you where we feel God is calling All Saints to grow and develop over the next few years as we emerge from COVID and grapple with new challenges and fresh opportunities.

Before my time in Kentish Town, I worked as a graduate student in Oxford, as Junior Dean at St Stephen’s House, and as Junior Chaplain at Merton College, whilst I completed a doctorate. One of my most heart-felt passions is theological reflection and helping people to explore their Christian faith. All Saints has long had a reputation for being a place of high-



*Fr Peter Anthony*

quality preaching and teaching, and I look forward to strengthening and renewing that reputation.

The academic research I undertook in Oxford was in the area of what one might describe as “biblical reception history”. It looked at how the Transfiguration narratives — and especially Luke’s — were interpreted in the patristic age, and in early 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century depictions. Engendering a love of the scriptures, and exploring the fascinating processes whereby we interpret, read, and live them

has always been a key imperative in my priestly ministry, which I hope will be of use at All Saints'. It has been suggested that I might want to share with you some of the ideas I have worked on, so there is a further article in this edition of the Parish Paper by me exploring some of the material my research focused on. If you want to know more, I hope to publish the thesis as a monograph later next year.

As I look ahead to the coming months, two ideas strike me as important in characterising our life together.

The first is gratitude. I believe very firmly in gratitude as the foundation and bedrock of any Christian ministry: gratitude for what God has done for us in Christ; and gratitude for all that those who have gone before us have accomplished. No ministry takes place in a vacuum. It is built upon the hard work of others who have preceded us, upon God's inspiration and guidance, and is rooted in collaboration with those amongst whom God calls us to minister. I am very aware of all the hard work that has taken place during the interregnum to keep the show on the road at All Saints, especially

with the extraordinary demands of COVID lockdowns. We should all be particularly grateful to Fr Michael, Fr Julian, the churchwardens, the parish representatives in the appointment process, the PCC, and so many others for their heroic efforts. I also want to pay tribute to the long and faithful ministry which Fr Alan exercised at All Saints. It will be an honour to build on his achievements.

A second idea which strikes me as crucial is the notion of journeying together, and of pilgrimage through life. The scriptures and many writers in the Christian tradition speak of the Christian vocation as a journey or "way". In all the places I have ever ministered as a priest, I have found pilgrimages, retreats, and journeys to be key points of calling and discovery for so many people.

Taking oneself away from the hum drum routines of our everyday life to a place set apart is an important way in which God touches and changes us, and gives us new vision for the future. It is also a crucial way of learning more about each other, rejoicing in each other's gifts, and trusting



*Fr Peter at St Benet's*

those with whom we are journeying.

I know pilgrimage and retreat have long been a key part of All Saints' life, and I look forward to exploring how we can expand that element of our life together. However, I would also hope, possibly more importantly, that the *idea* of journeying together could be something that characterises our parish life more generally in a more intentional way: journeying with those who are new to faith; journeying with, and learning about, those with whom we disagree; journeying with

those who are excluded or marginalised; and most importantly journeying with Christ as we encounter him in the liturgical life of the church.

I pray that our journey together as a parish community towards God might be a life-giving path, in which God has many exciting opportunities in store for us all. I look forward to preparing to move to All Saints and to beginning as your new vicar in May. Please keep me in your prayers as I keep you in mine.

*Fr Peter Anthony*

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## SERMON PREACHED on ADVENT 1 by FR MICHAEL BOWIE

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I once spent a happy summer holiday as the Chaplain of Taormina in Sicily. Sicily has an extraordinary sense of the past as **present**. We know that much Christian practice, especially the church calendar, was made over from existing pagan and secular celebrations, which is appropriate because of the incarnation. If God was prepared to take human form, then we may be reassured that all human activity belongs to God; the Bible teaches us that creation is **good** and humanity is sanctified by God's action in us.

In Sicily, home to so many succeeding civilisations, you can see and touch the past everywhere. In Syracuse the Cathedral is very obviously a Greek temple with walls added between the Doric columns. Deep in the dry centre of the island ancient sites of the mother-goddess Demeter have been made over into churches honouring the mother of Christ. Even in the resort town of Taormina there were plenty of examples of the past breaking through into present life, from the Roman amphitheatre with its

spectacular backdrop of Mt Etna playing host to a concert conducted by Ennio Morricone, to the feast of St Pancrazio which I have only properly understood with Advent in view.

San Pancrazio (not the same St Pancras as our almost-neighbour), was a 1<sup>st</sup> century martyr of Taormina, where some of his relics remain. The little ancient church dedicated to him opens only on his feast day. So it was that, on 9 July 1994, I witnessed a procession (with a band, playing Sicilian opera tunes) from the *Duomo* to the church of San Pancrazio. The ancient retired Archpriest and his housekeeper (let the reader understand), joined the procession in a Fiat 500; the present Archpriest (and his housekeeper) led the procession bearing a life-size bust of the saint in which the relics were housed. When we reached San Pancrazio's church, a little wooden railway had been built, sloping up from the church door to a throne above the altar. The reliquary was placed on a cart and the men of the town took it in turns to pull on

ropes, with a great pantomime of straining and panting, to hoist the saint up to his throne, where the Archpriest (*without* his housekeeper) placed him; cue more opera music **and** fireworks.

This was all great fun, as one would expect in a Sicilian summer, but I only realised later that this was another Christianisation, relevant to our celebration today. Pagans (and, probably, the ancestors of Judaism) observed a festival of the divinity coming to dwell in his temple at a certain time each year.

The Latin name of this feast was *adventus* — the arrival of the god (in Greek *παρουσία*: the word for Christ's return in the New Testament). The temple, usually closed, would be opened and a statue of the divinity would be solemnly brought into the main sanctuary. The *adventus* was a celebration of presence re-emphasised. Once the cult of the emperor spread, his state visits were also known as an *adventus* and a festival of his *adventus* was kept each year in the places which he had visited. This was what they were doing with the bust of San Pancrazio.

What better word than *adventus* for the visit of the Son of God to earth in the Temple of his flesh? Christians used it to emphasise the *true* coming of divinity into the world. Preparing for Christmas (originally the winter solstice feast of the birth of *sol invictus*, the unvanquished Sun, the re-turning of the year towards light), this *adventus* was originally a month-long celebration of the coming of God among us. As our calendar developed, the fullness of the Christmas season was understood to conclude with a second *adventus*, the coming of the child Jesus into the Jerusalem Temple (Candlemas).

As Lent was developed as a preparation for the greatest feast, Easter, so Advent began to be treated like a lesser Lent: a gloomy preparation for the birthday — odd when you think about it — rather than a joyful celebration of it. Here's why we shouldn't despise the world's too-early Christmas celebrations: if we *join in*, we can reclaim the feast; we can do what our Christian ancestors did to their secular festivals.

So, although we keep these four weeks in purple it isn't supposed to be a time of introspective gloom; it's supposed to be a time of rejoicing and wakefulness, as the Gospel recommends. The purple, in the darkest month of the year turns to the white and gold of Christmas as we celebrate the first spark of the lengthening days, lit by Christ, the new unvanquished Sun.

This reminds me of the Easter Vigil, when we celebrate the Christian Passover, the Lord's passage from death to life, his re-birth, if you like, and ours too. At the Vigil one of the first ceremonies is the blessing of the Paschal candle: that candle which stands in the Sanctuary in Eastertide and there by the font for the rest of the year (to remind us that baptism unites us to the risen Christ; birth and rebirth). In the blessing of the candle these ancient words are used:

*Christ yesterday and today  
the beginning and the end  
Alpha and Omega  
**all time belongs to him,**  
and all the ages;  
to him be glory and power,  
through every age and for ever. Amen.*

'All time belongs to him': that's what our calendar and seasons are all about; that is the message of our Christian New Year, today. He is not past but **present**; even in

the darkness of winter, even in pandemic and lockdown, we are to be *awake* to the light, to signs of his presence with us, here at the altar, and all around us in his world. We are all, in the words of today's Gospel, doorkeepers to the Temple of the Lord. Doorkeepers are to be alert to whatever is happening around them, not focused on themselves to the exclusion of others; their

task is to welcome the Master of the house and to make sure his guests can get in to meet him. That is our first task as members of this and every Christian church.

‘And what I say to you I say to all’: ‘keep awake!’

**‘All time belongs to him.’**

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## INTERPRETING VISION: LUKE'S TRANSFIGURATION NARRATIVE

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If you were present on the mountain with Peter, James and John, would you have been able to see the Transfiguration?

What I mean is this. Could just anyone see it? If you had a camera with you, for example, would you have been able to take a picture of it? Or to put it another way, if Squirrel Nutkin just happened to poke his head around a tree at the right time, would he have been able to see it? Could a creature with no soul, or reason see the Glory of God being displayed in Jesus Christ? Or would he just have seen three ordinary looking blokes a bit confused standing in front of another ordinary looking bloke.

It's a puzzling question isn't it. If we look at what was written about this question in the earliest Christian centuries, we discover something rather interesting. Broadly speaking if you asked a Greek speaker, writing in the East, whether we could all see the Transfiguration, he would probably answer no. For Greek speaking theologians, not just anyone could see the Transfiguration. For them, it shows how difficult it is for humans to see God's glory.

Origen, for example, says the disciples going up the mountain represent the way in which only the most spiritually experienced

and holy can see God: people who have spent their whole lives seeking Wisdom, and disciplining their souls. Origen argues the fact that there were only three disciples rather than twelve chosen to witness this event shows how difficult it is to see God, and how spiritually advanced you need to be to witness his presence. Greek writers tended to emphasize how the Transfiguration is a story about the transformation not of Jesus, but of the disciples' vision — how they were enabled to see something which ordinarily they would not be able to see or cope with. A seeing with the soul and the mind rather than the eyes. In fact many Greek patristic commentators go so far as to say if someone happened to be on the mountain and saw the Transfiguration by accident, or without being prepared for it, they would probably go blind or mad or both!

Contrast that with the opinion of the cooler, more restrained Western Latin mind. You discover in Latin patristic comment almost the opposite. Roman theologians tended to say, “Yes, of course anyone could see the Transfiguration”. For Latin commentators, there was something fundamentally democratic, if you like, about the disciples' experience. It shows that all of us, each and every Christian by virtue

of our baptism is given by God the grace of being able to know him and see him. Ambrose, for example, insists the disciples see Moses and Elijah in “bodily” glory, as though anyone could see it. Indeed for him, the three disciples represent the whole human race, rather than a smaller group of “elite” mystics as Origen argued. For Latin writers it was important to emphasise it less as a seeing in the mind, and more a physical thing, something Squirrel Nutkin may well have been able to witness, or which you might have been able to photograph. The Transfiguration for the Latin mind shows the vision of God is not an esoteric thing just for the very holy, but something God offers to all by virtue of the incarnation.

Through the whole of Christian history the Transfiguration has been seen as something that tells us a lot about what it means to be in God’s presence. It describes being with God in terms of seeing him. In that, there is something going on here that tells us what heaven will be like. Whatever else we experience in heaven, it will be a blissful and constant seeing of God in which we are somehow made able to witness his Glory — something which it is difficult for us to see in this mortal life, but which in heaven will be our constant joy and delight.

Maybe part of why this is so important for the ancient mind is actually rooted in how people understood sight. In the ancient world, human vision was thought to be almost like a form of touching. Most ancient theories of how we see imagined there were invisible, but nonetheless physical rays going out of the eye, or into the eye, connecting the viewer in an almost tactile way with the thing viewed. Language associated with vision was often very tactile too. Seeing something was like touching, embracing, exploring, or even

tasting it. To look at something was to grasp and hold it in your mind.

One of the things it is important to do when we read Luke’s version of the Transfiguration is to notice just how often the writer adds little details that have to do with vision and seeing. Take for example, his intriguing assertion that the disciples are affected by sleepiness on the mount of Transfiguration.

Most of our bad translations of the Bible simply say the disciples fell asleep and woke to the amazing vision. But the Greek of Luke’s version is more ambiguous. It says they became weighed down with drowsiness, and then suddenly come to themselves, but doesn’t actually say they fell asleep. The apostles seem to enter some sort of liminal woozy world that is neither sleep nor dream, nor wakefulness.

This is frequently something you notice accompanies the experience of other visionary figures in the ancient world. In descriptions of the visionary experiences of the desert mystics sleep deprivation is often a precursor to visionary revelation, for example. So Luke adds elements that draw us into seeing the disciples who accompany him as visionaries. Heavenly vision will certainly be a characteristic of Peter’s ministry as we make our way through the Acts of the Apostles, and John will have the authorship of Revelation, the Book of Vision par excellence, ascribed to him by the Early Church.

Notice also how skilfully Luke links his version of the Transfiguration to other incidents that involve vision of heaven in a way that Matthew and Mark don’t. Take for example a little phrase that, once again, gets lost in most of our translations. “Behold two men” — those are the words Luke uses

to introduce Moses and Elijah. Seemingly unimportant and throw away. Yet they are words he will only use on two other occasions: at the Resurrection to describe the two angels there; and at the Ascension, describing the two angels who appear to the disciples saying Jesus will come again in the same way as he left them. Luke links his Transfiguration to other revelatory, visionary incidents in which the life of heaven is revealed to our eyes.

One place we see an artist link the Transfiguration with ideas of a revelation of what heaven is like in Ravenna. In 402, as the Roman Empire crumbled the Western Capital was transferred to Ravenna on the Adriatic coast. It was taken over by the Ostrogoths, who were Arians, and then eventually by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian who was orthodox. Throughout all this time, a most extraordinary explosion of mosaic creation took place in the city at the behest of both Arians and Catholics.

One of the most beautiful and perplexing depictions of the Transfiguration is to be found there in the Church of Sant' Apollinare in Classe. It's a bit of a trek to get to, and is now stranded outside the main city. Classe

used to be the main port for Ravenna, but as the sea has receded, the church finds itself slightly abandoned in the middle of blasted swampland.

The Transfiguration is depicted there as a large cross covering the sky, with the disciples presented as sheep on either side of the Lord in a lush hillside full of flowers and plants. But if you look carefully to the centre of the jewelled cross, you see a small roundel with the face of Christ. I think this depiction of the Transfiguration makes much more sense when compared with a very peculiar first century text called the Apocalypse of Peter. The Apocalypse of Peter describes the Transfiguration prompting in Peter a strange vision of heaven and hell. Despite all the weird imagery it uses, we see here clear connections being made between Peter's experience of the Transfiguration and visionary experience of heaven. In that text, the hillside is described as lush and green, full of flowers, and there is a prediction that Christ will return with "my cross before my face," which might be the inspiration for the strange jewelled cross standing for the transfigured Jesus.

We see in this amazing mosaic an attempt to show how the Transfiguration points us forward to the life of heaven that we believe is the focus and ultimate end point of our faith. What Peter, James and John witness on the mountain top tells us something of what we hope for in eternity. And a big part of that is the series of experiences and ideas and metaphors which we describe using the idea of seeing God.

One thing Luke is trying to tell us in his Transfiguration



*Sant' Apollinare Ravenna*

account is that whenever and however we end up seeing God either in their life or in the next, it is never just a matter of a distant witnessing of him. Seeing God prompts us to embrace him, to know him, to touch him, to be overwhelmed by him. Seeing God does not just involve the use of our eyes, but our mind, our soul, our whole being. We can see God because God made us able to know and see him. And yet at the same time, that vision wonderfully overwhelms us, inebriates us, and is more than we

could ever hope for. The Transfiguration reveals the vision of God is strangely both possible and impossible at the same time; forbidden, and dangerous — and yet intimate and wonderful; awesome, and terrible; yet loving and personal. It points to a wonderful paradox at the heart of our experience of God. He is more than we could ever imagine, or desire, or see, and yet loves us and saves us as our friend and brother.

*Fr Peter Anthony*

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## ***What is the Church of England? How is it Catholic? 3*** **Creeds**

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If, as argued last month, the **Gospels** are the key both to Scripture and Christian faith, the Creeds, which do not include unbiblical doctrines like penal substitutionary atonement, help us to proclaim the Gospel personally and communally and to be confident that we don't need such extra doctrines, any more than we *need* papal infallibility.

### **Creeds**

Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP is especially lucid about the Creeds as an expression of our faith:

The Creed consists of a list of articles. A tutor of mine at Oxford, a distinguished Old Testament scholar, confessed that during the recital of the Creed, he would leave out the articles he did not believe that week. The Creed may look as if it is a checklist of faith, requiring one's assent to a number of separate items. How many must one accept to pass? But St Thomas Aquinas maintained that there are only two things we believe, two *credibilia*: that God exists, and that we are loved in Jesus Christ. Every word of the Creed is indeed necessary to bring us

closer to that mystery of love. Herbert McCabe, a rigorous and exigent thinker, wrote: 'The whole of our faith is the belief that God loves us; I mean there isn't anything else. Anything else that we say we believe is just a way of saying that God loves us. Any proposition, any article of faith is only an expression of faith if it is a way of saying that God loves us' [McCabe, *Faith Within Reason*, p 33]. Our confession of our faith in the Trinity is not assent to an obscure doctrine, remote from ordinary life, celestial mathematics: it is a declaration of the true nature of all love, our share in that perfect, equal love of Father and Son which is the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity challenges us to rid our loves and friendships of all that is dominating, patronizing, selfish or exploitative. Intolerant forms of Christianity have lost the plot, literally.

*Why Go To Church?*, p 73

Dare I suggest that those two Dominicans, Radcliffe and McCabe, offer us here a characteristically Anglican view of the kind I outlined two months

ago from the writings of F.D. Maurice, Michael Ramsey and Rowan Williams? This is precisely the faith expressed not as a system, but as the living Church is supposed to proclaim it. And this may be because the Creeds, the second pillar of the Quadrilateral, come from a similar place to the Gospels. As Fr Radcliffe says these are not limiting formulæ but words which help us to understand how God loves us.

### **Creeds: where did they come from?**

For hundreds of years Christians have understood the word *Creed* to mean a fixed formula summarizing the essential articles of their religion and enjoying the sanction of ecclesiastical authority. For more than half the Church's history no one had any doubts about the origins of the Creeds: it was confidently assumed that the twelve Apostles had themselves composed and authorized the first summary of belief. Tyrannius Rufinus, an ex-friend of the Biblical translator St Jerome, wrote an exposition of the Creed in about 404, which illustrates the picture people had of the beginning of the Creeds with the following story. The Apostles, he related, having been equipped at Pentecost with the ability to speak different languages, were instructed by the Lord to journey forth and proclaim God's word to the several nations of the world:

As they were therefore on the point of taking leave of each other, they first settled an agreed norm for their future preaching, so that they might not find themselves, widely separated as they would be, giving out different doctrines to the people they invited to believe in Christ. So they met together in one spot and, being filled with the Holy Spirit, compiled this brief token [*symbolum*, '*Creed*'], as I have said, of their future preaching, each making

the contribution he thought fit; and they *decreed* that it should be handed out as standard teaching to believers.

Rufinus did not invent the story he quotes. On the contrary it represented in his eyes an ancient and hallowed tradition, and one which is found in other contemporary documents. Rufinus's hint that each of the Apostles made his personal contribution to the formula is later elaborated with picturesque detail. We see the legend in a developed form in the series of sermons *De Symbolo* ('On the Creed') falsely attributed to St Augustine:

On the tenth day after the Ascension, when the disciples were gathered together for fear of the Jews, the Lord sent the promised Paraclete upon them. At His coming they were inflamed like red-hot iron and, being filled with the knowledge of all languages, they composed the Creed. Peter said "I believe in God the Father almighty...maker of heaven and earth"...Andrew said "And in Jesus Christ His Son...our only Lord"...James said "Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit..."

And so on, at some length!

The setting of this story is deliberately borrowed from the narrative of John 20: 19, according to which only the Twelve received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The prestige of the Creed was thus skilfully enhanced by attributing it to the direct action of the Spirit, using the Apostles as instruments.

Though accepted as a piece of history right down to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, this story has the obvious characteristics of a pious fiction. Of course, in a literal sense, the extreme unlikelihood of the Apostles having drafted an official summary of

the faith scarcely merits discussion. The theory was quietly set aside as legendary by practically all post-mediæval scholars, the conservative-minded merely reserving the right to point out that the teaching of the formula known as the Apostles' Creed reproduces authentically apostolic doctrine.

Then, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, critical scholarship of the Bible went further: it doubted the existence or possibility of anything remotely like a Creed from the apostolic period. This was part of a now outmoded view of Christian origins in which a Spirit-guided, spontaneous New Testament phase issued in the second-century epoch of incipient formalism and institutionalism. We now know the history was far more complicated and locally differentiated than that.

### **Creeds in the Bible**

Ironically, though, this very move, of interrogating the New Testament and trying to distance the early Church from credal statements of belief, resulted in a new understanding of where Creeds *can* be found in Scripture. Biblical scholars began to see that there were passages in the epistles which had a generic identity in style and form concerning 'the faith' as a body of beliefs, called variously 'the deposit', 'sound doctrine', 'the confession', 'the teaching'. Most tellingly, though, are those times when Paul writes of 'the Gospel'. Simple formulæ such as 'Jesus is Lord' (cf *KYRIOS KAISAR* 'Caesar is Lord', a popular chant encouraged by the imperial authorities) are what we would call basic credal statements, statements of belief; these might be likened to Christian versions of the basic credal statement of Judaism, the SH<sup>e</sup>MA — Deuteronomy 6: 4 – 9 — which observant Jews recite in

morning and evening prayers and before going to sleep:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Then we might recall some New Testament passages, for example 1 Corinthians 15: 3 – 7:

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.

Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

Compare also, among others, Romans 1: 3 – 4; Romans 8: 34; 2 Timothy 2: 8 and 1 Peter 3: 18 – 22.

There is a great deal of argument about how these forms developed within and without the New Testament. It is possible to trace the development of Creeds,

confessions of faith and belief-formulae as reflecting the Church's working out of the two great doctrinal arguments of the first four centuries, about the Trinity and the two natures of Christ.

These ways of understanding the revelation of God in Christ were being worked out and written down at the same time as the Church was determining the fixed Canon of Scripture and the same people were often involved in both tasks. Many of them would have seen the two tasks as a single endeavour. And even in the epistolary New Testament stage we can observe the process of seeking to interpret the history of salvation in full swing.

In this way we are brought back by devious routes to our starting-point. The story that the Twelve, meeting in solemn conclave, composed an 'Apostles' Creed' is a pious fiction. But the second-century conviction that the 'rule of faith' believed and taught in the Catholic Church had been inherited from the Apostles contains more than a germ of truth. Not only was the content of that rule, in all essentials, foreshadowed by the 'pattern of teaching' accepted in the apostolic Church, but its characteristic lineaments and outline found their prototypes in the confessions and credal summaries contained in the New Testament documents.

### **Credo in Church**

The Credo in the New Testament and in the early Church were crystallized in what we know as the answers to the questions in the Baptism service ('Do you believe in God the Father...' etc). The Apostles' Creed begins 'I believe' because it is rooted in the ceremony of Baptism: it represents the candidate's declaration of the faith into which he or she is to be baptized. These Baptismal questions and answers are our

Credo in their earliest surviving form. This point of origin indicates the importance of the statements as a sign of belonging and a proclamation of faith, not just the repetition of dry formulae. This in turn makes more sense of our using something similar in the Eucharist. The Nicene Creed, the traditional Creed of the Eucharist, begins with 'We believe' because it is the communal declaration of the faith of those who belong, the faith of the Church.

In the 1880s, when the Lambeth Quadrilateral was written, it was impossible for Anglicans to celebrate a Eucharist without reciting the Nicene Creed; nor could one say the *Book of Common Prayer* Offices of Morning or Evening Prayer without saying the Apostles' Creed twice a day. We still use them on Sundays and feast days. The Credo are familiar elements of Anglican liturgy throughout our history.

### **The Creed in the Eucharist**

In the Eucharist the Creed is part of the Liturgy of the Word, sitting between the sermon and the intercessions. This position is significant, because, as I've suggested, the Creed has a function beyond the codifying of agreed truths. Because the sermon should be the only part of the liturgy specially composed for the particular celebration, it should be understood as ephemeral, something which is in itself a liturgical action which is finished as soon as it has been delivered. That is emphasized by the Creed following directly upon it. The Creed is a proclamation of the whole Gospel in miniature, restating the essential truths of our living encounter with God in a form received from the living tradition of the Apostolic Church; as such it is a valuable constant element in worship. It is also a salutary recollection of those truths if the preacher has strayed somewhat in the

previous ten minutes!

Here is a little more of what Fr Timothy Radcliffe has to say about it:

We have listened to the word of God; the homily, one hopes, has gathered us into shared belief. Now we are ready to recite the Creed. This may not feel like an exciting moment. One does not sense ripples of anticipation in the congregation as we stand to proclaim our faith. But the Creed does have its origin in a ‘spine-chilling’ experience, Baptism. In the early Church, after months of preparation, those to be baptized were brought into the Church during the Easter Vigil, for what Cyril of Alexandria called ‘the awe-inspiring rites’. The Church was dark, one was stripped naked, and plunged into the cold water three times as one confessed one’s faith in the three persons of the Trinity; invisible people addressed one. The experience was disorienting, probably terrifying. The recitation of the Creed was rooted in the dramatic experience of breaking with one’s old life and becoming a member of the community of the faithful. Baptism today is not usually that exciting, though the [previous] Archbishop of York tried to recover some sense of the drama with Baptism by immersion in York Minster. *The Times* reported that he had reintroduced Baptism with water. What did they think we had been using all these years: gin?

*Why Go To Church?*, p 64

The Nicene Creed sets out for us the Trinitarian structure of our faith. It takes the whole of Scripture and shows it to us through the lens of what has been learnt and known about God in that salvation history.

## Doctrinal Content

A former Dean of Perth, Western Australia, wrote in *The Times* in 2012:

Our credal statements and formularies might gradually become meaningful to those who have already grasped a sense of the presence of God in their lives, but they are not helpful as entry points to faith. They are not the place to begin. Their metaphorical and mythical significance is too complex for that...

Our Creeds and doctrinal statements should be used and treasured for what they are — historical landmarks in the evolution of our understanding of God. But if used stridently and legalistically, as if they represented ultimate truth, we would have imprisoned the divine within the straitjacket of finite human language, and compromised the integrity of the Gospel.

This is not the place to deal with the doctrinal statements of the Creeds in detail, so in what follows I assume a readership which regularly uses these words in worship.

We start with creation: here is an accurate statement of Christian belief about creation in a way that Genesis can never be. It says enough and not too much about things which cannot be known by us: it is a clear statement of faith rather than a claim to scientific knowledge. And, more than any of that, it is a living and dynamic statement. As Radcliffe says —

Creation is not, most fundamentally, what happened in the beginning, 13.7 billion years ago. It is God’s present gift of existence to all that is. To be created means that I need not exist. My existence is a gift from God in every moment. p 73

That is extremely helpful in liberating

us from *cul-de-sac* arguments about creationism and evolution. Like so many arguments which the Church appears to be having with science this is a non-starter. Here the Creed helps us to read Scripture through the lens of the Church, which first determined what Scripture was.

The Creed then moves on to Jesus. Here we are on firmer and more recognizable ground. The articles about Jesus are a conversation with the Gospels and already familiar to us.

Finally we come to the Holy Spirit and the Church — this sometimes looks like two sections, because ‘we believe’ is repeated in each, but the final clauses about the Church are all out-workings of belief in the Holy Spirit which informs our lives now.

And belief in the Church is, as I’ve argued, necessary to understand the Bible itself. As Radcliffe writes:

It would make no sense to believe in the word of God unless one believes in the community which heard that word, wrote it down, edited it, recognized it for what it was, and defined the Canon of Scriptures. The Church may be the community of those who live by the word of God, but the Bible is also the fruit of the life of the Church.

All of this is to say, with Radcliffe, that

Our faith is not primarily assent to facts about God but friendship with God. p 90

The Creeds are at the centre of our Anglican claim to be part of the one Church of God. There are elements in them, as there are in the Bible, which are caught in time, especially in the way in which truths are expressed. But they remain a proclamation of faith and of belonging which indicates our common heritage with the whole Christian Tradition.

To repeat some words of Herbert McCabe OP quoted earlier:

The whole of our faith is the belief that God loves us; I mean there isn’t anything else. Anything else that we say we believe is just a way of saying that God loves us. Any proposition, any article of faith is only an expression of faith if it is a way of saying that God loves us.

The Creeds give us that Gospel, that good news, in a form which was able to be handed on orally (‘handing on’ is the meaning of ‘tradition’). This oral quality, finally, is very significant, to owning the faith as a personal act of belonging (Baptism) or a communal act of worship (Eucharist), the two Dominical Sacraments which we shall consider next month. We don’t all read the Gospel together as part of our worship; we do *all* proclaim the Creed.

*Fr Michael Bowie*

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## *Fr Michael suggests some books...*

Some of us visited and wondered at Ravenna in 2018 as part of the pilgrimage led by Fr Gerald Beauchamp, so when our Vicar-to-be pointed me towards Judith Herrin’s excellent new book *Ravenna*, I lapped it up. Having also read a somewhat racy novel about the Empress Theodora (splendidly

depicted in the Ravenna Mosaics with her husband Justinian, though they never visited the city) I realised my deep ignorance of all things Byzantine and I have followed through with the same author’s wonderful *Byzantium: the Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire* (2007). Our

understanding of how there came to be Eastern and Western Christianities (and indeed how Europe as we know it came about) depends on engagement with this substantial chunk of our Christian history. If, like me, you haven't spent much time immersed in it, Herrin's books are excellent and readable guides, especially the latter title. It is, helpfully, *not* a linear history of the 90 emperors and 125 Patriarchs but a collection of short chapters in which she focuses on 'significant high points as clearly and compellingly as I can; to reveal the structures and mentalities which sustained [Byzantium].' She succeeds brilliantly.

A recently published resource which I've also just acquired may appeal to some of you: *Christianity, a Historical Atlas*, edited by Alec Ryrie, gives a map-based overview of the entirety of our faith history from the beginnings of Israel down to the contemporary world. It is published by an imprint of Harvard University Press and there is an American Evangelical emphasis in a couple of chapters with which one might argue (this Australian's hackles rose a little on turning to the modern world map in which my homeland is coloured entirely Protestant, whereas its Christianity has been majority Roman Catholic almost from the beginning of white settlement), but it is, overall, an illuminating and helpful survey, each chapter's maps accompanied by just enough text.

You will know that I am a fan of the current Holy Father. Most of Pope Francis' opposition has come from conservative Roman Catholics in the USA: what is rarely said aloud is that this push back against him reflects a deep-seated fear of Latin Americans in the white United States, so effectively exploited by the outgoing President. The USA is on course to be a

majority Latino country by the middle of this century, so our Latin American Pope is a particular challenge to the fearful soon-to-be minority. The standard slur from his opponents is that Francis is unsophisticated, 'not a theologian' (by comparison with Pope Benedict). Quite apart from the absurdity of imagining a theologically unsophisticated Jesuit, when one learns anything about his theological formation and continued engagement with modern theology it is immediately clear how wrong his detractors are. They fail (or refuse) to realise that, unlike Benedict, he deliberately speaks in a popular register because of his deep commitment to sharing the faith with all God's people, but the theology whirring around in that great mind is extremely well-resourced and even original. I have embarked for the second time on Massimo Borghesi's *The Mind of Pope Francis: Jorge Mario Bergoglio's Intellectual Journey* (first published in English in 2018). This is not an easy read for someone like me in whom philosophy induces brain-fog, but I have found it fascinating and rewarding and commend it to those who like this sort of thing. If you don't have the stomach for such strong meat help is now at hand: Pope Francis has just published not only another important and engaging encyclical, *Fratelli tutti*, but also a highly accessible account of the theology which underlies his papacy, working with his biographer Austen Ivereigh (who apparently caused the pontiff to guffaw when he conveyed his aim of producing something from Francis in English that sounded like it was in English). The result is *Let us Dream: the Path to a Better Future*. I read this in an afternoon and it cheered me up no end. It is a unique book, a Pope writing in no sense *ex cathedra* but, like a journalist writing an Op-ed piece, directly addressing anyone who cares to

read what he has to say. Ivereigh writes,

*Let us Dream* was born in lockdown, specifically in that moment when Pope Francis appeared in Saint Peter's Square like a storm pilot to guide humanity through one of its darkest nights... Outwardly the "Pope in lockdown," cut off from the people, looked helpless. Yet those close to him told me the opposite: that he was energized by what he saw as a threshold moment, and the movement of spirits beneath its surface.

Ivereigh approached Francis in the hope of collaborating on a book that would be published simultaneously in Buenos Aires Spanish and Ivereigh's own English style: surprisingly he agreed and through a series of 'phone conversations, recorded answers to questions and meticulous proof-reading in both languages, oversaw the publication of a book which deserves to be read.

As I mentioned above, Fr John Behr,

the Orthodox priest and theologian who was to be with us for an Advent Day has kindly agreed to come in Lent instead. His small popular book *Becoming Human* will be the basis of the study day. If that whets your appetite you may like to follow up with his book on S Irenaeus of Lyons, the early Church Father who has opened his eyes to a whole new understanding of our Christian anthropology: *Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity (Christian Theology in Context)* (2015).

Finally, a shameless plug: a book of essays from the conference on which Fr Peter Anthony and I worked together in 2018 has just been published. Entitled *God's Church in the World: the Gift of Catholic Mission* (edited by Susan Lucas) it includes contributions from Rowan Williams, Gemma Simmonds, Philip North, Andrew Davison, Anna Matthews, Robin Ward, Alison Milbank and Luke Miller.

Happy reading!

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## MUSIC LIST JANUARY 2021

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### SUNDAY 3 JANUARY CHRISTMAS 2

#### SUNG MASS AT 11am

*Setting:* Missa Princeps Pacis  
— W Lloyd Webber

*Preacher:* Fr Michael Bowie

*Offertory Motet:* Bethlehem Down  
— Warlock

*Communion Hymn:* 28 In the bleak  
midwinter

*Voluntary:* Præludium in E BuxWV 141  
— Buxtehude

#### EVENSONG & BENEDICTION at 3pm

*Canticles:* Watson in E

*Anthem:* The Shepherds' Farewell  
— Berlioz

*O Salutaris:* Bortniansky, arr Caplin

*Tantum ergo:* Harwood, arr Caplin

*Voluntary:* Es ist ein Ros entsprungen  
— Brahms

### WEDNESDAY 6 JANUARY EPIPHANY

#### SUNG MASS at 6pm

*Setting:* Missa Brevis in F K192  
— Mozart

*Preacher:* Fr Michael Bowie

*Offertory Motet:* Lo, star led chiefs — Crotch

*Communion Hymn:* 48 Bethlehem of  
noblest cities

*Voluntary:* Noël Étranger — Daquin

✠ **SUNDAY 10 JANUARY**  
**BAPTISM OF THE LORD**

**SUNG MASS AT 11 am**

*Setting:* Missa secunda — Hassler  
*Preacher:* Fr Michael Bowie  
*Offertory Motet:* Tribus miraculis  
— Marencio  
*Communion Hymn:* 56 Songs of  
thankfulness and praise (omit\*)  
*Voluntary:* ‘Point d’orgue sur les grands  
jeux’ from A Solis Ortus  
Cardine — de Grigny

**EVENSONG & BENEDICTION at 3pm**

*Canticles:* Short Service — Gibbons  
*Anthem:* Omnes de Saba — Handl  
*O Salutaris:* Palestrina  
*Tantum ergo:* Palestrina  
*Voluntary:* Wie schön leuchtet der  
Morgenstern — Pachelbel

✠ **SUNDAY 17 JANUARY**  
**EPIPHANY 2**

**SUNG MASS AT 11 am**

*Setting:* Missa Brevis — Ives  
*Preacher:* Fr Michael Bowie  
*Offertory Motet:* O thou, the central Orb  
— Wood  
*Communion Hymn:* 302 O thou who at thy  
Eucharist didst pray  
*Voluntary:* Postlude on a theme by Orlando  
Gibbons (Song 22) – Stanford

**EVENSONG & BENEDICTION at 3pm**

*Canticles:* Harwood in A flat  
*Anthem:* Light of the World — Elgar  
*O Salutaris:* Schumann  
*Tantum ergo:* Schubert  
*Voluntary:* Vesper Voluntary no 5 — Elgar

✠ **SUNDAY 24 JANUARY**  
**EPIPHANY 3**

**SUNG MASS at 11am**

*Setting:* Missa Brevis in d K65  
— Mozart  
*Preacher:* Fr Michael Bowie  
*Offertory Motet:* O sing joyfully — Batten  
*Communion Hymn:* 353 Dear Lord and  
Father of mankind  
*Voluntary:* Toccata Quinta from Apparato  
Musico-Organisticus — Muffat

**EVENSONG & BENEDICTION at 3pm**

*Canticles:* Stanford in B flat  
*Anthem:* How lovely are the messengers  
— Mendelssohn  
*O Salutaris:* Elgar  
*Tantum ergo:* Bruckner  
*Voluntary:* Chorale prelude on “Eventide”  
— Parry

✠ **SUNDAY 31 JANUARY**  
**EPIPHANY 4**

**SUNG MASS AT 11 am**

*Setting:* Missa Dittes Maitresses  
— Lassus  
*Preacher:* Fr Michael Bowie  
*Offertory Motet:* Almighty and everlasting  
God — Gibbons  
*Communion Hymn:* 408 (i) Love, Divine,  
all loves excelling  
*Voluntary:* Toccata in F BWV 540 i — Bach

**EVENSONG & BENEDICTION at 3pm**

*Canticles:* Third Service — Moore  
*Anthem:* See, see, the word is incarnate  
— Gibbons  
*O Salutaris:* Handl  
*Tantum ergo:* Victoria  
*Voluntary:* Fugue in F BWV 540 ii — Bach

*For a full music list, including readings and psalms, visit [asms.uk/music](http://asms.uk/music).*

*All services are streamed on [YouTube.com/AllSaintsMargaretStreet](https://www.youtube.com/AllSaintsMargaretStreet).*

*A reduced choir will be singing in church for all these services.*

## KEEPING IN TOUCH

As well as the monthly **Parish Paper**, you can keep in touch with life at All Saints through:

**The All Saints Website** [asms.uk](http://asms.uk)

### **The Weekly Email**

This gives weekly news of events, people to pray for, and a short letter from the Assistant Priest. You can subscribe for free at [asms.uk/email](http://asms.uk/email) — all subscription enquiries to the office: [office@asms.uk](mailto:office@asms.uk)

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### **Electoral Roll Officer:**

Catherine Burling c/o 020 7636 1788

## CALENDAR and INTENTIONS for JANUARY 2021

<b>1</b>	<b>MARY, MOTHER OF GOD</b>	Peace
2	Ss Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen	The Orthodox Churches
<b>3</b> ✘	<b>CHRISTMAS 2</b>	Parish and people
4	<i>Feria</i>	Our Vicar-elect
5	<i>Feria</i>	Christians in the media
<b>6</b>	<b>THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD</b>	Thanksgiving
7	<i>Feria</i>	Christian Unity
8	<i>Feria</i>	Those in need
9	<i>of BVM (Walsingham Devotion)</i>	Shrine of OLV
<b>10</b> ✘	<b>THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD</b>	Parish and people
11	<i>Feria</i>	Our witness to the Faith
12	S Aelred of Rivaulx	Benedictines
13	S Hilary	Diocese of Europe
14	<i>Feria</i>	Christian Unity
15	<i>Feria</i>	Homeless people in London
16	<i>Feria (Monthly Requiem)</i>	Faithful departed
<b>17</b> ✘	<b>EPIPHANY 2</b>	Parish and people
18	<i>Feria</i>	Renewal in faith
19	S Wulfstan	Diocese of Worcester
20	Ss Fabian and Sebastian	The dying
21	S Agnes	Safeguarding officers
22	S Vincent	Persecuted Christians
23	<i>of BVM</i>	ASMS Walsingham Cell
<b>24</b> ✘	<b>EPIPHANY 3</b>	Parish and people
25	<b>The Conversion of S Paul</b>	Evangelists
26	Ss Timothy and Titus	Our Bishops
27	<i>Feria</i>	Openness to God
28	S Thomas Aquinas	Theologians
29	<i>Feria</i>	Growth
30	<b>King Charles the Martyr</b>	The Queen
<b>31</b> ✘	<b>EPIPHANY 4</b>	Parish and people

