

All Saints Parish Paper

FEBRUARY 2005

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VICAR'S LETTER

On the day after New Year's Day, we went to collect the Sunday papers at the shop in my brother's village in Wales. My eye was caught by the banner headline on the front page of the *Sunday Telegraph* which proclaimed that the Archbishop of Canterbury was doubting the existence of God. Although the *Telegraph* is not my usual Sunday reading, I bought a copy.

When we got home I discovered on reading the article to which the headline referred that it said nothing of the sort. Dr Williams had been asked to write an article in response to the Tsunami disaster, which had been unfolding with increasing horror since Boxing Day. It looked as if the editor had gone for a headline which would grab the attention of befuddled revellers.

The Archbishop did acknowledge that such terrible natural disasters do make people ask questions about the existence or the goodness of God. Questions in such circumstances can be a good thing. 'Every single random, accidental death is something that should upset a faith bound up with comfort and ready answers... The question: "How can you believe in a God who permits suffering on this scale?" is therefore very much around at the moment, and it would be surprising if it weren't indeed it would be wrong if it weren't.'

The traditional answers which work in the detachment of a theological seminar, do not have the same authority when faced with cruel realities — whether on the individual level of the death of a child, or the scale almost impossible to imagine in the Indian Ocean. Things said by some religious leaders have been appallingly cruel: the Muslim cleric who declared that those who had perished had not been good Muslims gives a picture of a god I would not want to worship. Lest we think this kind of stuff comes only from fundamentalist Islam, we should remember that there were Christian voices claiming that 9/11 was a consequence of homosexuality.

The Archbishop recalled the Aberfan disaster in the Wales of his youth, when a village primary school with its children and teachers was engulfed by a slag-heap washed down from a mountainside. Amongst all that was said by religious leaders at the time, he recalled: 'The only words that made any sense came from the then Archbishop of Wales, in a broadcast on Welsh television. What he said was roughly this: "I can only dare to speak about this because I once lost a child. I have nothing to say which will make sense of this horror today. All I know is that the words in my Bible about God's promise to be alongside us have never lost their meaning for me. And now, we have to work in God's name for the future." '

The plight of the Tsunami victims has resulted in an upsurge of generosity and willingness of help. The tragic loss of life seems to have reminded so many of us that all life is a precious gift. There has been a renewed sense of our common humanity. The response of faith must be one of generous and sustained compassion rather than some vindictive calculus which enrols God to rid the world of people we dislike.

The Archbishop ended his article by saying:

'The odd thing is that whose who are most deeply involved — both as sufferers and as helpers — are so often the ones who spend least energy in raging over the lack of explanation. They are likely to shrug off, awkwardly and not very articulately, the great philosophical or religious questions we might want to press. Somehow, they are most aware of two things: a kind of strength and vision just to go on; and a sense of the imperative for practical service and love. Somehow in all of this, God simply emerges for them as a faithful presence. Arguments "for and against" have to be put in the context of that awkward, stubborn presence.'

We have just been celebrating the birth of our Saviour who came to share our life, "Emmanuel, God with us". We will soon be marking the passion in which he shared our suffering and death.

'What can be said with authority about these terrible matters', wrote the Archbishop, 'can finally be said only by those closest to the cost. The rest of us need to listen; and then to work and — as best we can manage it — pray.'

Yours in Christ,

Alan Moses

RESTORATION

As the Vicar said in his January letter, we are planning to move ahead with the restoration of the interior of the Church. Just before Christmas he and the Churchwardens met with our architect Colin Kerr to discuss the next phase.

We have been gathering information about the various stages of decoration in the church in order that a carefully researched plan can be made. This will involve the erection of scaffolding at the rear of the nave sometime after Easter so that exploratory work can be done at the higher levels. This work will be funded by a grant from the All Saints Foundation. We are also going to look at possible better use of the space available in the crypt. Mr Kerr intends to bring costed proposals to the PCC before the summer. It is then our intention to launch a restoration appeal in the autumn. It has been our custom that we keep Foundation Sunday in July. This is not linked with the actual anniversary of the consecration of the church which is in May and consequently often gets mixed up with major festivals. The traditional date for keeping a dedication festival when the date is not known is the first Sunday in October. So this year our plan is that we will keep Foundation Sunday on Sunday October 2nd and launch the Restoration Appeal on that day.

In the meantime, a small piece of restoration work has been carried out thanks to the generosity of a member of the congregation. The decorative shields on the cast iron beams in the Parish Room and the Oratory have been restored by Howell and Bellion who also restored the statue of Our Lady and the Child Jesus in church.

JUBILEES

The weekend before Christmas was a crowded one for us at All Saints because it saw the celebration of two jubilees of ordination by priests connected with All Saints. The first on the Saturday was Canon Geoffrey White's Golden Jubilee. Canon White may not be known to many of our Sunday worshippers but he has been a stalwart helper with weekday Masses and the confessional since Fr Hutt's day. On Sundays he is usually to be found helping Fr Peter McGeary at St Mary's, Cable Street.

In tribute to a long and faithful ministry a host of people from different parts of Canon White's past gathered at All Saints for the celebration. Former curates came to concelebrate with, former servers to assist at the altar, a granddaughter to be boatgirl, and an orchestra and choir; and the Bishop of London to preach. His sermon is published in this issue.

There was a happy party afterwards in St Peter's, Vere Street. Among those present was one of Canon White's school-friends from Wakefield. He and his wife are now parishioners at St Margaret's, Ilkley, where our former Vicar Dr David Hope is about to become vicar.

Canon White writes:

"...to thank you very much for all your kindness and generosity in making yesterday's Mass possible at All Saints. I do very much appreciate the way so many people at All Saints supported and helped me. Please pass on my thanks to them all."

The second celebration was on Sunday morning at High Mass when the celebrant was Fr Gerald Reddington whose Silver Jubilee it was. Gerald was something of a late starter in the ordination stakes after being a member of the congregation here for many years. As Fr Alan said: "When you have done 50 years you get the Bishop of London to preach. When you have only done 25, you have to make do with the Vicar."

Fr Gerald writes:

Thank you for a Grace-filled Day.

It was an enormous privilege for me to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of Ordination at All Saints, my spiritual home for 50 years.

Despite my request for no special marking of this occasion save to be with you, Fr Alan made sure there was a lovely cake, mulled wine, a splendid book on St Paul's Cathedral, a beautiful signed card, together with a very undeserved envelope with a gift inside. Kind people, kindly organised, generously given.

I cannot tell you how "Grace-filled" the day felt for me, to be with special people in a special place. I want to say, I didn't deserve it, which I didn't, but it was the happiest of days, full of thanksgiving to God for everything given. Thank you all so very much indeed.

Gerald Reddington

Fr Alan writes:

I am quite unapologetic about exercising my authority as Vicar to make rather more of Fr Gerald's anniversary than he had intended. It turned out to be a fitting celebration of his ministry. In his letter he heaps more praise on me than is due. Frances O'Neil was responsible for cake, card and collection, and Janet Drake for mulled wine.

CHRISTMAS AT ALL SAINTS

All Saints, like many central London parishes, experiences something of an exodus at Christmas as a large proportion of our regular congregation disperses to be with families. Those who remain in London keep the show on the road and we welcome large numbers of visitors.

Before Christmas itself, we hosted carol services for the University of Westminster and the Wells Street Family Court. Our own lunchtime Carol Service was as usual a happy occasion followed by mince pies and mulled wine. Our thanks to Guy Pritchard who decorated the Christmas tree and the Madonna and Child in the courtyard so splendidly and to Janet Drake who mulled the wine.

Forty or so members of All Saints, young and old, and including two visitors from Texas, went carol-singing in the parish again this year. We began in the Plaza shopping centre, then moved to the bottom of Market Place. Making ourselves heard on Oxford Street was hard work. On our way to the Champion pub in Wells Street — to sing rather than drink — we were invited to sing at a new printing business in East Castle Street which was having its opening party. The singers finally got some refreshment at the Vicarage. £263 was raised for the Church Army and the West London Day Centre. Our thanks to the Mission Committee for organising the event, to Ian Lyon for his musical direction, to Frances O'Neil for the banner. Some of the singers were able to make the second half of the concert being given in church by the Chandos Choir under the direction of our assistant organist Andrew Arthur.

Midnight Mass at Christmas with the Blessing of the Crib was a wonderful celebration. Most of the choir have been singing carols for a month or more by the time we get to the real Christmas, so it is a minor miracle that they have any voice left. However, you would never have guessed this from the splendid music at our services. When we have this standard of music to aid our worship every Sunday, we can begin to take it for granted. More than one person who was away for Christmas has said that they had forgotten how spoiled we are here.

High Mass on Christmas morning sees a congregation with a large proportion of visitors but is a lovely service. This year it ended with the organ playing the Radetzky March. As the Vicar said in the Vestry afterwards: 'More like New Year's Day in Vienna.' The practice of having coffee and Christmas cake (provided by Fr Alan's mother) has now become well-established and allows us to offer our customary hospitality to visitors. One visitor, Ted Dixon, e-mailed on Christmas Day itself to say:

"I attended High Mass this morning as a visitor with my wife and this is just to say again what a quite wonderful occasion I thought it was in every way and to express huge admiration and appreciation to all who helped make it so.

A very nice touch too to end with the Radetzky March. As soon as I got home I dug out an old LP with it on which I hadn't listened to for 20 years or more and enjoyed it again several times — but the Philharmonia rendition I have isn't nearly as exciting as your organist's was!

It was very nice to have the coffee and cake afterwards too."

With Christmas Day being a Saturday we

had to be back in church again the next day!

The Second Sunday of Christmas, immediately after New Year's Day, saw not only the Vicar away but the Director of Music and the Assistant Organist, so the music was in the very capable hands of our organ scholar Joseph Fort, assisted by our former director of music, Dr Harry Bramma, making his first appearance on the organ stool since his retirement. In the congregation that day was an old friend of All Saints, Father Charles Cannon from South Carolina. He is bringing a group over later in the year who will be joining our parish pilgrimage to Walsingham.

Fr Alan and Theresa were in Wales and went to Mass in Llandaff Cathedral on New Year's Day. In the congregation there was another All Saints face, Dr Michael Duggan. Michael has once again donated to All Saints a large selection of bottles given to him as Christmas presents by grateful patients. These will be raffled for church funds.

In the secular world Christmas comes to an end by the time the sales begin on Boxing Day. In the Church we continue to celebrate the incarnation through till Candlemas. In many parishes the Epiphany is kept on a Sunday. In suburbia this makes pastoral sense. Here at All Saints many of the people who worship with us on weekday feasts work in town and come here on their way home. The rightness of our decision to stick with keeping the feast on January 6th was confirmed by the full church at the 6.30 p.m. High Mass this year. Our guest preacher, a "wise man from the East End", was Prebendary Alan Wynne, the Rector of All Saints, Poplar, and Area Dean of Tower Hamlets. Fr Wynne's sermon can be found in this issue of the Parish Paper and we are grateful to him both for preaching it and allowing it to be reproduced.

High Mass on the first Sunday of Epiphany, the Feast of the Baptism of Christ, saw the baptism of **Edward Charles Thorley.** In the evening we had our Epiphany Carol service, with seasonal readings accompanied by a feast of music from the choir and a chance to sing wonderful Epiphany hymns for the congregation.

Christmas Thoughts of All Saints from Afar

The Revd Caroline Kramer used to worship at All Saints from time to time when she lived in London. She now ministers in a small parish in the mountains of South West Virginia. She sent us a copy of some thoughts she had written for her people in preparation for Christmas. We print the following extract with her permission:

"From our London house I could walk four blocks and be on Oxford Street and there was something magical about that at Christmas. I could go out for an hour or two and absorb holiday spirit — there was no need to buy anything — just to be around the bustle, to watch people's faces as they marvelled at the Selfridges window, to see them after dark staring up at the twinkling lights. I could walk down Regent Street and past Hamley's — a giant toy store. There in the window was a paradise of delights and children, noses glued to the glass, making longing circles of warm breath on the window pane.

"But of course the excitement and bustle of Christmas shopping was only a small part of the story. If I turned left onto Regent Street and Oxford Circus — away from the shopping mayhem—and then onto Margaret Street and walked a few blocks, past the fashion design offices and model agencies which now occupy the Georgian townhouses, there tucked in and hidden is All Saints Church, a legacy of the Oxford Movement. Pushing open the heavy door, you are ushered in by the smell of incense, ever present in the air, and the hush of prayer. There, in that little known place, it is possible to sit a while and wonder about this Christmas journey we are on. To see the Advent Candles, one, two, three, four. To ponder a new beginning, a coming to life.

HOLY WEEK PREACHER

Easter is early this year, with Lent beginning February 9. So it is not too soon to be letting you know something of our Holy Week programme.

This year we have a visiting preacher for Holy Week. He is Canon Joseph Cassidy, Principal of St Chad's College in Durham. A Canadian by birth, he entered the Society of Jesus in 1977. His ministry as a Jesuit included a period as a teacher, teacher in Newfoundland, parish work in Nicaragua and in Ontario, retreat and spiritual direction work in Guelph and Montreal and a visiting professorship at Concordia University. After leaving the Jesuits he undertook further theological study and added two doctorates to an already impressive list of academic qualifications.

He became an Anglican in 1993 and has taught, first in the University of Southampton and then at Durham.

Canon Cassidy is married to Dr Gillian Skinner and has two daughters and a son. The Cassidy family will be staying in the Vicarage while he is here.

Commitments at St Chad's mean that he will not be able to be with us on Palm

Sunday, but will be here to preach at the 6.30 p.m. Mass on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in Holy Week, at the High Mass of the Lord's Supper on Maundy Thursday and at the Three Hours on Good Friday.

THE ANNUNCIATION

This year March 25th is Good Friday, so the feast of the Annunciation is transferred to Monday April 4th, which is the first free day in the Calendar. Instead of having a High Mass here, we hope to have a joint service in the evening with our neighbours at the Church of the Annunciation, Bryanston Street, near Marble Arch. We hope this will be an opportunity for the two congregations to get to know each other as our relationship develops.

LENT 2005

BAPTISMAL LIFE

Lent began as a time of preparation for those to be baptised at Easter. Candidates for baptism, known as "catechumens", those being instructed, underwent a period of preparation involving teaching, prayer and fasting.

This year our Lenten programme is designed to help us think and pray about the meaning of our baptism. At Evensong there will be a series of sermons exploring the meaning of Baptism using questions which form part of the Church of England's new Common Worship services. After the service, there will be an opportunity for discussion in the Parish Room.

Lent 1 *"Baptism and the Church"* — The Vicar

"Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread and the prayers?"

Lent 2 *"Baptism and Repentance"* — Fr Ivan Aquilina

"Will you persevere in resisting evil and whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?"

Lent 3 *"Baptism and Evangelism"* — The Vicar

"Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?"

Lent 4 *"Baptism and Service"* — Fr Ivan Aquilina

"Will you seek and serve Christ in all people, loving your neighbour as yourself?"

Lent 5 *"Baptism and Society"* — Fr Allen Shin

"Will you acknowledge Christ's authority over human society, by prayer for the world and its leaders, by defending the weak, and by seeking peace and justice?"

The Gospel readings at Mass on the Sundays in Lent this year come down to us from the same period of the Church's history.

As well as hearing them read and preached on at Mass, we are going to use them as the basis for our meditations at our Lenten Holy Hours on Thursday nights at 7.00 p.m.

Holy Hour

February 17

Matthew 4: 1 - 11 — The Temptation

February 24

John 3: 1 - 17 — Jesus and Nicodemus

March 3

John 4: 5 - 42 — Jesus and the woman at the well

March 10

John 9: 1 - 41 — Jesus and the man born blind

March 17

John 11: 1 - 45 — Jesus and Lazarus

Also in Lent

Stations of the Cross

This devotion in which we follow our Lord on the way of his passion will be held each Friday night during Lent beginning after the 6.30 p.m. Mass.

LENT APPEAL

Among the traditional Lenten disciplines are fasting and almsgiving. The two are of course related. What we save by giving up things during Lent, can be given as our Lenten alms.

Fasting and Abstinence

These need not be restricted to food and drink, although in a parish with a licensed bar, abstaining from alcohol has a particular significance! In an increasingly obese society, controlling what we eat has spiritual as well as medical benefits. We can give up our favourite entertainments during Lent, going to the theatre or cinema or concerts, we can give up or limit the amount of TV we watch (next time we say we do not have enough time for our prayers, think of how much time we spend watching a favourite soap or a movie on TV). Those who are unable to fast because of age or health can still find things to give up. Money we save in these ways can be given to the Lent Appeal.

Our Parish Lent Appeal this year will have three objects:

1. The Bishop's Lent Appeal

This year's Bishop's appeal is supporting healthcare projects across Southern Africa. Your money will help the Angolan Association for Christian Youth as they work to combat Malaria (76% of child deaths in Angola are caused by Malaria). It will help train national HIV coordinators in the churches in Zambia. Zimbabwe and Malawi: it will help St Luke's and St Martin's hospitals in Malawi to care for people living with HIV and other infections and help provide literacy training for the people of Malawi, to help them access the healthcare and advice they need.

2. The Church Army St Marylebone Hostels and the West London Day Centre.

These two projects, which work with the homeless in our part of London, are our long term mission projects. The Church Army works with homeless women, a particularly vulnerable group. The West London Day Centre provides meals and other support for homeless people. Each week All Saints distributes about 30 vouchers at an annual cost of £1.500.

3. St Cyprian's Theological College, Masasi

The parish is committed to supporting the work of Brother James Anthony SSF, a USPG missionary, at the college which is situated in a very poor part of Tanzania.

CONFESSIONS BEFORE LENT			
Thursday 3 February 12.00 - 1.00 p.m.	The Vicar	5.00 - 6.00 p.m.	Fr Aquilina
Friday 4 February 12.00 - 1.00 p.m.	Fr Gaskell	5.00 - 6.00 p.m.	Fr Aquilina
Saturday 6 February		5.00 - 6.00 p.m.	Fr Shin
Monday 7 February 12.00 - 1.00 p.m.	The Vicar	5.00 - 6.00 p.m.	Fr Gaskell
Shrove Tuesday, 8 February 12.00 - 1.00 p.m.	Fr Aquilina	5.00 - 6.00 p.m.	The Vicar
Ash Wednesday, 9 February 12.00 - 1.00 p.m.	The Vicar	4.45 - 5.45 p.m.	Fr Aquilina

DIARY DATES

Wednesday 2 February — The Presentation of Christ (Candlemas) 6.30 p.m. Procession and High Mass Preacher: Bishop Michael Doe, General Secretary, USPG

Wednesday 9 February — Ash Wednesday

6.30 p.m. Imposition of Ashes and High Mass Preacher: The Vicar

11 - 13 February Parish Retreat at St Francis' House, Hemingford Grey led by Bishop Michael Manktelow.

SERMON PREACHED BY THE BISHOP OF LONDON AT CANON GEOFFREY WHITE'S GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION ON DECEMBER 18TH 2004

"Brethren, I count not myself yet to have apprehended: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things that are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." This is in no way a conclusion but the celebration of fifty years of ministry in the season of expectation and eager looking forward and in a liturgy which we celebrate in between the times waiting for the Lord's coming again.

It is with something approaching awe that I contemplate the Golden Jubilee of someone who passed through Cuddesdon College with honour — something I cannot myself claim and who was ordained in the year of the Coronation.

Geoffrey was 11 when World War II broke out and he is part of that generation which included Robert Runcie who were able to see ordination as a personal response to the horror revealed at the heart of European civilisation.

Geoffrey was priested 50 years ago in the year that Billy Graham launched his London crusade and Roger Bannister ran the first four minute mile. Geoffrey, however, to the delight and encouragement of his many friends gathered here has been a long distance runner.

According to my old friend Alastair Haggart, who was a post war curate in Hendon, the fifties were a time when "modest pastoral diligence reaped a rich harvest". The Sunday Schools were bulging, the ranks of ordination candidates highly motivated and talented.

The leadership of the period has been vilified and that of Archbishop Fisher in particular dismissed as being overconcerned with the revision of Canon Law, as we have been in recent times with liturgical fidgeting. Yet it was Fisher who re-invented the Anglican Communion, took the first steps towards healing the quarrel with Rome, and presided over the recovery of the church from the ravages of bombing and dislocation.

Then came the social revolution of the late sixties and seventies associated with the Beatlemania which erupted in 1964 when Geoffrey had been in priest's orders for a decade. The Church was so thoroughly integrated with the mores and ethos of Churchill's Britain that it found great difficulty in responding to the era of the sensitive self which became the orthodoxy as soon as the generation of the baby boomers came into power. Like every other ancient institution the Church found it hard to adapt to a deconstructionist establishment which artfully concealed its pre-dominance in the vital fields of education and the media by maintaining the myth that there was still a fusty old order from which we needed to be liberated.

In these circumstances it is not surprising that there was confusion in the Church and many people left the ministry. I was priested in Luton in 1974 when Geoffrey had been working for twenty years. I remember those who were at college with me and reflect on how many are doing different things now.

I remember meeting one former priest in the Cornish pub of which he was the landlord — "I just had to leave the Church because I wanted to meet people". There was a sense of disengagement between Church and the people of England. At the same time we must face the mystery that many serious spiritual persons pursue their researches in an ABC spirit — anything but the Church because we look too pedestrian and banal to be promising allies.

The reaction of some was to take up ecclesiastical causes and invest heavily in groupings which spent much energy in blaming other parts of the Church for the mess we were in. To some extent we are still in this period.

All the while Geoffrey, whom I came to know in Stepney days when he had been priested a mere forty years, touched literally countless lives. It is impossible to keep all of them in mind and we have all had the experience of someone coming up with humbling gratitude to say "When it happened you were the only one who understood" — and you cannot remember what "it" was or even who they are. Geoffrey has touched countless lives and helped people to become friends of God by opening the scriptures and celebrating the sacraments. One of the marks of the saints in the New Testament is hypomone — stickability.

Geoffrey is celebrating for us today in what I believe are more hopeful though no less turbulent times. Among our neighbours there are many who are searching for what to believe and what to pass on to the next generation. The difficulties which we now experience of underachievement in schools and the erosion of trust in institutions, the frequency of suicide among the young and the kind of yobbery which makes lives in so many parts of London a misery, these things spring from disorder in thinking and disorder at the level of our very capacity to form and sustain fruitful relationships. Banging people up and more draconian laws is a shallow response to what faces us in the erosion of the spiritual capital which has been the foundation of the astonishing achievements of the past two centuries.

The agenda of this Diocese in these circumstances is very simple — reconnecting with God for the sake of the people we serve and re-connecting with all the people of this country for the sake of God.

Thank God the Holy Spirit never leaves himself without witnesses. There are fresh springs of life in many quarters. But we owe a huge debt of gratitude to those who have served and persevered through a period of discouragement so that the continuity of our story and good news could be communicated to the broken-hearted in our own time.

I shall not attempt an ABM-style definition of the abiding characteristics of the priesthood. There are some here who have undertaken that task much more adequately. But in season and out, in periods of confidence and in periods of dryness and discouragement when we are ground into greater translucency, the priest urged on by the love of Christ is called to live and express the good news that "Christ died for all so that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who died and was raised for them". St John's Gospel declares that no man hath seen God at any time but the Son of Man, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath made him known. The supreme communication of God is in a human life.

Jesus Christ is the human face of God and reveals the depths of divine love in his life, death and resurrection. If we wish to know God profoundly we must grow to be like him.

Jesus teaches us about glory by coming in the form of a servant, not thinking as the Letter to the Christians of Philippi says "to snatch at equality with God". Paradoxically the first step to becoming human and aware of the true God, is like Jesus, to refuse to be a little god, an ego around which the world is expected to revolve. Jesus shows us the mystery that as the ego diminishes we grow in soul. We come to God by subtraction and not by addition. Those who follow the path of self-aggrandizement either are unaware of God or much more dangerously project themselves onto God. That is how fanatics are bred.

The way of Christ is a way in which suffering is inescapable but in which we discover that the more we give self away, the more we accept the breaking open of that crust of self-aggrandizement which grows as life goes on, then the more we discover new fresh springs of life flowing from the source and well-spring which we discover in our spiritual heart.

We are here because we recognise that the priesthood of Geoffrey White has been an effective sign of this truth and we are grateful. He has helped many to become friends of God, in the spirit of Jesus Christ who said — "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth, but I have called you friends".

SERMON PREACHED ON THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY BY PREBENDARY ALAN WYNNE, RECTOR OF ALL SAINTS, POPLAR

There is something comforting about the Christmas crib.

Started by St Francis of Assisi all those years ago in Italy in 1223, the reproduction of the stable scene of Jesus' birth with the manger, Jesus, Mary, Joseph and the shepherds, somehow helps us to glimpse and begin to understand the remarkable claim of the Gospel writers that, in the birth of Jesus, God the Creator was sharing human life and saving the world. It's not just the story with angels, a virgin birth and dreams — there is, after all, something remarkably appealing and emotional about babies, especially the fragility and vulnerability of the new-born. Put the picture of a baby in an advert or in a charity appeal and you are almost guaranteed success.

Emotions thus aroused, we can look at the crib and wonder anew (as St John's Gospel reminds us) that "God loved the world so much that he gave us his only son, so that whoever believes in him might not perish, but have eternal life". For us God becomes a baby, a human being. The crib and the candles remind us that we are loved — eventually, all will be well. After all, the angels proclaimed to the shepherds "good news of great joy to all people"— the newborn child is Christ the Lord, the Saviour. People were amazed and the shepherds returned home singing praises to God.

We can wish each other a "Merry Christmas" and be happy.

But, now we are at Epiphany. The shepherds in the crib scene are exchanged for wise men, and the pastoral serenity of a rustic nursery is rudely interrupted by the political realities of the imperfect world into which Jesus has been born. Praise and joy give way to fear and uncertainty: when Herod heard what the wise men told him about the star and the birth of a king "he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him". And, because Herod saw the new-born baby as a threat, the young male children in Bethlehem are slaughtered, Jesus becomes a refugee, and he, Mary and Joseph escape to Egypt until King Herod dies.

Jesus, the Prince of Peace, is also the disturber of peace; and disturbing the peace remains a constant feature as Jesus' life and ministry unfolds.

The only incident in the Bible about Jesus' childhood apart from his birth tells how he goes with Mary and Joseph to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover. You know the story. In the crush and excitement of the pilgrimage Mary and Joseph begin the journey home without him, and only after a day's journey realise he is not with their group. We have seen enough in the media in the past year to understand the fear and turmoil of those who have a missing child. So, rushing back to Jerusalem they search for him and find Jesus in the Temple listening to the rabbis and asking them questions; and, in a comment worthy of any modern adolescent to a concerned parent, Jesus says to them, "Surely you must have

known where I would be!" Even as a child Jesus could cause anxiety to those closest to him, and the Gospels show that the ability to disturb the peace and tranquillity of others continued as his ministry of teaching, preaching and healing developed.

He cures a madman who lives in a cemetery and who terrorises the local people, but are they grateful? No, they beg Jesus to go away and leave their territory.

Jesus cures people on the Jewish holy day and breaks the religious traditions of his time, but is he welcomed and thanked? No, he is accused of being evil and in league with the devil.

He challenges the religious teachers and leaders to look afresh at their scriptures, and with humility and knowledge to delve deeper into the mystery which is God and discover hidden treasures in their tradition; but, rather than thank him for his insights and guidance he is accused of arrogance and blasphemy.

He raises back to life again people who have died and brings hope to those facing suffering and death, but do people give thanks to God? No, the authorities make plans to silence and kill him.

And finally, of course, after a carnivallike procession into Jerusalem with his followers he goes into the Temple, overturns the stalls where the religious leaders made their money exchanging currency and selling animals for sacrifice, and accuses the authorities of turning a house of prayer into a den of thieves. And his fate was sealed.

The baby Jesus may be a king, but — as he pointed out to Pilate in his trial — his

kingdom is not of this world. His beliefs and values are different, unsettling and challenging — the truth he lived and proclaimed caused offence. And the crib ends in the cross.

Well, a new year has begun and you and I are followers of this Jesus revered and acclaimed all those years ago by wise men as a king. And all I want to do today, as I wish you all a very happy New Year, is to encourage us to beware of allowing our Christian faith to stay with the crib and become too cosy. I want to encourage us to have enough confidence in our relationship with the living Jesus to allow him to continue to disturb and challenge — even offend — us, our lives, our faith, the Church, the world. In my experience, it is when I have been open to Jesus my saviour not only as *giver* of peace but also as

disturber of my peace that I have been able to change and to grow. It has not always been easy, and sometimes it has also been quite painful; but, it is then that the journey of faith ceases to be routine, a habit, a duty, and becomes a real relationship with the living God — an adventure. It is how the kingdom Jesus was born to bring will become real "on earth as it is in heaven". It is how justice and peace, proclaimed at Jesus' birth, will become a reality for all God's creation.

"When Herod heard from the wise men about the star and the birth of a king, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him."

My brothers and sisters, a blessed — but disturbing and adventurous — 2005 to us all!

FR RICHARD MEUX BENSON S.S.J.E. One of the five 'Saints' commemorated on the Screen

To understand Fr Benson it is necessary to look at the context of his time. A very brief sketch reminds us that he was born within living memory of the American War of Independence, the French Revolution, and the publication of Tom Pain's "*Rights of Man*" a book that later was to influence John Henry Newman considerably. The repeal of the Test Act of 1828 was followed by the Emancipation of Roman Catholics in 1829 and then by the "Reform Act" in 1831.

N.B. Technically until the repeal of the Test Act only those who received Holy Communion in their Parish Church, (Church of England, of course) could hold Office under the Crown, i.e., be a Civil Servant, be a Member of Parliament or could attend a University.

The Church of England had been seriously challenged by John Wesley and then, from the 1780s on, had been completely dominated by the vision of William Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect. Those amazingly dedicated Christians sought to fill the moral vacuum of the time with the restoration of Christian Evangelical teaching and moral values. They formed a Political Party gaining 17 members of Parliament, obtained Parliamentary funding for building new churches, successfully infiltrated the East India Company as well as legislating against slavery in this country and then after 50 years, finally, in the Dominions.

They held a practical Christian focus, mostly to do with change of attitudes

through the structure of the State, (Robert Raikes first schools), for the needs of the people following the Industrial Revolution. This was seen as paramount to Christian Witness and action. It is the context of this moral evangelical background that the next "Christian Revolution", The Oxford Movement, was to take place.

Sadly today the letters S.S.J.E. standing for 'The Society of St John the Evangelist', mean little to most of us. Father Benson was a founding member and the first Superior of this, one of the earlier male post reformation monastic orders. It was founded in Cowley, Oxford in 1865, hence the term 'Cowley Fathers'. The Order continues today, no longer at Oxford but at St Edward's House, Great College Street, Westminster. Their old premises is now St Stephen's House, the Theological College, secured by Dr David Hope, thanks to the generosity of the Society.

Fr Benson was born in Oxford in 1824. He was Kennicot Hebrew Scholar at Christ Church, Oxford, and graduated with honours in 1847, priested in 1849, and after only two years curacy was appointed Vicar of Cowley, Oxford in 1850. John Keble preached his famous Assize Sermon on National Apostasy, on July 14th 1833. The first of the subsequent Ninety Tracts, which gave rise to the term "Tracterians" was published in September that year. This Tract, and those following, had a tremendously stimulating effect on many people. Maintenance of the Christian Religion, the Church and its relationship with the State, astonishingly became household topics.

A number of like-minded people at Oxford came together. Keble, Newman, Pusey, are probably the best remembered; Newman being the most outstanding. This Group became known as the "Oxford Movement". Samuel Wilberforce, William Wilberforces' son, though an evangelical, was a sympathetic Bishop of Oxford.

Fr Benson grew up in an era of new questioning about the Church's rôle in society, about the Church's relationship with Parliament, and with the practical consequences of Incarnational Theology, the belief that Christ is present in every person. The legal freedom for Roman Catholics soon brought the Sisters of Mercy from Paris to settle behind Kings Cross in order to care for the Irish who had come to work in England. This was seen as a challenge to the new thinking of the Oxford Group. Newman in 1842 formed a small Community of men at Littlemore, in Oxford. This was disbanded in 1845 when he became a Roman Catholic. Frederick Oakeley, Priest in Charge at the Margaret Street Chapel also joined the Roman Catholic Church at this time. However, others of the Oxford Movement, especially Dr Pusey, also commemorated on the All Saints Screen, began to consider the idea of Anglican Monastic Orders for the first time since Nicholas Farrers' "Little Gidding", a mixed Community experiment, tried in the 17th century.

The first Post-Reformation female Anglican Order was formed tentatively in 1845 at Park Village, just by the North East Gate exit from Regents Park. This Order worshipped at Christ Church, Albany Street, NW1. Mother Harriet, the Foundress of the All Saints Sisters of the Poor, who lived in Nottingham Place, W1, occasionally worshipped with the Park Village Sisters.

In many parts of the Church there was a movement to reflect a more devotional but outwardly directed expression of God's love for the poor, sick, homeless and destitute. This monastic expression was a reflection of the new understanding of the 'incarnational' presence within every person, not just the Squire in his pew. Tractarian churches were built with chairs not pews, vide All Saints, to reflect the truth that everyone is equal in the sight of God. The monastic Orders would be a visible witness of God's care and love for all people, especially those on the margins of Society. Any 'proper' Oxford Movement Parish seemed to give birth to a monastic order to work with the poor of that Parish, as it so happened at All Saints, Margaret Street. In the following 50 years, 17 male Anglican Communities and 51 female were founded. An astonishing witness and work. The rise of the Welfare State and the changing views about the Monastic life has caused a massive reduction in this number today.

Fr Benson's connexions with these Monastic explorations began with a meeting at All Saints, Margaret Street, in 1865, about the possible formation of a Community. Later he and Charles Grafton, an American Priest, committed themselves to an experimental venture of life together with certain rules. They were encouraged by Bishop Samuel Wilberforce, without whose permission it could not have begun. The Missionary Brotherhood as it was originally known began in Benson's little house in Oxford. Two brothers were sent, almost immediately, to give spiritual help with Dr Pusey to the victims of the Cholera epidemic in London. Life vows were taken on December 27th, the Feast of St John the Evangelist, 1866. The object of the Society was to "seek that sanctification to which God in His mercy calls us and in doing so to seek, as far as God may permit, to be instrumental in bringing others to be partakers of the same sanctification".

The fifth Vicar of All Saints, Fr Mackay, wrote of Benson, that he was "an embodiment of devotion, reserve, austerity and self-effacement of the Tractarians". He lived at Cowley "unobserved, in prayer and labour among the poor". He felt a call to missionary work in India but Samuel Wilberforce begged him to stay in Oxford. "A great act of renunciation" said Fr Mackay.

It is difficult for us today to envisage the austerity and severity of that early monastic life. There was a feeling at the time that it must be as good as anything that had existed before the Reformation and as good as any current Roman Catholic order.

Fr Mackay described Fr Benson as a man "who had no form or comeliness apart from the tranquil shining spirit which shone through his dim short-sighted eyes, and in the strong benevolent lines of his mouth. A little shrivelled, bent, thin, wiry, ascetic figure, full of energy, often looking as though he were concealing physical suffering — but at times brimming over with laughter and humour, a shabby faded cassock, a neck-cloth renewed not very often, stockingless feet thrust into old shoes, the cassock girded very tightly — that is the figure people remember; a harsh, rather hesitant voice, no power of popular preaching, nothing to attract you short of the highest characteristics of all".

Fr Benson died in 1915 leaving a vibrant monastic presence not just in England but in India and America. Bishop Charles Gore, who founded the Community of the Resurrection (having himself lived in No 6 Margaret St and given it to All Saints) said of Fr Benson that "in the circle of the Church, and in particular that part of it which adhered to the Tractarian Movement, he exercised a profound influence... without parallel".

It is a quite impossible task to give the proper weight to the magnitude and influence of the man. Richard Meux Benson. His published letters are truly revealing, he wrote to Fr O'Neill in India "The Hindu has his own truer conceptions of reverence. The Indian people take knowledge of any devotee... and in due time gain a reverence for him." He goes on to write: "Well, the English must have some religion, for there is Father... who has been living here for all these years with no other purpose than the glory of God". Fr Benson's published Course of Meditations, declare: "In order to meditate upon Divine Truth, we ought to come to the Act of Meditation with composure, expectation and delight". These glimpses all reflect a centrality of purpose to be with God, to shew this, being with God, in every detail of living, and that being, is enjoined with "delight" because of the presence of God within.

The extraordinary discipline and ascetic austerity of Fr Benson and those early monastic adherents is beyond our contemporary understanding, but what faith, what tenacity in a then hostile environment, what dedication and purpose. The fruits of their work lived for 100 years undiminished. They changed the face of spiritual and social thinking. They were the Welfare State before it came. They cared for the poor but always in the context of their love for God in that person. They were true revolutionaries for Christ. We are their inheritors.

Fr Benson was a truly inspirational Saint. Certainly his influence on my life has been considerable. That is what a good hero does, inspire us by what they did and how they did it, so that we change. I regret the passing of that essential spiritual commitment and total devotion that he embodied. I do believe we need to rediscover that collective Godfilled sense of thinking, purpose and living, which changed the lives of so many in the second half of the 19th century so we can empower it for the 21st century.

Fr Benson is rightly commemorated on the Screen at All Saints. He was an integral part of that movement which is part of All Saints' history. He would not want our veneration. What I am sure is, that he would want a totally Christ-centred, totally Christliving commitment, from all of us.

Gerald Reddington.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

In his remarks on Lenten Observance in the Parish Paper for February 1905, Father Whitworth addressed himself to the question of slackness and remedial measures:

"What shall be the special feature of our Lenten Observance this year?

In order to answer this question, we may ask ourselves a previous question — in what matter has there been any sign of slackness?

Now I venture to say that for some years past good Church people have shewn an increasing tendency to slackness in assisting at Church services on Sunday evening.

From all parts of London I get the same testimony. The Sunday evening congregations are much smaller than they used to be, not because the less religious people are ceasing to come to church, but because the more religious people have lowered their standard. The same sort of people, who twenty years ago made a rule of going to church twice on Sunday, are now content to go once; and while the more devout were formerly accustomed to assist at Mattins, Holy Communion, and Evensong, I suppose that many *of the* *same degree of piety* now think it sufficient to attend the morning service.

Everywhere the Sunday evening services seem to be falling into neglect. And, without reference to any pleas urged in favour of this relaxation at ordinary times, I suggest that, in the season of Lent, a stricter rule should be kept.

I, therefore, propose to you that we make it a special feature of our Lenten Observance this year to throng the church on Sunday evenings in witness against the prevailing neglect.

But, I could hardly ask you to do this, unless I took pains to make the service as helpful as possible. The act of worship which we offer in Evensong is, indeed, invariable, but I am anxious that the sermon should be helpful to us all, and with this view, I am trying to secure preachers of more than ordinary power for the evenings of the six Sundays. Further than this, that the service may be as devotional as possible, I am asking Dr Hoyte to let us sing the Miserere, after the service, to a simple tone in which all can join, in place of that setting by Stainer, to which we have been accustomed to listen in past years, but, in which none but trained musicians could take any part.

I hope that you will take the fullest advantages of the opportunities thus offered you, that you will listen to the sermons with a receptive mind, and take your part in the services as the expression of your own personal devotion."

And the punch line:

"It is my practice always to join in the earlier Evensong on Sundays at 4 p.m. and sometimes to go to St Paul's instead of assisting at the later Evensong here. But, in Lent, I shall observe the rule which I am pressing upon you. I hope to be present every Sunday night at 7 p.m., except when I am called to preach elsewhere." C. C. G. R.

SUNDAYS AND SOLEMNITIES MUSIC AND READINGS

WEDNESDAY 2 FEBRUARY PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE (CANDLEMAS)

HIGH MASS AT 6.30 p.m.

During Candle Ceremony:

	God is light — Harry Bramma
Procession	al Hymns: 33 (omit *), 157
Introit:	Suscepimus, Deus
Mass:	Mass in G minor
	— Vaughan Williams
Lessons:	Malachi 3: 1 - 5
	Psalm 24
	Hebrews 2: 14 - 18
Hymn:	Angels from the realms
	of glory
Gospel:	Luke 2: 22 - 40
Preacher:	The Rt Revd Michael Doe,
	General Secretary, USPG
Creed:	Credo II
Anthem:	Light of the world — Elgar
Hymns:	187, 44 (T 282), Fairest Lord
	Jesus, 338
Voluntary:	Te Deum — Langlais

Voluntary: Te Deum — Langlais

• SUNDAY 6 FEBRUARY THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE LENT

HIGH MASS AT 11.00 a.m.

Entrance I	Hymn: 177
Introit:	Illuxerunt
Mass:	Missa Brevis — Koldàly

Lessons:	Exodus 24: 12 - 18
	Psalm 99
	2 Peter 1: 16 - 21
Hymn:	178
Gospel:	Matthew 17: 1 - 9
Preacher:	Prebendary John Gaskell
Anthem:	Ave Maria — Stravinsky
Hymns:	308, 280, 286, 487 (T 447)
Voluntary:	Moto ostinato — Petr Eben

SOLEMN EVENSONG at 6.00 p.m.

Psalm:	84
Lessons:	Ecclesiasticus 48: 1 - 10
	Matthew 17: 1 - 23
Office Hym	<i>n:</i> 176
Canticles:	Service in E — S.S. Wesley
Anthem:	Thou wilt keep him in
	perfect peace — S.S. Wesley
Preacher:	Fr Ivan Aquilina
Hymn:	410

BENEDICTION

O Salutaris:	Norman Caplin
Hymn:	389
Tantum Ergo:	Norman Caplin
Voluntary:	Scherzetto — Vierne

• WEDNESDAY 9 FEBRUARY ASH WEDNESDAY

HIGH MASS AND IMPOSITION OF ASHES AT 6.30 p.m.

<i>ymn:</i> 507
Misereris omnium
Missa 'Emendemus in
melius' — Palestrina
Joel 2: 1 - 2, 12 - 17
Psalm 51
2 Corinthians 5: 20b - 6: 10

Hymn:	60
Gospel:	Matthew 6: 1 - 6, 16 - 21
Preacher:	The Vicar
During Imp	osition of Ashes: Emendemus
	in melius — Byrd; Psalm 103
Anthem:	Miserere mei, Deus — Byrd
Hymns:	70 (i), 74, 66 (T 63), 445

• SUNDAY 13 FEBRUARY FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

HIGH MASS AT 11.00 a.m.

Entrance:	Litany in Procession
Introit:	Invocabit me
Mass:	Missa 'Quand io pens' al
	martire' — Lassus
Lessons:	Genesis 2: 15 - 17, 3: 1 - 7
	Psalm 32
	Romans 5: 12 - 19
Hymn:	67
Gospel:	Matthew 4: 1 - 11
Preacher:	Fr Ivan Aquilina
Creed:	Credo III
Anthem:	Cast me not away from thy
	presence — S.S. Wesley
Hymns:	507, 64, 60, 420

SOLEMN EVENSONG at 6.00 p.m.

Psalm:	50: 1 - 15
Lessons:	Deuteronomy 6: 4 - 9, 16 - 25
	Luke 15: 1 - 10
Office Hym	en: 59
Canticles:	Service for five voices
	— Weelkes
Anthem:	When David heard
	— Weelkes
Preacher:	The Vicar
Hymn:	439

BENEDICTION

O Salutaris: 251

Hymn: 457 (ii) *Tantum Ergo:* 393

• SUNDAY 20 FEBRUARY SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

HIGH MASS AT 11.00 a.m.

Entrance Hymn: 148 (omit vv 4, 6 - 7)		
Introit:	Reminiscere	
Mass:	Missa 'Crux Fidelis'	
	— Vivanco	
Lessons:	Genesis 12: 1 - 4a	
	Psalm 121	
	Romans 4: 1 - 5, 13 - 17	
Hymn:	84	
Gospel:	John 3: 1 - 17	
Preacher:	The Vicar	
Creed:	Credo II	
Anthem:	Remember not, Lord, our	
	offences — Purcell	
Hymns:	507, 434, 72, To God be	
	the glory	

SOLEMN EVENSONG at 6.00 p.m.

Psalm:135Lessons:Numbers 21: 4 - 9, 25 - 50Luke 14: 27 - 33Office Hymn: 59Canticles:Service in A — NaylorAnthem:O vos omnes — CasalsPreacher:Fr Ivan AquilinaHymn:76

BENEDICTION

O Salutaris: 95 Hymn: 276 (ii) Tantum Ergo: 295

• SUNDAY 27 FEBRUARY THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

HIGH MASS AT 11.00 a.m.

Entrance Hymn: 362		
Introit:	Oculi mei	
Mass:	Mass for four voices — Byrd	
Lessons:	Exodus 17: 1 - 7	
	Psalm 95	
	Romans 5: 1 - 11	
Hymn:	357	
Gospel:	John 4: 5 - 42	
Preacher:	Fr Ivan Aquilina	
Anthem:	Versa est in luctum — Lobo	
Hymns:	507, 71, 73 (i), 368	

SOLEMN EVENSONG

at 6.00 p.m.

Psalm:	40			
Lessons:	Joshua 1: 1 - 9			
	Ephesians 6: 10 - 20			
Office Hymn: 59				
Canticles:	Service in the Dorian mode			
	— Tallis			
Anthem:	In ieunio et fletu — Tallis			
Preacher:	The Vicar			
Hymn:	449			

BENEDICTION

O Salutaris:	493
Hymn:	355
Tantum Ergo:	202

The Parish Office, 7, Margaret Street, London W1W 8JG Telephone: 020 7636 1788 / 9961 www.allsaintsmargaretstreet.org.uk

CALENDAR AND INTENTIONS FOR FEBRUARY 2005

1		St Brigid of Kildare	The Church in Ireland		
2		THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN			
2		(CANDLEMAS)	OUR PARISH AND PEOPLE		
3		St Anskar	Unity Those in need		
4		Gilbert of Sempringham			
		of Our Lady	Walsingham		
6	¥	THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE LENT	OUR PARISH AND PEOPLE		
7			The homeless		
8	-		Preparation for Lent		
9	×	ASH WEDNESDAY	Observance of Lent		
10		St Scholastica	Unity		
11			Those in need		
12			The Parish Retreat		
13	¥	THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT	OUR PARISH AND PEOPLE		
14		Ss Cyril and Methodius	Missionaries		
15		St Sigfrid; Thomas Bray	The Swedish Church		
16		Ember Day	Ordinands		
17		Janani Luwum, Archbishop of Uganda, Martyr			
			Persecuted Christians		
18		Ember Day	Those in need		
19		Ember Day	Theological Colleges		
20	¥	THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT	OUR PARISH AND PEOPLE		
21			The unemployed		
22			The housebound		
23		St Polycarp	Religious Communities		
24			Unity		
25			Those in need		
26			Altar Servers		
27	¥	THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT	OUR PARISH AND PEOPLE		
28			World Peace		

Please note:

All Friday Masses are 'for those in need' — intercessions from the board inside Church are used on these days

v — A Votive Mass

