All Saints Parish Paper

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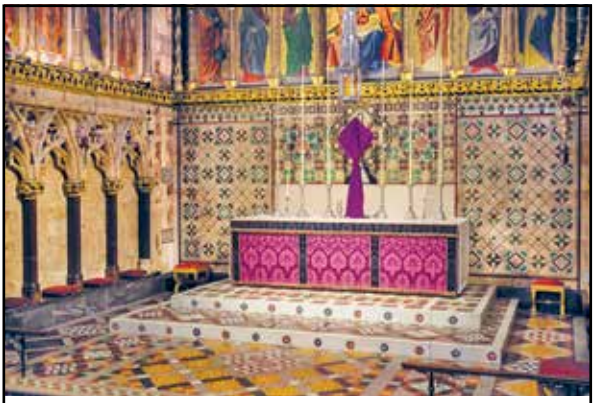
THE ASSISTANT PRIEST WRITES:



The High Altar from the Vicar's stall
Photograph: Andrew Prior

Our principal focus this month was to have been the unique liturgies of Holy Week and Easter, which we all love so much, and the opportunity to welcome Bishop Rowan Williams to share in our worship and preach. We did also recently welcome back two former Assistant Priests, Frs John Pritchard and Peter McGeary, to preach at High Mass Evensong on Lent 2 and their sermons are included below. Bishop Rowan has very kindly offered to be with us next year, so we look forward to his presence with us then.

Fr Gerald Beauchamp (yet another recent Assistant Priest) and I shared a suitably Lenten lunch after Clive Wright's funeral, and he described to me how he intended to spend the first months of his retirement revisiting significant places from his past. Although I assume that his project may now be delayed for a few months, this resonated with me: when I returned to Sydney after 12 years' absence in 2016, and on several subsequent visits, I found myself drawn to revisit the sites of my childhood homes. The one in which I lived longest, from 1969 to 1982, is no longer there, pulled down for a new development: a salutary reminder that here we are 'strangers and pilgrims and still we are seeking the city of God'.

The draw of places remains strong for all of us, which is why churches like All Saints provoke 'worshipper return' from countries all around the world. I've been reflecting on how important a responsibility that places on the shoulders of a medium-sized church community like ours, which for me is also home for this chapter of my life (for longer than I expected, now that I am not returning home to Australia, which may be provoking this line of thought!). How we offer our worship, as I've written recently, is of first importance because it is done to the glory of God. But it is also important in forming the sort of community we are, and in nourishing those who visit us from elsewhere. I am

wary of 'All Saints exceptionalism', but I believe we are called to express a particular charism within the Church — a purposeful call to the beauty of holiness which draws us back over and over again, but also challenges us to the outworking of faith in our lives. Both of those callings require discipline and joyful enthusiasm. Sharing the Gospel, we have learned over the past decades, does not happen most effectively in large mission rallies or diocesan initiatives but in the faithful living of Christian lives encountered by others who do not yet know the Lord. So our worship, our welcome, and how we live our lives, are at the core of our Evangelism.

This adds to the challenge of a time when the church building cannot be open for public worship. As those of you who receive our weekly email know, I am at present celebrating a daily Mass at noon which is also live-streamed via a link you can find on the parish website. I have also shared resources for Spiritual Communion and the Daily Office (and a form of Stations of the Cross) via that medium. As we approach Holy Week and Easter I will add other devotions as seems appropriate.

Walking around W1 is now a slightly eery experience. Once-busy streets are suddenly sparsely-populated wind-tunnels. But I have noticed another difference. People are routinely greeeting one another as they pass in the street, as if Fitzrovia has become a village again. My clerical collar may be partly responsible, but with all these greetings I also notice people rushing less and behaving a little more considerately. I hope that behavioural modification outlasts our current difficulties for a while!

Prayers are offered daily here for all our community, including those of you who are always necessarily connected to All Saints at a distance, partly through this Parish Paper. Please pray for those of us who continue to maintain the offering of Mass and the prayer of the Church here as we all unite in prayer for the needs of the Church and the world, and especially all who are sick or feeling isolated or anxious as a result of the pandemic.

As we look to our future together, I pray that we may in this season of Passiontide, Holy Week and Easter, even in the strange circumstances in which we must observe them this year, increase in the outworking of love which will draw others into fellowship and communion with us and with God. And may the Lord strengthen us in our resolve with the promise of new life which as always, on the other side of Good Friday, Easter promises and proclaims.

Fr Michael

The church is open daily between the hours of 10am and 4pm for private prayer.

There is a non-communicating Mass every day at 12 noon (this is live-streamed: see the link on the website).

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will be offered on Thursdays and Sundays after the noon Mass until 4pm. The period of Exposition will conclude with simple Benediction, also live-streamed on Sundays at 4pm.

Please see the website for further information: ***www.allsaintsmargaretstreet.org.uk***

Rebecca Abbott, a third order member of the Society of St Francis, reflects on Confession

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION: A PERSONAL REFLECTION

During my time as a novice, and in the years leading up to my noviciate, I would ask Christ to deal with my sin in the following way. I would imagine myself piling my sin into a wheel barrow, which I would then cart off to the foot of the cross, where I emptied it out. There, Christ took my baggage and sent it upwards, and I would watch as my sin floated skywards. He then would show me how my sin was transformed by Him into hundreds and hundreds of blessings, and He then gave me the image of these blessings falling down the chimneys of houses wherein dwelt people in great need of such blessings. Amazing. My sin taken up and transformed by Christ's immense love for all people into something that could be useful in this world.

When I became a novice, my novice guardian encouraged me to find a confessor and to engage with the sacrament of Reconciliation. This I duly did, and, from then onwards, I have gone annually for confession during the season of Lent.

My first confession was lengthy, since my novice guardian had suggested that I use it to confess all of my sin up to that point in time. Having lived a "colourful" life and being in my late 50s, I had a good deal to bring before my confessor. And it was so healing, for a huge weight was lifted off my shoulders, and I remember clearly the surge of joy I felt soon afterwards.

My second confession was shorter; I only had to confess my sin from the time of my previous confession. And, as the years went by, I found that I had less and less to confess, and this was because I was realising that I did not wish to send my best friend, Christ, back to the cross every time I sinned (a significant deterrent to my sinning in the first place), and, also, I was getting a clearer understanding of my failings and of what things tempted me to sin, and I was increasingly able to correct myself, all, of course, with God's help.

I am now professed and an annual confession is an established part of my Personal Rule of Life. As the Day 16 principle states: "...we are encouraged to avail ourselves of the sacrament of Reconciliation, through which the burden of past sin and failure is lifted and peace and hope restored".

Certainly, these words ring true for me. Sin is a terrible burden. Through the sacrament of Reconciliation Christ removes this weight, and the joy and release experienced as a result are a sure sign, in my opinion, of the restoration of peace and hope. I encourage you all to participate in this sacrament and to enjoy the fruits of the spirit that are poured upon us through taking part in this sacrament.

LITURGICAL LIFE IN THE CHURCH 3

This is the third of a series of articles to refresh our memory about how we live as Christian people nurtured in a Catholic discipline and tradition of worship.

This month continues with Part 3 of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, which begins with the Greeting of Peace and Offertory rite. It follows through the Eucharistic action up to the point of the *Agnus Dei* and Fraction. Next month's article will conclude this examination of the shape of the Mass, especially the form of High Mass we offer at All Saints, and then consider other elements of liturgical life and pious practice which are part of our life in the church.

High Mass III: The Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Greeting of Peace

The greeting of peace is an ancient ceremony of the Mass enacting our desire to approach the Lord reconciled to our brothers and sisters in Christ. By the time of the Reformation, it had been reduced to a prayer and an exchange of words after the consecration (or, at High Mass, a ritual gesture among the clergy). It was omitted from early Anglican Prayer Books after 1549.

The liturgical reforms of the twentieth century recovered this ancient ceremony and made use of it to enhance the participation of all present at Mass. In Roman Catholic liturgy it remains after the consecration, but now shared by all.

Anglican liturgies have also restored it to all worshippers, in a different position, though an equally ancient one (that of the Ambrosian rite of Milan): at the hinge between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. At this point in the Mass it enacts the command of the Lord to 'first be reconciled to your brother or sister and then come and offer your gift at the altar'.

The Offertory

The Offertory is the first action of the second major section of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Eucharist. It comprises the bringing forward and placing, *offering*, on the altar the bread and wine, the elements of our sacrifice of praise to God. These elements represent our own offering of our life to God ('ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a living sacrifice to you').

Associated with this offering may be a collection of money, for the support of the church and the poor, which also symbolises our response to God's gifts to us. But it is the bringing to the altar of bread and wine that begins the *Eucharistic* offering.

We often think of sacrifice as meaning only 'giving up', as destruction or death, but the ancient sacrifices of our Jewish ancestors in the faith took many forms. That which underlies the Mass, the Communion or Thanksgiving Sacrifice [see Part 1 of this series in the February Parish Paper], began with just such a ceremony of offering.

Sacrifice (*sacrificium* in Latin) means 'making holy'. The whole action of the Mass is about making us holy by our participation in the Offering, which unites us to Christ in his death *and his resurrection.*

The Eucharistic Prayer

The Eucharistic Prayer, sometimes called the Great Thanksgiving, is the high point of the second part of the Mass, known in

the Book of Common Prayer as 'the Prayer of Consecration'. The BCP title reflects a western understanding of the consecration of the elements in the Words of Institution ('this is my body', 'this is my blood'), marked by showing or elevating the bread and wine for adoration at this moment. In Eastern Orthodox liturgy, Christ is thought of as already present in the offertory, and a further significant 'moment' of consecration comes with the *epiclesis* or 'calling down' of the Holy Spirit on the offering.

The whole Eucharistic Prayer may be seen as effecting the gift of Christ's presence, as we offer ourselves to God with the bread and the wine and are nourished with his new life. It has several distinct elements, some of which will be described in separate articles (S*ursum Corda,* Preface, *Sanctus/Benedictus*).

The consecrated bread and wine are again lifted up at the end of the prayer and all join in the great 'Amen' to acknowledge the gift.

The *Sursum Corda*

The Eucharistic Prayer begins with three biddings and responses from the celebrant. This ancient triple invitation to the central prayer of thanksgiving begins with the ancient Christian greeting:
'The Lord be with you', followed by
'let our hearts be on high' = *sursum corda*,
'up with your hearts', 'lift up your hearts'
to which the people answer
'we have them towards the Lord'
= *habemus ad Dominum,* 'we lift them to the Lord'.

St Augustine understood this exchange to express the Pauline exhortation 'seek the things that are above, where Christ is' (Colossians 3: 1).

The third invitation brings us to the point of the Prayer:
'Let us give thanks / *let us make Eucharist*, to the Lord (our God)'
= *gratias agamus domino Deo nostro*
to which the people answer
'it is right and fitting (to do so)'
= *dignum et iustum est*.

This ancient dialogue was already the subject of comment and interpretation by St Cyprian in the early third century — before the Christian Bible was a canonically defined text. It indicates that we are now embarking on the core of the offering to which all else has been leading.

The Preface

After the opening Dialogue or *Sursum Corda*, the celebrant says or sings the Preface. This is a variable (or 'proper') part of the Mass which typically focuses on the element of thanksgiving which has just been introduced in the dialogue, and is related to the Jewish blessing prayers which the Lord was praying when he gave us the Eucharist.

In Ordinary Time the Preface focuses on thanksgiving for our salvation, expressing in summary the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

On feast days or in particular seasons, the Preface gives specific thanks to God for the occasion, or for a Mystery of Salvation (such as Christmas, Easter, or the Blessed Sacrament), or for the life of a saint, or, in a Requiem, for the life of the deceased person, linked to the resurrection hope.

The Preface sets the particular context of the Offering, within the general context of our redemption by Christ on the cross and the new life of Easter.

The *Sanctus/Benedictus*

The *Sanctus* and *Benedictus*, which follow the Preface, respond to it in the form of

biblical texts. These texts link our act of thanksgiving to the heavenly worship; they point towards Christ's gift of himself; and they point also to our unity with that self-offering of the cross through our own offering of the elements of bread and wine by which we are nourished in Communion. The *Sanctus* ('holy, holy, holy…') is the song of the seraphim in Isaiah's account of his vision of the Lord and personal calling by God 'in the year that King Uzziah died' (Isaiah 6: 1 – 3; cf. Revelation 4: 8). It joins us together in that 'upward' aspiration to heavenly things.

The *Benedictus* ('blessed is he who comes'), from St Matthew's account of the Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21: 9, citing Psalm 118: 26), may originally have been an invitation to Communion. In its present location it looks forward to the Offering and Communion which follow. It strongly implies belief in the real presence of Christ in the sacrament. For that reason the BCP reformers removed the verse, but it has been restored to us in the modern liturgy — and was often added to the Prayer Book service by many Anglo-Catholics soon after the Oxford Movement.

The Lord's Prayer & *Agnus Dei*

The 'Our Father', or 'Lord's Prayer', is found in more than one version in the Gospels, harmonized and augmented by a doxology (ascription of praise) in the form we mostly use, identical to that in Eastern Orthodox liturgies.

At Mass it follows directly on the doxology at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer. Cranmer placed it later: his final version of the BCP ended the prayer of consecration with the Words of Institution, followed immediately by the communion of the people, to avoid any suggestion of the real presence of Christ in the sacrament. Anglicans having recovered that Catholic tradition of real presence, it is good that we are now able to pray this prayer given to us by Jesus in his presence, sacramentally, on the altar.

During the Fraction [see below], or soon afterwards, the text *Agnus Dei* ('Lamb of God') is traditionally said or sung. John the Baptist referred to Jesus as 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1: 29): like the *Benedictus* these words from scripture are adapted to welcome the sacramental presence of the Lord.

The Fraction

Like the offertory, the Fraction, or breaking of the bread, was originally a practical action, necessary for the sharing of the consecrated bread and wine in Holy Communion.

But it is more than that: scripture tells us that Jesus 'broke' bread at the last supper while describing it as his body (which was to be 'broken' on the cross for us). The Fraction, 'the breaking of the bread', was a name for the Eucharist in Apostolic times; it signifies the unity of all in the one bread, as St Paul teaches.

In Anglican liturgies words are sometimes added to accompany the Fraction expressing this: 'We break this bread to share in the body of Christ: we who are many are one body, for we all share in the one bread'. Words describing our sacramental unity in Christ from another early text, the Didache, are also sometimes used ('As this broken bread was once many grains …'). More anciently and appropriately (as still in the Roman rite) it takes place during the *Agnus Dei*.

SERMON PREACHED at HIGH MASS on LENT 2 by FR JOHN PRITCHARD

Embrace your baptism fully into your human identity. Do not separate in life your fleshly and spiritual understanding of yourself: for the two are uniquely joined in each of us, a mystical tension, reminding us that we are born both of earth and from above!

Last Sunday's Gospel reminded us of a similar revelation in Jesus' life. The struggles we share with hunger, hope and ambition, revealed in his encounter with that which seeks to sabotage our life, God's creation and His Kingdom. And even though we hold these natures of the flesh and spirit in a less successful way than Our Lord! In this Season of Lent, if we are not careful we will magnify the battle within us of guilt and sorrow, rather than be more likely to succeed in our discipleship if, with a foot in each camp, we allow the hope of the spirit to influence the life of the flesh and the life of the flesh to be present to God in truth: for God is not ignorant of who or what any of us really is. Remember, God hates nothing that God has made.

I suspect we more often than not, see our life in the flesh and our life in the Spirit in conflict with one another, rather than divinely appointed to be interwoven in our life in Christ. After all, His birth gives him insight into our struggles and joys, and His life, death and resurrection give us insight into God's divine will for us.

This does not mean that we hope the Spirit won't notice and we embrace our humanity to the detriment of the two great commandments: to love the Lord God with all your heart and soul and mind, and to love your neighbour as yourself. But it is a reminder that though we are of this world, (some of us more than others), though we are born of the flesh (some of us more flesh than others), it is, through our baptised life in Christ, incumbent upon you and me to remember that part of our earthly experience is a spiritual membership and blessing of God's Kingdom which we carry into the world and the Church, even if either make us feel we have been badly made!

For we are born also from above! We are reminded through the waters of the font that we are loved, and through the gift of the Holy Spirit, given an association with heaven and the Kingdom of God. And being members incorporated into the Body of Christ, we affirm and aspire to being part of a realm of perfect justice, truth and love, with our human flaws, in fellowship with Christ helping us make this whole thing divinely workable.

And in this season of Lent when we are preparing candidates for Baptism and Confirmation, our Ember days ask us to remember our vocations, including those who are preparing to give their lives in service of the Gospel. In this season where we are seeking to return to the Lord, the Gospel reminds us that it doesn't matter where those who join the church come from, or indeed where any of us come from… but that we welcome everyone, for by being born of the spirit we have a common heritage, purpose and place to which we belong!

So, in the Gospel, and that conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, Jesus again preaches inclusion and shared purpose for us all.

Inclusion, so that, as people in

Nicodemus's day and in ours from different traditions, races and backgrounds want to be part of the movement of Christ, through a baptism of water and spirit, we belong: even if you don't rate their earthy heritage, you must accept their heavenly credentials!

Remember, I come from an ancient people who think a diet of leeks and seaweed is normal, where the ladies wear funny hats and to declare your love for another — you give them a spoon! For even in the Church there are so many things we can use as ammunition to reject each other if we are so minded: but Jesus says, be born again, into a new and lively heritage which you share in common with your sister and brother which is the Kingdom of God. A kingdom centred on perfect justice, truth and love, which understands your humanity as part of its outworking. So when you are not quite sure where you belong, or what your heritage is as we enter new understandings of British society and Church: Remember the one constant, is our membership of The Kingdom.

And it is a Kingdom we must proclaim.

For the last three or four years I have tried with marginal success, much frustration and some failure to see all I do in my life through the Anglican Communion 5 marks of mission. I commend them to you if you are not consciously aware of them. They are:

The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

These more than echo our Lord's hope for us to not only know earthly things but to be part of heavenly things also. So perhaps in these remaining weeks of Lent, stop purging yourselves of your God-given humanness, and accept your baptism as a reminder of you being beloved and belonging to the nation state of Christ, the state of love and compassion, forgiveness and healing, proclaim him, in these ways, proclaim Christ: nurture new believers and one another. Respond to the human need around you — starting with the human need of the person sitting next to you. Do not allow the coronavirus to be an excuse to put even more distance between us. Challenge injustice in society and the Church, challenge violence both physical and emotional at every level… but pursue peace and reconciliation. And, in our riches, strive to safeguard the integrity of creation. Do your bit for the Gospel. For we can all say, I am a Nicodemus, I get it wrong, I am limited in my understanding, in my practice and my discipleship of Christ. But St John reminds us… "indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him".

We have one another, and together we have, through our baptism, Christ. This is our choice. Let it be your choice this Lent also to embrace your baptism, embrace Christ's teaching, and embrace the work of the Kingdom, our promised and realised home, present and to come.

To the Christ who saves us and makes sense of our discipleship be all honour and Glory now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON PREACHED for SOLEMN EVENSONG and BENEDICTON on LENT 2 by FR PETER McGEARY

(Numbers 21: 4– 9; Luke 14: 27 – 33)

There's an extraordinary moment quite near the beginning of Stephen Spielberg's 1993 film about the Holocaust, *Schindler's List*: during the course of a late night evacuation of part of the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw, one of the officers co-ordinating the expulsion of people from their homes comes across a piano. While around him familes are rounded up and sent off to the trains that will eventually take them to the concentration camps, and those who have tried in vain to hide from the Nazis are summarily executed, the officer sits down to play a Mozart sonata. For a few moments he loses himself in the music, oblivious to the terror and violence that surround him.

That's only one of many extraordinary images in a remarkable film. It sticks in my mind because of the bizarre marriage of apparent opposites; the beauty of Mozart and the tragedy and violence of the ghetto, the delicacy of the officer's piano playing and the brutality of the job that he has been sent to do. The dislocation between these two states seems to be total, yet here they are, side by side...

A little over a month ago, one of my great heroes died. We never met, yet his writings have influenced me deeply. He was born in Paris ninety years ago to a prosperous Viennese Jewish family, being educated in France, the USA and England. Eventually he settled in an academic chair in Cambridge. He was an amazing writer on a bewildering variety of subjects, and I truly believe was one of the few people left today writing in English who was worth the bother. His name was George Steiner. I've been looking through some of his works recently. One of them, an essay on Arnold Schoenberg's incomplete and only opera *Moses und Aron*, is one of the most moving meditations on the Holocaust that I know. In it he touches on the same thing that Spielberg caught in his film:

> 'One of the things I cannot grasp... is the time relation. Precisely at the same hour in which [the Jews were] being done to death, the overwhelming plurality of human beings, two miles away on the Polish farms, 5,000 miles away in New York, were sleeping or eating or making love or worrying about the dentist. This is where my imagination balks. The two orders of simultaneous experience are so different, so irreconcilable to any norm of common human values, their coexistence is so hideous a paradox... that I puzzle over time.'

I puzzle over time too. So do you — or at least you should. That's part and parcel of any kind of Christian worship, puzzling over time, trying to make sense of that jumble of past history, present experience and future hope which we call theology.

But all too often we don't do anything of the kind: rather than puzzling over time we idealise it or just look at one bit of it. We look to an illusory past when all was well, or else to a fictional future of wish-fulfillment, a false paradise of deadening niceness. Or else we look at the present

through the spectacles of our choice — rose-pink in colour usually — and we fit everything into a nice convenient system of theology or philosophy or ecology or whatever takes our fancy.

And all of these are profound delusions. They are lies. They are 'sweet little lies' as the song has it, but lies they remain. They are attempts to cope with the often horrific reality of human existence — or rather they are attempts to evade it.

In Christianity, the avoidance of 'puzzling over time' leads to cheap, vacuous parodies of the Gospel. These are very popular, very user-friendly, very seductive, very nice. They are also completely wrong.

The readings for this evening give us bad food, serpents, crosses and poverty. Not very promising stuff if you want to be strong, confident or safe. There is lots of this sort of thing in the Bible; I am amazed at how often Christians pretend otherwise. The only exceptions to this seem to be composers and artists.

Christians go on a lot about suffering — taking up the cross, that sort of thing — but so often in the wrong way. We either indulge our love of spiritual sado-masochism — feeling good by feeling bad — and we speak of suffering in quiet, smooth tones, uttering pious inanities. Or else we just pretend it's not there. We construct 'theologies of suffering' and so try to fit it into some kind of plan that makes sense of it all, or else we blame it all on the devil or human sin. Or we see God as the highest point of what is good and true and beautiful, and we leave it at that, skating over the rest and hoping nobody will notice.

The good news must come through the sadness and the frailty of human existence. Resurrection comes through the recognition of tragedy, not its avoidance. The story of God, the story of Christ, is not a story about the sidestepping of human existence, but the total acceptance of it in all its horror. Jesus, having carried **his** cross, however momentarily, believes God has forsaken him. And in the acceptance of that emptiness is resurrection. As a friend of mine put it brilliantly once: 'the story of Easter is not a story of success; it is a story of transfigured failure'.

This is what gives Christianity its distinctive, bitter-sweet character: it does not ignore suffering or explain it away. It certainly doesn't try to make sense of it all! Rather it accepts it totally, and in so doing transfigures it.

Last week I was lucky enough to hear one of the giants of twentieth century theology, Jurgen Moltmann. Ninety three years young, his most famous book is probably *'The Crucified God'*, published in English in 1974. In it he says this:

> "The cross is not and cannot be loved. Yet only the crucified Christ can bring the freedom which changes the world because it is no longer afraid of death. In his time the crucified Christ was regarded as a scandal and as foolishness. Today, too, it is considered old-fashioned to put him in the centre of Christian faith and of theology. Yet only when men are reminded of him, however untimely this may be, can they be set free from the power of the facts of the present time, and from the laws and compulsions of history, and be offered a future which will never grow dark again. Today the Church and theology must turn to the crucified Christ in order

to show the world the freedom he offers. This is essential if they wish to become what they assert they are: the church of Christ, and Christian theology."

This is not easy news. It's certainly not comfortable news.

But then nobody said that was part of the deal.

'Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb': The Hail Mary, the Annunciation and the Visitation

Towards the end of last month, after a number of years, we had planned to restore the celebration of a High Mass for the Solemnity of the Annunciation. Next month, May, is the month of Mary, which concludes with the Feast of the Visitation. As we prepare for the Great Week of the liturgical year, these two Marian celebrations offer a reminder of Mary's part in the story of our salvation, and provoke reflection on our most common prayer to her, the *Ave*.

We use the 'Hail Mary' every day and we associate it with the Annunciation: after all the opening words of it are those of the Archangel Gabriel to Mary in that meeting. The Annunciation is, of course, also the principal biblical story of the Walsingham narrative. One of the best sermons I have ever heard in Walsingham was in the Roman Catholic shrine on the more modern September feast of Our Lady of Walsingham.

This was the gist of the sermon:

Some pilgrims to Walsingham are disappointed because when they ask where our Lady appeared, they are told that she didn't appear here. The Walsingham shrine is possibly unique in not relying, strictly speaking, on an apparition. The story says that Richeldis had 'a vision' or dream — something with a good biblical pedigree (think of patriarchal Joseph, of Jacob, of Mary's husband Joseph…); she saw 'in the spirit'.

If you visit Bethlehem, the preacher went on, *you see the cave with the star, proclaiming that Jesus was born here. But we know that the Holy House which Richeldis was commanded, in her vision, to replicate was not the birthplace of Jesus, not the stable, but* ***Mary's*** *house — the house of Anna and Joachim, her parents (mentioned at Luke 1: 56 — after the Visitation). Here the greater miracle took place — not the human birth, but the actual* ***incarnation*** *of God, the Word becoming one of us. That is what Walsingham is about — not Christmas, but the* ***Annunciation****.*

So the Annunciation overshadows other Marian feasts, even biblical ones. In modern liturgy it has been recast as a feast of the Lord, despite its long pedigree as a Marian devotional focus ('Lady Day', in England). However, to quote Pope Paul VI (who also notes that this is the true feast of incarnation):

For the Solemnity of the Incarnation of the Word in the Roman Calendar the ancient title — the Annunciation of the Lord — has been deliberately restored, ***but the feast was and is a joint one of Christ and of the Blessed Virgin****: of the Word, who becomes Son of Mary (Mark. 6: 3),* ***and of the Virgin, who becomes Mother of God****. …With regard to Mary, these liturgies celebrate it as a feast of the new Eve, the obedient and faithful virgin, who with her generous "fiat" (cf. Luke 1: 38) became through the working of the Spirit the Mother of God, but also the true Mother of the living, and, by receiving into her womb the one Mediator (cf. 1 Timothy 2: 5), became the true Ark of the Covenant and true Temple of God. These liturgies*

celebrate it as a culminating moment in the salvific dialogue between God and man, and as a commemoration of the Blessed Virgin's free consent and cooperation in the plan of redemption.(Marialis Cultus 6)

So from the Annunciation we take the beginning of the prayer, the *Ave* (*'Hail Mary, full of grace'*). But the Visitation, which we celebrate at the end of May, is as significant as the Annunciation in forming the Hail Mary, because Elizabeth's greeting supplies two more vital clauses.

The feast of the Visitation is a latecomer to the Marian calendar. The earliest feast of our Lady was that celebrating her title *Theotokos*, which in the West we translate 'Mother of God' (a title formally conferred at the Council of Ephesus in 431). The feast of Our Lady on 15th August was originally focused on *this* title, but the celebration of her Motherhood was later transferred to 1st January and 15th August came to be celebrated as Mary's heavenly birthday, the feast called first *Kathisma* ('resting'), which became the *Dormition* in the East and the *Assumption* in the West.

Celebration of the Visitation originated in Byzantium, where it was originally celebrated on 2 July, (where you will find it in the BCP Calendar). Celebration of the Feast in the West is first noted in a Franciscan general chapter in 1263. Its observance quickly spread, with a focus on Mary's utterance of the *Magnificat*, because Mary's song had become so central to the evening prayer of the church.

This is Pope Paul VI's focus when he also mentions this feast in his apostolic letter *Marialis Cultus*, 1974:

Mary is also the Virgin in prayer. She appears as such ***in the visit to the mother of the precursor****, when she pours out her soul in expressions glorifying God, and expressions of humility, faith and hope. This prayer is the Magnificat (cf. Luke 1: 46 – 55), Mary's prayer* par excellence*, the song of the messianic times in which there mingles the joy of the ancient and the new Israel. As St Irenaeus seems to suggest, it is in Mary's canticle that there was heard once more the rejoicing of Abraham who foresaw the Messiah (cf. John 8: 56) and there rang out in prophetic anticipation the voice of the Church: "In her exultation Mary prophetically declared in the name of the Church: 'My soul proclaims the glory of the Lord....'" And in fact Mary's hymn has spread far and wide and has become the prayer of the whole Church in all ages.*

Mary's visit to Elizabeth also gave to the Church two of the oldest phrases of the Hail Mary: 'blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.'

Like the feast of the Visitation, the *Ave* or Hail Mary is a comparative latecomer to Christian devotion, at least in the form we know and use. The original prayer consisted of just the two biblical quotations, the only added word being her name, 'Mary', which of course Gabriel doesn't speak: 'Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb'. For a long time that was the whole prayer.

There is little trace of the Hail Mary, even as a popular devotional formula, before about 1050. It seems to have arisen from versicles and responsories occurring in the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, a form of prayer which was coming into favour among the monastic orders at that time. Two Anglo-Saxon manuscripts at the British Museum, one of which may date from the year 1030, show that the words *Ave Maria* etc and *benedicta tu in mulieribus et benedictus fructus ventris tui* occurred in almost every part of the Little Office. The great collections

of Mary-legends which began to be formed in the early years of the twelfth century show us that this salutation of our Lady was fast spreading as a form of private devotion. Abbot Baldwin, a Cistercian who was made Archbishop of Canterbury in 1184, wrote a paraphrase of the *Ave Maria* in which he says:

> To this salutation of the Angel, by which we daily greet the most Blessed Virgin, with such devotion as we may, we are accustomed to add the words, 'and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,' by which clause Elizabeth at a later time, on hearing the Virgin's salutation to her, caught up and completed, as it were, the Angel's words, saying: 'Blessed are thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.'

Not long after this (c 1196) the Bishop of Paris urged the clergy to see that the 'Salutation of the Blessed Virgin' was familiarly known to their flocks as well as the Creed and the Lord's Prayer; after this date similar episcopal commands become frequent throughout the Christian world, beginning in England with the Synod of Durham in 1217.

Those who first used this formula recognized that the *Ave Maria* was a form of *greeting*. So it was customary to accompany the words with some external gesture of homage, a genuflection, or least an inclination of the head. St Aybert, in the twelfth century, recited 150 Hail Marys daily, 100 with genuflections and 50 with prostrations. St Louis, King of France performed similar reverences accompanying the Hail Mary. Kneeling for it was enjoined in several of the religious orders. In this way, owing to the fatigue of these repeated prostrations and genuflections, the recitation of a number of Hail Marys was often regarded as a penitential exercise, hence its use as a penance in the confessional.

In the time of St Louis the *Ave Maria* still ended with the words of St Elizabeth, *benedictus fructus ventris tui*; subsequently it was extended by the introduction of, first, the Holy Name of Jesus and later of a clause of petition, asking Mary to pray for us. It was often a subject of reproach against Roman Catholics by the Reformers that the Hail Mary which they so constantly repeated was not properly a prayer, but rather a greeting which contained no petition. This objection would seem to have long been felt, and as a consequence it was not uncommon during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries for those who recited their *Ave*s privately to add some clause at the end, after the words *ventris tui Jesus*. But for liturgical purposes until 1568 the *Ave* ended 'and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus, Amen'. It is ironic that Protestant criticisms led to the prayer as we now know it: it is a counter-reformation text in its final form.

We first meet the modern *Ave* in early 16th century monastic breviaries. It probably originated from Italy: an *Ave Maria* identical with our own, except for the omission of the single word *nostræ*, ('our' death) stands printed at the head of a work by the Italian Dominican Girolamo Savonarola issued in 1495, of which there is a copy in the British Museum. But the official recognition of the *Ave Maria* in its complete form, though foreshadowed in the words of the Catechism of the Council of Trent, was only given in the Roman breviary of 1568.

The prayer (and the feast of the Visitation) as we know them are symptomatic of developed rather than primitive Christianity. But the greeting of Elizabeth is an extremely significant moment in the history of salvation, one which has perhaps been overshadowed by the Annunciation story on one hand and the origin of the *Magnificat* in the Visitation story on the other.

Interestingly, Paul VI doesn't address the origin of the Hail Mary in his pastoral letter *Marialis Cultus*, despite obviously feeling a heartfelt need, in the wake of Vatican II, to defend the use of the Angelus and the Rosary, which were perceived to be under threat at the time, as the RC church rediscovered the Bible and a newly accessible Mass. But in the course of his defence of the Rosary he says,

> *Its most characteristic element, in fact, the litany-like succession of Hail Marys, becomes in itself an unceasing praise of Christ, who is the ultimate object both of the angel's announcement* ***and of the greeting of the mother of John the Baptist: "Blessed is the fruit of your womb"*** *(Luke 1: 42).*

Here is the simple point with which I shall conlude. In Elizabeth's greeting something significant happens which may go unnoticed. Mary has already been greeted by an angel, she has received a divine communication. The world-changing miracle of the incarnation has by now occurred. But in Elizabeth's greeting we have the first Gospel moment of *human* recognition: the primary question put to us by Jesus in the Gospels (and really by the whole New Testament) is 'who do you say I am'. Elizabeth, in greeting Mary, stands for *us*: she is the first to recognize, and having recognized, to articulate, the saving truth of the incarnation.

That is what we are doing when we say the Hail Mary too, especially in the Angelus; and it is why the Rosary, which enacts the Gospel in devotional terms, is such an important Christian devotion and one worth revisiting. It is not only contemplative; it can be a very powerful tool for reconnecting with doctrinal truth.

LITURGICAL LIFE IN THE CHURCH — HYMNS

I have been enjoying Fr Michael's articles about why we do what we do in the Mass. There is a great need for such teaching, whether to inform a younger generation or to remind to an older one. One area not yet covered is the use of hymns, and I have rashly offered to write something about this.

Hymns are so embedded in our services that it comes as a shock to discover that until 1820 they were forbidden in the Church of England. This was a legacy of Reformed clergy who fled to the continent during the reign of Mary Tudor. They returned having imbibed there the Calvinistic insistence that only scriptural words should be used in worship, so hymns were suppressed.

In the best British tradition, ways were found around this prohibition. Private chapels were exempted from the rule. For example, *Spirit of mercy, truth and love*, has come to us from the chapel of the Foundling Hospital. Also, the Psalms were turned into verse which could be sung, and we still use some of these versions (e.g. Psalm 34 *Through all the changing scenes of life*).

It was the rise of hymn singing nonconformity, especially Methodism, which drove the Church to change its position, leading eventually to the ground-breaking publication of *Hymns Ancient & Modern* in 1860, a work notable for its high quality and its quiet but definite Catholic flavour.

But what is the purpose of hymns? They are as old as the Church itself, (Colossians 3: 16; Ephesians 5: 19) and rooted in earlier Hebrew worship. Jesus and the disciples sang a hymn at the Last Supper, expressing a tradition of sung worship which continued in Christian liturgy.

Firstly, hymns should enable us to raise our hearts and minds to God in adoration and

praise. In the words of Bishop Christopher Wordsworth (1807-1885), when we sing hymns, "the soul of the worshipper blends itself with the souls of all other worshippers throughout the whole of Christendom in every age, and is absorbed in contemplation of God". He also puts his finger on an important point when he says that too many modern hymns are concerned less with adoring God and more with the personal preoccupations and emotions of the singer, something which renders many contemporary hymns unsatisfactory.

Secondly, we tend to remember words which we sing better than words we say. This makes hymns an ideal means for teaching sound doctrine memorably. Orthodox doctrinal content, rooted in scripture, is a vital part of great hymns — think of the work of Charles Wesley (the Anglican Wesley), for example.

Fr Michael has pointed out that hymns are not a fundamental part of the Mass, though I imagine we all welcome the opportunity to use them as a means of sharing in the worship surrounding us. The offices of Morning and Evening prayer, on the other hand, historically contain specific hymns which may mark a particular season, or saint's feast, or simply express the time of day. (Consider John Keble's fine version of the ancient Greek evening hymn, *Hail, gladdening Light*.)

I have concentrated on the words of hymns, but obviously music is the other essential ingredient. A good melody helps to fix the words in our minds, and there is a great heritage of excellent hymn tunes, ranging from early chant to more recent compositions.

Although hymns are meant for shared public worship, the best of them can also be helpful as helps to prayer and meditation, especially if we are in a spiritually dry period. (We might even sing them when nobody else is around.)

A final word. It is a familiar story when a new hymn in a service is greeted with the cry, "we don't know it". Well, there was a time when none of us knew any hymns. We have to learn them. The alternative to learning an unfamiliar hymn is to condemn ourselves to a restricted diet of unchanging fare when our hymn books contain rich resources which we should be using.

Barry A. Orford

KEEPING IN TOUCH

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

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CALENDAR and INTENTIONS for APRIL 2020

1	*Feria*	Persecuted Christians
2	*Feria*	Unity
3	*Feria*	Those in need
4	*Feria (of BVM)*	✠ Rowan Williams
5 ✠	**PALM SUNDAY**	**Parish and People**
6	**Monday in Holy Week**	
7	**Tuesday in Holy Week**	
8	**Wednesday in Holy Week**	
9	**Maundy Thursday**	
10	**Good Friday**	
11	**Holy Saturday**	
12 ✠	**EASTER DAY**	**Parish and People**
13	Monday in Easter Week	Thanksgiving for the Resurrection
14	Tuesday in Easter Week	Thanksgiving for the Resurrection
15	Wednesday in Easter Week	Thanksgiving for the Resurrection
16	Thursday in Easter Week	Thanksgiving for the Resurrection
17	Friday in Easter Week	Thanksgiving for the Resurrection
18	Saturday in Easter Week	Thanksgiving for the Resurrection
19 ✠	**2nd SUNDAY OF EASTER (Low Sunday)**	**Parish and People**
20	*Feria*	Those baptized at Easter
21	S Anselm	Theologians
22	*Feria*	Penitents and Confessors
23	S George	Unity
24	*Feria*	Those in need
25	S. MARK	Evangelists
26 ✠	**3rd SUNDAY OF EASTER**	**Parish and People**
27	*Feria*	Renewal of our Faith
28	S Peter Chanel	Parish of Notre Dame de France
29	S Catherine of Siena	Europe
30	*Feria*	Unity

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