



All Saints Parish Paper

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The High Altar at All Saints

FR MICHAEL WRITES:

There are continuing debates about the value and future of online worship, which will certainly not diminish during this third lockdown. Permanent online provision won't be easily achieved or even, perhaps, important in many parishes with significant congregations of local residents, but I'd suggest it will be of continuing, possibly increasing, importance to urban churches such as All Saints, which has never had such a population and inspires continuing interest, loyalty and support among those who have moved away (or attend as regular visitors to London from the UK or abroad). It has also gathered a new group

of supportive participants who may never have been here. I was moved to receive this email from an online worshipper on 16 January:

"I have been following the daily, on-line Masses since Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter last year. In between lockdowns I have, of course, been able to worship in my own church in Norwich but anyway continued to follow the weekday Masses even then. I know I will not be the only person to tell you how precious these have been over this period. They have enabled me to observe not only the great feasts of the Church, whose celebration would otherwise have

been so sorely missed, but also the lesser feast days, including of many saints, which might otherwise have passed me by. I cannot overstate how grateful I am to All Saints for making these available on line...

“A week ago my parents, aged 92 and 90, and married for 67 years, were admitted to hospital from their care home in Norwich. Despite the best efforts of the team there, the coronavirus had reached some of the staff and residents, including my parents. My mother, though frail, appears to be recovering. My father died in the early hours of this morning. As usual I ‘tuned in’ to the All Saints’ YouTube site for the daily Mass. I had not remembered that today would be your monthly requiem. Although in some ways a small thing, nothing could have been more appropriate. It was one of those occasions where one can feel that what happened was both meant to be

and a gift. I can only say thank you.

“Perhaps you could remember my father in your prayers at ASMS?... Prayers are being offered by friends elsewhere, including some who are priests, but it would be good to know that that was the case in All Saints also. Thank you!”

I did, of course, offer a Mass for the correspondent’s father and he is on our RIP list.

As we all grapple with yet another lockdown and wait for our vaccination dates, it is good to know that we are able to reach out beyond the boundaries of Fitzrovia and gather worshippers in this very modern form of *koinonia* (the New Testament word we translate fellowship/communion). I look forward to working with Fr Peter further to increase its effectiveness and reach.

With prayers and best wishes

Fr Michael

THE PASSING OF TIME — *By Stephen Farr, Director of Music*

The sensation of time becoming strangely fluid in various ways is something we’ve probably all become more or less inured to over the last months. I realised with some surprise as I sat down to begin writing these words (on January 14th) that it’s exactly one year to the day that Fr Michael rang on behalf of the PCC to offer me the position at All Saints. For all the meaning normal experiences of time and duration have had recently, that call may as well have come last week.

Music has been described as the best way we have of digesting time — it’s certainly helping many to do that at the moment — but on occasion time itself is the point of the music. One of the most glorious passages in

Wagner’s ‘*Parsifal*’ is the Transformation scene in Act 1, wherein the hero is led by Gurnemanz into the Hall of the Grail. This pivotal moment in the narrative is accompanied by one of the composer’s most remarkable inspirations, whose endlessly spiralling, ecstatic progressions strive to express the inexpressible mysticism of the text — ‘*You see, my son, here Time becomes Space*’. I’m not an obsessive Wagnerian by any means, but I can remember the overwhelming effect these three minutes of music had on me when I first heard them, a sensation which familiarity hasn’t diminished (although there’s an amusingly ironic backstory to the passage in question, an account of which is here:



<https://www.monsalvat.no/verwandlung.htm>).

A curious side-effect of my current, less transcendent, experience of temporal dislocation has been the emergence of suddenly vivid memories of forgotten past events. With most aspects of life in suspended animation, some remote mental filing cabinets are being archived; and in a train of thought set off by a concert remembered in one such exploration I found myself thinking recently about another church musician, from much a much earlier generation.

Heinrich Schütz was the finest German composer before Bach, and possibly one of the great composers of all time; once we're up and running again, he'll be appearing in some music lists. My first encounter with his music was in 1985, in a concert celebrating the music of Gabrieli (his teacher) and Schütz himself. One work in particular stood out on that occasion. *'Auf dem Gebirge'* is a work from a collection of motets Schütz published in 1648, and is scored for two countertenors and five instruments. It's a setting of a text proper to the Feast of the Holy Innocents (A voice is heard from the mountains of

weeping and [great] lamentation. Rachel is weeping for her children, and will not be comforted because they are no more). Schütz was a stickler — his portrait makes that quite obvious — and his preface to the collection contains an admonition that mastery of strict composition must precede any attempt to adopt the newer and less rigorous styles then emerging. He took his own advice; one of the work's many remarkable features is the way in which Schütz eschews emotive displays, choosing instead to compose in a style of the

utmost technical propriety. The effect of the resulting tension between the pathos of the text and the restraint of the music is extraordinary. There's a good account of the piece here — <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/classical-music/50-best-short-pieces/schutz/>

The motet was published in the year that saw the end of the Thirty Years War, and the text would have had particular resonance for contemporary listeners who had lived through its atrocities; some cities had executed children for witchcraft. Even the court at Dresden, where Schütz was employed as Kapellmeister with responsibility for music in chapel, was not immune from the devastation; he wrote plaintive letters about the effect on the musical resources at his disposal. The force of these circumstances resulted in changes to his compositional practice. Gone were the resplendent earlier works for multiple performers; in their place came more restrained, but no less exquisite, works for smaller forces, which, although shaped by necessity, have an affectingly intimate expression.

All of this history has some thought-provoking aspects for a Director of Music

as we negotiate the present day. Of course Dresden in 1648 is not London in 2021. For one thing, the musicians at All Saints have been very much better looked after than the musicians of Dresden, and for that we are all grateful. But we do have this in common, *mutatis mutandis* — our music and liturgy has had to regroup and reassess in the light of testing and stressful passing circumstance. In the course of the past calendar year or so at All Saints we've moved (albeit not quite in a linear fashion) from a full choir of eleven, to a choir of seven, to a choir of four, to a solo cantor and organ, with numerous amendments and reconsiderations and recalibrations along the way. The proportion of repertoire available to us has been reduced, and the days of resplendent High Masses with Haydn and Bach, Harris and Langlais seem a long way distant. Of course on one level this is a matter for some nostalgia, however much we understand and engage with the necessity for it; the safety of the church community will always be paramount. But just possibly, like Schütz did, we've been able within these challenges to find different ways of exploring the relationship between music and liturgy, and to develop equally illuminating, if less obviously magnificent, means of fulfilling our ministry to the congregation. The exhumation (almost literal in some cases) of long-abandoned repertoire in the All Saints

library, and the rediscovery of neglected but valuable pieces from elsewhere, has been one of the unexpected positive outcomes of the recent restrictions on our resources; it's been a refreshing process.

There was a happy ending for Schütz. By the 1650s, with the foundation at Dresden restored, he was once again writing large-scale works, and we hope that a similar return to the great celebratory liturgies of the All Saints calendar aren't too far away. The day when we see the return of our full musical resources is one I look forward to greatly, and it will be with more than usual enjoyment that I plan that music list, as soon as circumstances permit.

But as we look forward to that point, the present moment has its own value. Even with his musical fortunes at a higher ebb, Schütz carried into his very last works — the Passion settings, for example — a new concentration and refinement of expression; the number of notes on the page and the force of their message in inverse proportion. They are testament to the sometimes surprising power of simple things done with care, and a striking example of necessity driving a change which ultimately brings unexpected benefits. As we continue to negotiate the challenges of our current circumstances, and find rewards in apparently unpromising scenarios, I shall often think about Schütz.

From PETER LITTLE — SACRISTAN/VERGER

Dear friends

In case you do not know who I am, may I introduce myself. I am Peter Little the sacristan/verger who was married to my wife, Satomi on 28th December 2016 at All Saints Church, Margaret Street, at a joyful Eucharistic celebration with my family and friends.

I started as a sacristan on Tuesday 19th November 2019 with a two-days induction course with Father Michael which covered a wide spectrum of tasks and rôles from the washing and ironing of the High Altar and Our Blessed Mother's Altar fair linen, albs, amices, credence tablecloths, corporals, purificators, lavabo towels. Through to

trying to respond to the 25 plus Homeless Guests which came from 7am onwards every day.

For me one of the greatest joys and privileges is being able to take a full part in the 12 noon daily live streamed Eucharist. By preparing what is required for the celebration of the Eucharist as follows:

1. The preparation of the priest and visiting priests' vestments, ie. alb, amice, correct liturgically coloured chasuble, veil and burse according to the lectionary and church magazine intention for the day.
2. The preparation of the chalice set, water, wine cruets, lavabo bowl and hand towel.
- 3 The lowering of the Blessed Sacrament Tabernacle on to the High Altar.
- 4 The switching on/off of the four cameras plus focusing the lens of the camera on Our Lady's statue.

Once I have prepared everything for the daily Eucharist, you will often see me seated by the main church door inviting all our visitors to write down their names and a contact number or address for the prevention of the spread of the COVID-19 virus within the church community since the first Government Restrictions on the 22nd March 2020.

The vast majority of members and visitors have been very helpful with many people thanking the Church for being open so that they can just come and sit, think and offer their prayers to God and Our Lady. Many foreign guests are visibly overwhelmed as they enter the church and just stand and stare which reminds me of the famous poem.

"They also serve who only stand and wait."



I always find it humbling and encouraging to see the many members of the Church Community both ordained and lay people within a wide age spectrum who attend the daily Eucharist, and use the time before the Eucharist for silent prayer and just being still before God which is so essential in our daily lives. Since having started here as sacristan I know that I could not try to fulfil this rôle without the daily offering of the Eucharist and that silent time of reflection, preparation prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

I am also encouraged and give thanks to God for the many different nationalities of visitors who come sometimes as a family or as a single person just to stand at the church door and look and go, or come in to look around the church or light a candle and offer heartfelt prayers to God and Our Blessed Mother. It is always interesting to see the variety of ways God speaks to each human being who enters the church, whether they are interested in the historical architecture, the wall paintings, the stained glass windows, the floor tile designs. Recently two plain clothed police officers came to look in from the church door, explaining that they never knew the church was here and had just seen the spire from

the high street. Also, local electricians, plasterers, telephone engineers working in the local offices come to take a look at this beautiful church — they never knew it was there. God calls and speaks to every visitor from a wide age spectrum in a unique way for each human being. Many visitors think All Saints Church is a Roman Catholic Church, so I gently explain. One lady visitor was convinced that we must be an Anglican Church, because she could not see that we had the Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament with a red sanctuary lamp. I explained that we did reserve the Blessed Sacrament in a hanging pyx over the High Altar and that a white candle burns 24 hours a day to the left of the silver High Altar Crucifix to signify that the Mystery of God is always present, and that He is more than willing to listen to us.

I have to gently invite all our visitors to give me their names and contact numbers which has been very challenging at times. Some members of the Body of Christ, and others maybe outside the church, share their strong feelings and beliefs about the British Government, and how what the

church is doing in recording contact details is complete nonsense and an absolute disgrace. I will leave the reader of this article to interpret that behaviour.

I have made mistakes in my approach to all our visitors at times, so I have had to re-adjust how I approach everyone, so that I can strike a careful balance of protecting our Church Community members from the COVID19 virus and facilitating the needs of our visitors. I remember the wisdom that you should say something to another human being in an appropriate way, however that other human being may respond to it. I think I have touched on some raw nerves in some of our members and visitors.

Through God's Grace a new awareness has taken place between the Body of Christ, visitors and myself so that both sets of needs has been fulfilled as far as is possible in the current restrictions.

It is a rôle that brings me much joy and I give thanks to God for it.

With best wishes from

Peter Little

SERMON FOR CHRISTMAS EVE 2020

Fr Julian Browning

You would have to be very resilient not to be disappointed at Christmas this year. Smaller celebrations do have their own simplicity and beauty. But much has been lost, not least our trademark carol services.

But Christmas can't be cancelled, because Christmas has already happened. It was an historical event, in a time of uncertainty, threats, government edicts and human anxiety, just as our 2020 was an historical event with similar threats beyond our control, this time from a

pathogen which cares nothing for any of us. That seems to be where we can find God, not where we decide him to be, but where we are, in real time. It is there, it is here that God finds us.

Somehow we know that. Each of us has a hunger for depth and meaning in our lives. We know there was a time of innocence for each of us, when eternity did break through into our time-bound lives. It's a memory we all have. What is it we're looking for now? We're looking for

the God we've lost. But God has always been with us. In the beginning was the Word; the Word of God is heard in every human life. We forgot that; we forgot that God is our Creator. Christmas is the story of us finding God again. A child born in a manger in a stable, in those uncertain times, is the perfect image of God in your life. The child is now at the centre of the picture, with no memory of past sins, given to us to look after and love. That is the surprise of Christmas. God is in our hands, like a newborn child, trusting us, and, like all children, demanding love, so that our hearts of stone, rough from years of worry and human mistakes, can be converted into hearts of flesh. Deep down we are joyful beings. The Word became flesh. It's a strange image, that one, one among many images that Christians have used down the centuries to describe the place within where God is found: soul, true self, Christ consciousness, the Christmas manger, eternal life, and so many others, but the word the early Church used was heart. God's love has flooded our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us [Romans 5: 5]. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but that will be of no avail to us unless he is born in our hearts. Sir Philip Sidney, the Elizabethan courtier and poet, wrote a poem beginning My true love hath my heart and I have his, written I may say not by some ancient sage but by a man in his twenties who was to die from battle wounds at the age of thirty one. He says of Jesus: "He loves my heart, for once it was his own, I cherish his, because in me it bides. My true love hath my heart and I have his..."

So Christ is born in our hearts on Christmas Day. Life begins again. We haven't failed in our search for God. He

has found us, and lives among us, in that original innocence we can never lose, in infinite simplicity and compassion. This is sheer grace. God knows us, and loves us as we are. Our Christmas present, this year and every year, is His life. All our prayers are simply that, stepping aside so that Christ can speak to us in the silence and heal us. At Christmas the angel and the multitude of the heavenly host spoke of peace on earth, God's peace. Peace on earth begins with peace in our hearts, where Jesus is born. What can this mean, as we struggle to the end of a terrible year? It means we are no longer alone. Life is no longer about what I deserve, what we want, what you demand, because from our still centre Christ alone speaks. Early Christians talked about being followers of The Way. Not my way, not your way, not our way, but The Way, Christ's Way, the way to fullness of human life, which begins for each of us by welcoming the child Jesus, with all His life ahead of us. Life in all its fullness: that is God's gift to us. Maybe a quiet Christmas, even a solitary Christmas, is not so bad after all, if we take this opportunity to feel and express our gratitude for life itself. Read again, or even sing, Christina Rossetti's *In The Bleak Midwinter*. "Yet what I can I give him — Give my heart." It is that gratitude, that worship, even when unsung, which unites us, and it is that fundamental unity in Christ which leads tonight to the clergy and people of All Saints, Margaret Street, wishing you, particularly those of you who have been so loyal to your church by connecting online over the last ten months, wishing you the Peace of Christmas. May God's peace, at the birth of His Son, fill your hearts with joy and hope.

Fr Julian Browning

SERMON for THE EPIPHANY 2021

Fr Michael Bowie

After the Gospel at the Epiphany Mass the dates of the Moveable Feasts for the Year are proclaimed with the following text:

Know, dear brothers and sisters that, as we have rejoiced at the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, so by leave of God's mercy we announce to you also the joy of his Resurrection, who is our Saviour.

On the 17th day of February will fall Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the fast of the most sacred Lenten season.

On the 4th day of April you will celebrate with joy Easter Day, the Paschal Feast of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On the 13th day of May will be the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On the 23rd day of May the feast of Pentecost.

On the 3rd day of June, the feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

On the 28th day of November, the First Sunday of the Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Looking forward to the Feasts of the coming year reminds us that we come to worship with eyes fixed on a horizon: that's the light of the Epiphany.

There are many epiphanies, moments of enlightenment, of clear-sightedness, in the Gospels, in scripture and in our lives. The story which we celebrate today as the Epiphany is an interplay between wonder

and fear.

We are told that the wise men from the East are explorers: guided by a star they are overwhelmed with joy at finding the child in Bethlehem, they are warned in their dreams about Herod, and they go home 'by another way'. Herod, on the other hand, is *frightened*, fearful at the prospect of a pretender to his throne. He whips up similar anxiety all around him in Jerusalem, he uses the wise men to find the child, his deceit is uncovered, and he is left without knowledge, spiralling into more fear. He is a study in stay-at-home smallness.

In twelve verses, Matthew paints a picture of wisdom and fear as opposites: that's a Gospel in itself. The Epiphany is more than the travelogue of exotic Eastern gurus. It is a story of the choices that lie before all of us. Choices that, to be rightly made, depend on open eyes, open hearts and open minds.

Remember that Jesus' closest friends and followers consistently failed to see who he was throughout his ministry. As the Gospels tell it, only in the light of the *resurrection*-epiphany, a larger window on glory, did the previous three years' experiences begin to make sense to them. Epiphanies are to be aged, digested, and truly grasped with hindsight. Equally, thank God, our lives are not understood or defined in split seconds by the best, *or the worst*, things we've ever done. Neither our greatest achievement nor our worst sin characterizes us with God. It is

the entirety of our response to the gift of life which makes sense of who we are. As St Paul tells us, ‘we know now only in part, but *then* we shall be fully known’. The ‘*then*’ in that sentence is crucial. That is what the Gospels call *καιρός*, ‘the right time’, God’s moment, when glory will become overwhelming and the light will illumine all those other epiphanies and make them complete. The paradox of death for Christians is that it gives meaning to our lives.

We worship and engage with God in community with one another, even though it may be a virtual community this year; those who join us today come with particular gratitude that we will continue to be able to do so in lockdown. We all participate because we are somewhere on a spectrum of understanding, of having glimpsed glory and wanting to see more. That is the key: what is the *more* we want? It is human to want more. Equally, it is human experience to find the acquisition of *more*, mere quantity, ultimately unsatisfying. The *Magi* had enough *stuff* — gold, frankincense and myrrh — but they glimpsed glory — the light of the star — and followed it until they found

the unlikely king of the universe, and they left the *stuff* behind: that was their offering of worship.

And they did that in *hope*, the second of Paul’s list of ‘theological virtues’: faith, hope and love. We need all three of these, but *hope* is the pivot that gets us there and the engine of the spiritual life. Human beings are constituted by hope; it is a supremely human quality, part of what Henry James called ‘the pain of consciousness’. *Faith* sets us on the way; it is the point of contact, the conversion. *Love* is the destination, the fullness of life to which we tend on this path, *God* who calls us home. But *hope* leads us, day by day, from glimpse *to* glory, from inspiration to realisation, from the idea of a god to God.

The Epiphany Gospel proclaims and enacts that hope, of the opening-out of the people of God to include, potentially, the whole of humankind. But it is also a sign, an icon, of the whole of our lives in Christ, lives which are founded on faith, fed by hope and aimed at our final destination, perfect love.

Fr Michael

What is the Church of England? How is it Catholic? 4 **Dominical Sacraments**

After Scripture and the Creeds, the third ‘pillar’ of the Lambeth Quadrilateral is Sacramental:

The two sacraments ordained by Christ himself — Baptism and the Supper of the Lord — ministered with unflinching use of Christ’s words of institution, and of the elements ordained by him.

These Dominical Sacraments show us the Church as being and doing rather than listening and thinking: the sacraments are at the heart of our worship and also our relatedness as members of the Body of Christ. Because of this it can be said that the primary theology of the Church takes place in the belonging and communion of these two sacraments, an experience which

is shared on an equal basis by all members of the Church, not reliant upon didactic or academic forms of communication or understanding.

What is a Sacrament?

Our first question, as in the *Book of Common Prayer* catechism, should be:

Question. What meanest thou by this word sacrament?

Answer. I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.

Notice that even in its most reformed mode, represented by the *Book of Common Prayer*, the Church of England insists on a particular form of sacramental theology. Many of us will remember the first part of that answer

an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace

but the rest of the sentence is equally significant. The reformed element is expressed in the need to insist that these two sacraments are ‘from the Lord’, but there is an important Catholic balance in the final clauses:

as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.

This is sacramental theology directly inherited from and in continuity with the tradition of the Church; there is nothing here of the reformers’ attempts to take away from what sacraments *do*: ‘as a means whereby we receive the same’ means that the sacraments, we believe, *do* something *to* us and *for* us. They are not just things we *watch* or during which we *remember* something.

In classical western theological terms we believe that the sacraments ‘effect what they signify’. Even the 39 Articles say this — XXV:

Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian men’s profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses **and effectual signs** of grace, and God’s good will towards us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him.

If we read this together with Article XXVI, ‘*Of the unworthiness of the Ministers, which hinders not the effect of the Sacrament*’,

we can see clearly that our Church teaches what Christian Tradition has always believed (but what Protestant Churches mostly deny) that sacraments are effective in themselves (*ex opere operato* as the Latin tag puts it). This is because they are gifts from God, not ‘services’ put together or shared by us; they exist independently of our feelings, personal skills and abilities; they just *are*, gifts of God. In this sense they parallel the Gospel itself, as I argued previously: they are effectual signs of the Good News in our midst.

That is a very significant theological emphasis which must inform our understanding of this subject. Sacraments are an *objective* form of worship, things with inherent or inbuilt spiritual efficacy. They are a gift that does not depend upon preaching or reading Scripture. They presuppose and require a community, and privilege that above an individual response. They provide God’s gift unmediated by personalities, mental training or ability. They are found in the simplest staples of life — water, bread and wine — infused

with divine power. They are the simplest things, made powerful by God's grace. That makes sense when you think of what God was doing in Jesus — Jesus Christ was *the* sacrament of God — a visible tangible and lively demonstration of who God is. The Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ — he told us this himself — so that this simple link between God and us must not be lost.

Things as Sacraments — bread

To clarify that point with reference to the Eucharist I'd like to repeat an illustration some of you have heard me use in a sermon, recalling a trip to Chile, on the Sunday when the Gospel reported Jesus speaking of himself as the 'bread of life'.

Everywhere you go in Chile you see bread: for sale on street corners and markets, in shops and stalls. As soon as you sit down to eat, in the simplest diner or bar and in the most sophisticated restaurant, immediately you will be presented with at least one type of bread and possibly two or three. It is the foundation of the meal, the necessary beginning. It is emphatically not a side dish.

Going to Mass on our last Sunday and knowing that the Gospel was about Jesus, the bread of life, I wanted to hear what the priest might say about bread. I wanted to hear it because a month in Chile had given me a new sense of what Jesus was doing in the Eucharist. In Chile, as in Jesus' Palestine, bread is not an optional item. It is the opposite of what it has become for many of us. The last time I went to Sydney, walking in a street near the University, I came upon something I thought truly preposterous: it was called a 'bread boutique'. In the centre of the shop was an artistic display of different breads, an acme of a window-dresser's

art, subtly back-lit, without the slightest connection to food. If you had shown Jesus a bread boutique I should think he would have laughed too, or possibly wept. In Sydney as in London, there are homeless people and hungry people. For them bread is not a decorative item, a camp joke. Nonetheless they are probably able to find some bread and maybe some other food as well. But in Chile (as in Jesus' Palestine) there are many people for whom the 'daily bread' for which we glibly pray is not always guaranteed.

You get a sense of the fundamental importance of bread in Chilean society as you watch priests at the altar. The Spanish word for bread is pan. It is a strong monosyllable, and I noticed that the words 'took bread' ('tomo pan') were almost always enunciated with great force at the altar and followed by a pause, as if to say, 'here is what we eat every day and Jesus used this.' Which is why I wanted to hear what the priest would have to say about bread.

The church I attended was packed for the fourth Eucharist of the morning. When the priest came to discuss the Gospel his proclamation did not disappoint. Jesus, he said, simply and repeatedly, is as necessary to us as bread. And bread in this context was not found in a boutique, but made at home or bought for less than a penny in a little shop or street-stall nearby. Jesus is the food that makes the difference between life and death.

That experience helped me further to understand the simplicity and the power of sacramental worship. If you extrapolate from that illustration, there are many things which might be called sacramental, things used by God and his Church to communicate with us and relate us to him

and each other. So why the concern to emphasise Baptism and the Eucharist which we find in the *Book of Common Prayer*?

Sacraments of the Gospel?

Anxious to avoid what were seen as the abuses of the medieval sacramental system the back-to-basics minimalism characteristic of the English Reformation insisted on only two sacraments as absolutely necessary to the Church, because they were clearly ‘from the Lord’ (Dominical). We must remember that the motivation of the Lambeth fathers in 1888 was similarly minimalist, but for a different reason: they wished to fix upon a non-negotiable minimum without which the Church could not be recognized (this is where the teaching about Bishops starts to sharpen); they aimed to provide a proper basis for what they called ‘reunion’, or what we might call an ‘ecumenical minimum’. Things we can share together with other Christians were taken by them to be more important than things which we consider desirable or good, but not essential (*adiaphora*, ‘indifferent’ in classical Anglican terminology). This means that the items which *do* appear in the minimum list take on a heightened significance.

However, it is worth recalling from what has been said already that, even in its minimalist reforming phase, our Church insisted on *sacramentalism*, the efficacy of sacramental action in worship, as part of that minimum.

How many Sacraments? Confession

Luther and some others of the reformers originally insisted that there were at least three sacraments of the Gospel. Luther included penance or confession as a sacrament with Baptism and the Eucharist: his personal sense of guilt and sin and his need for the assurance of forgiveness

were very highly developed. Confession certainly has as good a claim to come from the Lord himself as the first two: recall John 20: 23:

“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

And compare Matthew 16: 19 and 18: 18.

There is also specific Anglican warrant for sacramental confession in the *Book of Common Prayer* under the rubrics of the *Visitation of the Sick*:

Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special Confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter. After which Confession the Priest shall absolve him (if he humbly and heartily desire it) after this sort:...

These words are followed by words of absolution from the then current Latin formulæ rendered into English. The Canons of 1603, subsequently augmented by the modern Canons of the Church of England, also specifically provide for private confession and enact the secrecy of the confessional (Canon 113 of 1603; Canon B29 of our current Code).

So while the *Book of Common Prayer* broke the nexus between *necessary* individual confession and communion, it did not remove the availability of the sacrament or cast doubt on its efficacy. This led to the well-known Anglican maxim about individual confession — ‘all may, none must, some should’.

In fact, over time, the Lambeth Conferences have gone much further than this. Here is Owen Chadwick’s summary:

Upon the sacraments they were equally clear. It was of the essence of their

faith that they administered the two sacraments of the Gospel, baptism and the Lord's Supper, with Christ's words of institution and the elements ordained by him...

The later Middle Ages numbered seven sacraments, and the traditional Anglican teaching always accepted that the other five, not having a warrant from the mouth of Christ, were not in the same way of the essence of their faith. Nevertheless we shall see how momentous they felt the sacrament of marriage to be; they asked that the possibility of confession be taught; they regarded due ordination, at the hands of a Bishop, as constitutive of the Anglican ministry; they preserved the rite of confirmation and attached much importance to it in the religious training of the young. They refused to condemn priests who anointed the dying.

Two *Dominical* Sacraments?

In the early days of the Church, the term *sacrament* was used in a wider sense than that which we now attach to it. For example, St Augustine defines a sacrament to be a "sacred sign" and speaks of the "sacrament of the Creed, which they ought to believe; the sacrament of the Lord's Prayer, how they ought to ask". Any holy thing of which it could be said, 'this possesses a hidden power or meaning', was termed a sacrament. But in later times, and by degrees, the term *sacrament* came to be restricted to seven rites. Some of these owe their existence to our Lord's direct institution as recorded in the Gospels; others to the apostles' teaching.

In fact we could argue that our Lord's authority can be traced directly for the institution of Holy Baptism, the Holy Eucharist, Penance and Holy Order.

Matrimony, ironically, is somewhat ambiguously commended by the Lord, but commended nonetheless; and anointing is warranted by St James in his letter (5: 14), where it is clearly a practice of the earliest church; it is also mentioned as practised by the Twelve when Jesus sent them out on their first mission (Mark 6: 13). Confirmation can clearly be identified in the practice of the apostles in Acts. This last, Confirmation, is the most doubtful of the seven as a separate sacrament, because it was closely associated with Baptism or even part of the same rite from very early times, but the practice of the Western Church has made it a separate rite, usually (though in fact not always) administered by a Bishop. In the Eastern Orthodox tradition it is always part of Baptism, usually administered by a priest, reflecting older practice.

To sum up, in the words of Bishop Jeremy Taylor, the 17th century Anglican Divine,

It is none of the doctrine of the Church of England that there are two sacraments only, but that 'two only are generally necessary to salvation'.

So why these two in particular? They are indeed unique, but not for the reasons advanced by the reformers, whose view of the early Church was skewed by their understandable distaste for the Medieval corruption and abuse of the sacramental system.

Baptism

Early Christian practice shows that Baptism and Eucharist together form the complete initiation of the Christian. Baptism happens once, originally includes what we call Confirmation, conveys belonging and culminates in first reception

of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is then intended to be the continued basis of Christian life as well as worship. If the Eucharist makes the Church, then it is Baptism which provides the Body with its members. This is not about joining a club, as is sometimes said, but about bringing us into familial relationship, horizontally with other Christians and vertically with our divine parent. As Jesus said, 'you must be born anew/from above by water and spirit'. Into what are we born? A family.

If you want to know more about how this Baptism/Eucharist nexus was developed, the best place to look is the texts which survive from the early Church about baptismal preparation (more like what we would call a confirmation class), especially that from St Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem in the 4th century. But we don't just rely on one witness: St Ambrose in Milan (the mentor of St Augustine) and Sts John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia, both in Antioch, provide us with very similar courses of instruction which demonstrate what the Church was doing in this area at the same time as she was fixing the Canon of Scripture. You can find these texts with commentary in Fr Ted Yarnold's *Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation*.

Cyril, as the earliest surviving witness to this tradition, also reveals the origin of this genre of Christian writing. This is the point at which the articulated tradition of the Church progresses from scripture and creeds to full-blown discursive Christian theology. By this I mean that the patristic texts from the early church fathers, (*Didache*, *Epistle of Barnabas*, *Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, *1st Letter of Clement* etc) are what is sometimes termed 'sub-apostolic'. They are written

much as the epistolary New Testament is written (often interweaving quotations of scripture from memory); many elements are semi-scriptural in style, intent and even in reception. There are also accounts of martyrdom, like that of Polycarp, from this period, which display an apostolic or even New Testament mindset.

But in Cyril and the writers who follow him in providing detailed instruction on the faith and the practice of the Church we begin to see a more organized theology which will reach its first full flowering in the stylistic and theological brilliance of St Augustine. Theologians are now providing commentary on, and a discursive theology of, scripture (as it is becoming a fixed Canon); they have ceased writing in the *manner* of scripture, as the so-called Apostolic Fathers (Ignatius, Clement and others) had done.

Cyril will suffice to give us a flavour of what was going on, and of why Baptism and Eucharist are our starting point, our Anglican minimum, but why also those sacraments feed and inform the whole of Christian life and practice.

St Cyril was born about 313. This was a critical year in the history of the Church when the Emperor Constantine granted Christians the right to practise their religion. This toleration soon developed into favour as the Emperor began to see in Christianity, rather than paganism, the influence he needed to cement together his widespread and diverse subjects. Soon, in 325, he convened the first Ecumenical Council at Nicaea to restore the unity which the Arian heresy had shattered. St Cyril grew up in the aftermath of this Council; the arguments which followed it had a direct impact on his life and career.

And, as we have observed, this is also the beginning-point of both a fixed scriptural Canon and of what we call the creeds, a moment to which the Lambeth fathers are consciously referring.

Soon after the Council of Nicaea, Constantine, desiring to promote the Faith with a propagandist's instinct for what would appeal to the people, decided to build a sumptuous church in Jerusalem on the site of the tomb where Jesus had been buried. While the foundations were being excavated, a find was made which was interpreted as miraculous proof that here indeed was the site of the Lord's Passion. A tomb cut from a rocky outcrop was discovered and identified as the tomb of Christ; also a rocky hillock which was taken to be the hill of Calvary.

By the end of the century there grew up the legend of the discovery of the true cross by Constantine's mother Helen. A sumptuous basilica was built, called the *Martyrion*, a term used to denote a chapel connected with a martyr's body or his relics. The tomb, elaborately decorated, dominated the open space behind the apse; a circular church was soon constructed round the tomb; this was called the *Anastasis* or Resurrection. A door in the wall by the apse gave on to the rock of Calvary, standing in the same open space and pared down and built round with stone. On top of it a richly jewelled cross was set. It was in these buildings that Cyril preached his catechetical sermons, moving from site to site to gain maximum effect.

The basilica was dedicated in 335. Even before its dedication, pilgrims began to make their way to Jerusalem. One pilgrim, a nun from Spain or the south of France called Egeria, came to Jerusalem a few

years before Cyril's death. The detailed and lively account she wrote helps us to recapture the atmosphere of the Holy Week ceremonies celebrated by Cyril on the scene of the original events, and the enthusiasm of the new Christians as they applauded each point of sermons preached in front of the tomb of the risen Christ. Here then we have the origin both of what we recognize as a confirmation course and also of the special services which we celebrate in Holy Week.

Sacramental Theology — **the Eucharist**

One of the chief sources of interest in these sermons, and a link between the two dominical sacraments which we are considering, lies in Cyril's theology of the Eucharist, which he expounds to those who are to be baptized. The Eucharist is, he writes, a sacrifice of propitiation (5: 8), in which Christ who has been slain is offered (5: 10); it can be offered for the living and the dead (5: 8, 9); the bread and the wine are 'transformed' into the body and blood of Christ (4: 6, 9; 1: 7; 5: 7); the presence of Christ is brought about by the *Epiclesis* (the 'calling-down' prayer) in which God the Father is asked to send down the Holy Spirit upon the offerings to transform them into the body and blood of Christ (1: 7; 5: 7); prayer in the presence of the body and blood of Christ has a special efficacy (5: 9); each particle of the Host is precious as it is the body of Christ (5: 21); the spiritual effect of Holy Communion is obtained through our bodies, which absorb Christ's body and blood.

This detailed theology of the Eucharist is significant because it is held and taught at the place and time in which our liturgies, our creed and our scriptures are all finding

the form to which, as Anglicans, we appeal. And, of course, Cyril is a Bishop, Bishop of a historically crucial See. In a way, in his person, all the elements of the Lambeth Quadrilateral meet.

Eucharistic Communion and Communion between Christians

‘The Eucharist Makes the Church’ is a truism which I’ve written about elsewhere. And there is a logical consequence of the Eucharist’s formative status for the Church in what we also call Communion, as in the Anglican Communion: not the receiving of the elements of bread and wine but the shared fellowship of membership within the Body of Christ which that reception implies and effects.

KOINONIA

Both senses of the word come from a pivotal word in the *New Testament* Greek lexicon: *koinonia*, which we translate as ‘communion’, ‘sharing’ or ‘fellowship’:

1 Corinthians 10: 16

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing [or ‘communion’] in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing [or ‘communion’] in the body of Christ?

2 Corinthians 13: 13

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion [or ‘fellowship’] of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

This terminology is particularly important to Anglicans because we define ourselves as ‘a Communion’.

Kenneth Stevenson, the liturgical scholar and Bishop of Portsmouth, directed attention to Nicolas Sagovsky’s Hulsean lectures delivered in Cambridge

in 1996, later published as *Ecumenism, Christian Origins and the Practice of Communion*.

The trouble with ‘Communion’ is that it is a slippery word, part of ecumenical-speak. But Sagovsky sets it in a far wider perspective, placing it originally in the world of Greek philosophy, and of fruitful civic relationships in the ancient world, with all the tensions that this implies, whether about leadership (Plato’s philosopher-king) or dissent (Socrates was too hot to handle and had therefore to be done away with). And while there was no exact equivalent in Israel, Sagovsky shows lines of comparison between ‘communion’ and ‘covenant’ — that binding relationship between the people, their God, and one another.

Given the Greek background alongside which the early Church developed, it was almost inevitable that ‘communion’ should figure in the vocabulary of Christianity and the grammar of its lifestyle, to which the NT bears witness. In the later fourth century, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa develop ‘communion’ in terms of relations within the Trinity as well as our knowledge of God in the Christian community. And Augustine is responsible for the evolution of this transition into Latin through the use of such terms as ‘*communio*’, ‘*societas*’ and ‘*participatio*’.

Sagovsky must have had both his acute historical perspective and today’s ‘unhappy divisions’ in mind when he wrote... towards the end of his book:

It is a matter of faith, that when debates become deadlocked, in the very activity

of mutual dialogue there will emerge a deeper and more truthful *koinonia*. Here we have to argue against the premature foreclosing of debates, ...the illegitimate manufacture and imposition of consensus that is ultimately a failure of faith in God the Holy Spirit to lead God's people through the wilderness into all truth.

Essay 'Communion in Conflict' in *A Fallible Church*, ed Stevenson p 147f

Even the Acts of the Apostles, often presented as a story of inevitable Church growth, is also an account of struggle in the face of persecution and a continuing disagreement about circumcision which we in our age find incomprehensible, but which threatened irreparably to divide the apostolic Church.

Sagovsky here reminds us of a principle dear to Pope Francis and observable in the history of the Church: that foreclosing debate by imposing premature and inadequate agreement before those involved are ready for it leads to a subsequent collapse of the agreement and further division. The lesson is that it is more important to tease out and locate the real disagreement by conversation on common ground than to enter into dialogue about differences.

Kenneth Stevenson recalls how, when he was a student at Edinburgh University and a member of the Scottish Episcopal Church he became a member of its Commission on Inter-Communion. So we're now talking about that intersection of meaning where 'sharing Holy

Communion' = 'being in communion'.

Three different approaches emerged in the Commission. The first was the traditional Catholic and Orthodox view that communion was the sign of an already existing unity and therefore the Eucharist could only be shared on that basis. The second was the traditional Evangelical approach, which regarded it as a sign of fellowship between believers regardless of their denomination's internal discipline. The third, to which that Commission inclined, was that communion was about Christians working together in worship and witness in a committed relationship — in other words Communion (capital C) is built by *enacting* it in Eucharistic communion. This is a profoundly sacramental insight, which transcends attempts to use the Eucharist as a marker of separation, the current practice in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. It restores it to its proper status as gift and invitation, rather than reducing it to a boundary mark.

From Cyril, 4th century Bishop of Jerusalem, to Kenneth Stevenson, 21st century Bishop of Portsmouth: Bishops are an inescapable focal point of so much thinking about the Church, from the apostolic age until the present day. They are the guardians and teachers of the deposit of faith, as expressed in Scripture and the creeds, and guarantors of the sacraments to which that tradition makes us heirs. They will be the subject of next month's article.

MUSIC LIST FEBRUARY 2021

Tuesday 2 February — Candlemas

SUNG MASS at 12 noon

Preacher: Fr Michael Bowie

Communion Hymn: 187 Virgin born we bow before thee

Voluntary: Mit Fried' und Freud' fahr' ich dahin BWV 616 — J.S. Bach

Sunday 7 February — Second Sunday before Lent

SUNG MASS at 11am

Preacher: Fr Michael Bowie

Communion Hymn: 295 Let all mortal flesh keep silence

Voluntary: Prelude and Fugue in B major — Saint-Saëns

Sunday 14 February — Sunday next before Lent

SUNG MASS at 11am

Preacher: Fr Michael Bowie

Communion Hymn: 178 'Tis good, Lord, to be here

Voluntary: 'Lebhaft' from six sketches for pedal piano — Schumann

Wednesday 17 February — Ash Wednesday

SUNG MASS at 12 noon

Preacher: Fr Michael Bowie

During the Act of Penitence: 507 Hear us, O Lord, have mercy upon us

Communion Hymn: 70 Lord Jesus, think on me

Sunday 21 February — Lent 1

SUNG MASS at 11am

Entrance Chant: 507 Hear us, O Lord, have mercy upon us

Preacher: Fr Michael Bowie

Communion Hymn: 67 Forty days and forty nights

Sunday 28 January — Lent 2

SUNG MASS at 11am

Preacher: Fr Michael Bowie

Communion Hymn: 507 Hear us, O Lord, have mercy upon us

*Live choral singing at services is not permitted for the time being.
Any changes to circumstances may create changes to the music list.
For the fullest and latest Music Lists, go to asms.uk/music*

KEEPING IN TOUCH

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The All Saints Website 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 — all subscription enquiries to the office: office@asms.uk

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CALENDAR and INTENTIONS for FEBRUARY 2021

1	S Brigid	Irish Christians
2	PRESENTATION OF THE LORD	Perseverance in faith
3	S Anskar	The Swedish Church
4	S Gilbert of Sempringham	Diocese of Lincoln
5	S Agatha	Persecuted Christians
6	Ss Paul Miki and companions	Japanese Christians
7 ✕	2nd SUNDAY BEFORE LENT	Parish and people
8	S Josephine Bakhita	Sudanese Christians
9	<i>Feria</i>	Churches Together in Westminster
10	S Scholastica	Women religious
11	Our Lady of Lourdes	The sick
12	<i>Feria</i>	Persecuted Christians
13	<i>of BVM (Walsingham Devotion)</i>	Shrine of OLW
14 ✕	SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE LENT	Parish and people
15	<i>Feria</i>	Increase of faith
16	<i>Feria</i>	Environmental stewardship
17	ASH WEDNESDAY	Penitents and Confessors
18	<i>Feria</i>	Unity
19	<i>Feria</i>	Persecuted Christians
20	<i>Feria (Monthly Requiem)</i>	Faithful departed
21 ✕	LENT 1	Parish and people
22	Chair of S Peter	Pope Francis
23	<i>Feria</i>	Prayerfulness
24	<i>Feria</i>	Integrity in public life
25	<i>Feria</i>	Unity
26	<i>Feria</i>	Persecuted Christians
27	<i>of BVM</i>	Society of Mary
28 ✕	LENT 2	Parish and people

