



All Saints Parish Paper

MARGARET STREET, LONDON W.1

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VICAR'S LETTER

One of our festival preachers said to me after the service, "You must be very religious to cope with all these services". He comes from a church with a rather less crowded liturgical schedule than ours.

This comment has stuck in my mind in the way that such things can do and provided me with food for thought; thinking further stimulated by an encounter on a bus and a recent edition of Fr Allen Shin's weekly letter from Keble College. On a bus back from St Thomas's Hospital, I overheard a conversation, although it was more monologue than dialogue, between an "evangelist" and another person. I was not deliberately eavesdropping: the evangelist's part was conducted at a volume impossible to ignore. At one point, he said that Christianity was "not about religion".

There is an honourable theological tradition which is suspicious of 'religion'. Its most famous exponent was the German martyr theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer who coined the phrase "religionless Christianity" in his letters from prison. Bonhoeffer was not around to explain what he meant by this, and it has been used as an excuse for some pretty feeble secularist theology. What he seems to have been concerned about was that mixture of pietism and German national religion

which had proved itself incapable of resisting the seduction of Nazism.

In 19th century England, F.D. Maurice had said "We have been dosing our people with religion, when what they want is not that, but the living God". In his lecture "Beyond Religion" in 1964, Archbishop Michael Ramsey, who would strike most people as a very religious figure, noted that the word religion does not occur in the New Testament at all. There is an appropriate and healthy suspicion in Christianity of religion as something which can be used as a means of controlling or evading God.

I suspect what Maurice and Bonhoeffer and Ramsey were suspicious of was that kind of religion which gives us just enough of God to inoculate us against him for life; to prevent God infecting or upsetting us. That critique of "religion" remains true and vital to the health of Christianity. However, it is not the whole story. "For everything there is a season", says the writer of Ecclesiastes, and I think this is the time for us to begin to take the practice of religion far more seriously than many have. I say this as a result of observation of myself and the world around us.

At one level, I would seem to be a very religious person; indeed professionally so. I wear clerical dress most of the time and

I go to church a lot; I read the scriptures, celebrate the liturgy, meditate, say my prayers, receive the sacraments. But I am not a very religious person in the sense of hyper-ventilating, dewy-eyed, in love with Jesus, emotional piety. In fact, I would probably not be very religious at all if I did not observe the daily practices and routines of faith; acting as though I were a Christian so that I might be one. It is these which, along with my relationships with others in the same business, give whatever Christian shape and ethos there is to my life. If I did not have them, I do not think it would come naturally. In that sense they are a means of grace. They are also, in St Benedict's term, "the work of God".

In his letter Fr Shin spoke of the origins of our word 'religion' in the Latin terms to 'bind' or 'reconnect' and to 're-read', 'go over again', 'ponder carefully'. Scripture, sacrament, prayer, worship, and other Christian disciplines, repeated over and again, re-read, re-visited, have the effect of re-connecting us to God, binding us more closely to him and to others.

We are all very conscious now of the presence of people of other faiths alongside us in this country; especially Muslims. Even apart from the real threat of what is called Islamic-fascist terrorism, there are those who see Christianity in Europe as in serious danger of being eclipsed by a religion whose followers seem to take it and its practices much more seriously than many Christians, even practicing ones, do.

It is not that I think that everything about Islam is admirable, but as we move into a society in which the outward signs of Christian identity are being steadily eroded, as the Archbishop of York

pointed out recently, we Christians have to take responsibility for maintaining and practicing those outward signs, that religion, because no one else will. Externals may present dangers of hypocrisy but without them there would be no faith to betray publicly.

I have just had one of my regular meetings with the organists and choir. These meetings are an opportunity to work out how we can do things better, iron out problems, listen to suggestions. This one also gave me the opportunity to thank the choir and organists, on behalf of the whole congregation, for the wonderful music we had over the Festival. In response, Paul Brough said something which struck me as significant. It was that a major reason why they enjoyed making music at All Saints was that the whole of what goes into our worship, not just their part, is taken very seriously. It is not left to the choir to generate an 'experience' for people who have not brought anything to it themselves. Clergy, servers, readers, sidespersons, and others, all take what they are doing seriously.

That does not mean that our worship and church life is drear and lugubrious. Far from it! There is much joy and a good deal of laughter; even during sermons. It is the seriousness about important things which allows us enjoy our religion; and even sometimes to laugh at our own spiritual oddities. I think we can take a modest pride in that but also learn the lesson that there is always more that we can do, and that more of us ought to be doing, in developing the practice of our religion, in order that others may be drawn to faith by the obvious impact it has upon us. If we wonder how we might share our faith, other than loudly on

a bus, we might make a start by realising the importance of our presence in church Sunday by Sunday, even day by day, as a witness to those around us.

With best wishes and prayers for Advent and Christmas.

Yours in Christ,

Alan Moses

FROM THE VICAR'S LIBRARY: RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Some of you have expressed appreciation of recent reading suggestions, so here are a few more. They may also help with your Christmas shopping.

The first two would seem to deal with death and suffering but neither is despairing.

Michael Mayne's "**The Enduring Melody**" was published shortly before he died. In it he writes both of the *cantus firmus* — the enduring melody of his Christian life, those things which have endured and sustained, and of his response to the cancer which was in the end to prove fatal. It is a moving chronicle of faith, love and humour, as well as a mine of quotations from a wide and deep reading.

The American writer Joan Didion's "**A Year of Magical Thinking**" chronicles the year after the sudden death of her husband, the novelist John Gregory Dunne; a year in which their daughter almost died too. A testimony to love and faith.

John Allen's "**Rabble-Rouser for Peace**" is the authorised biography of

Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Allen was the Archbishop's assistant for a number of years at the height of the crisis in South Africa and communicates Tutu's personality, the infectious laughter, as well as the events in which he was involved.

PEOPLE

"Three score years and ten"

A number of us from All Saints were delighted to be guests at the 70th birthday celebration which **Dr Harry Brama** hosted at Pembroke, his old college in Oxford on the 11th of November. The Dean of Chichester expressed our admiration, affection and gratitude in a speech which included a couple of anecdotes which will I am sure be repeated on many occasions whenever Harry comes to mind.

On the following Sunday, the choir sang Harry's new Anthem "I will go unto the altar of God" at High Mass and the congregation was able to congratulate him on both birthday and composition.

Valerie Hargreaves-Smith

A memorial Mass for Valerie was celebrated on Saturday 28th October. It was good to have Paul, Ashley and Mark, as well as Aiden, and other family and friends from Yorkshire with us for this occasion.

The Nativity panel on the north wall is to be cleaned in memory of Valerie.

Lily Caplin and Mary Bishop

Lily has been missing from her usual place on Sunday for a few weeks because she has had a knee-replacement operation.

Her first major outing was to accompany Fr Alan on a visit to Mary Bishop who has been in Whipps Cross Hospital. Lily hopes to be back with us on Sunday before too long.

“SING UNTO THE LORD”

Our series of talks on hymns during October demonstrated what a depth of talent we have in the congregation. It was a pity that the audiences were not proportionately large but we hope that the talks will reach a wider audience when they have been printed. Our thanks to Denis Moriarty, Harry Brama, Ross Buchanan and Frances O’Neil for their hard work. On the biblical principle that labourers are worthy of their hire, the Vicar organised a supper party to express our appreciation to the speakers.

FESTIVAL IN RETROSPECT

While our present efforts seem perhaps rather feeble when compared with the 8 days with two sung services, with visiting preacher each day, of the past, there can be few if any parish churches which have five major services just to celebrate their patronal festival. An enormous effort goes into this from the various departments of All Saints and it would not be possible without this. Our preachers once again rose to the occasion and I am sure those of you who were not able to be present will be able to profit from their labours as we publish their sermons in the Parish Paper.

The Festival Appeal raised **£6,000**. The sum will be divided between our mission projects and the Restoration Appeal. Many thanks to all who contributed.

THE RESTORATION APPEAL

Many of you will have seen the excellent poster based on the painting of the church’s interior which hangs in the Vicarage hallway. We are distributing it around the parish to encourage people to come and see the church and the display in the baptistery about our restoration plans. We are grateful to Nick Mayhew-Smith for producing these.

Fund-raising events continue at a steady pace. On Festival Sunday afternoon the Boston Place Readers Group presented “Plays and Players — An Afternoon of Light Entertainment”. The players included our own Pamela Botsford, Sandra When, and Martin Woolley who brought a note of religion to the occasion by performing “The Great Sermon Handicap” by P.G. Woodhouse. The afternoon raised **£210**. Our thanks go to all the players for their generosity and enthusiasm.

Earlier, after High Mass, Fr Alan drew the raffle of bottles donated by Dr Michael Duggan. These had been given to him by grateful patients. The raffle raised **£356** and we are grateful to Michael and Nicola for their generosity.

By the time you read this, the quiz night organised by the Walsingham Cell will have taken place at St Botolph’s, Bishopgate Hall. It had already generated much interest, even excitement, and promises to be a wonderful evening, as well as a profitable one.

DIARY DATES

Advent Sunday 3 December

11.00 a.m. Litany in Procession and High Mass

Preacher: The Vicar

6.00 p.m. Advent Carol Service

A Service of Readings and Music for Advent with the Choir of All Saints.

Thursday 7 December

7.05 p.m. Holy Hour led by the Vicar.

Friday 8 December — The Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Cell of Our Lady of Walsingham and All Saints

6.30 p.m. Low Mass with Hymns

Preacher: Fr Guy Scott, Rector designate of the Isles of Scilly.

Saturday 9 December

7.30 p.m. A Mediaeval Christmas Play — the ‘Play of Herod’

An hour of the drama and music of Christmas told in Latin.

Don't worry, you'll find you know the story!

Tickets will be £8 to include mediæval mulled wine!

In aid of the Restoration Appeal.

Friday 15 December

12.30 p.m. Lunchtime Carol Service

followed by mince pies and mulled wine in the Courtyard.

NB No 12.30 p.m. Confessional or 1.10 p.m. Mass that day.

4.00 p.m. University of Westminster Carol Service *All are welcome.*

Saturday 16 December

7.45 p.m. Chandos Chamber Choir Christmas Concert 2006

‘In dulci Jubilo’ — A German Baroque Christmas

The programme includes Motets by J.S. Bach and settings of popular German carols, interspersed with audience carols.

Andrew Arthur, conductor, Gavin Roberts, organ

Wine and mince pies will be available in the interval.

Tickets £10 (on the door)

Wednesday 20 December

5.15 p.m. Wells Street Family Proceedings Court Carol Service

NB No 5.30 p.m. Confessional or 6.00 p.m. Evening Prayer that night.

Sunday 24 December — Christmas Eve

11.00 p.m. High Mass of Midnight

Preacher: The Vicar

Monday 25 December — Christmas Day

11.00 a.m. High Mass of the Day

Preacher: Fr Ivan Aquilina

Saturday 6 January — The Epiphany

11.00 a.m. High Mass

Preacher: The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, Bishop of Woolwich

Sunday 7 January — The Baptism of Christ

(The First Sunday of Epiphany)

11.00 a.m. High Mass and Baptism

6.00 p.m. Epiphany Carol Service

*A Service of Readings and Music for The Epiphany
with the Choir of All Saints.*

CONFESSIONS BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Monday 18 December

12.00 - 1.00 p.m. Fr Gaskell 5.00 - 6.00 p.m. The Vicar

Tuesday 19 December

12.00 - 1.00 p.m. The Vicar 5.00 - 6.00 p.m. Fr Aquilina

Wednesday 20 December

12.00 - 1.00 p.m. Fr Aquilina *No evening Confessional*

Thursday 21 December

12.00 - 1.00 p.m. The Vicar 5.00 - 6.00 p.m. Fr Gaskell

Friday 22 December

12.00 - 1.00 p.m. Fr Aquilina 5.00 - 6.00 p.m. The Vicar

Saturday 23 December

5.00 - 6.00 p.m. Fr Bunker

ALL SAINTS FESTIVAL 2006

THE SERMON BY FR BERTRAND OLIVIER, VICAR, ALL HALLOWS BY THE TOWER, ON THE EVE OF ALL SAINTS, 31 OCTOBER

It's very good to be with you this evening, and can I first of all thank Fr Alan for inviting me to take part in your Patronal Festival this year. All Saints is also the Patronal festival for my parish of All Hallows by the Tower, but I am afraid that we don't keep it with as much panache as you do here on Margaret Street.

Until I was invited to preach here, I had been trying to resist the secularist or pagan thrust to become involved in some kind of Halloween extravaganza. You haven't been able to escape witches and ghouls for weeks and the whole commercial machine has gone into overdrive to encourage us in what they describe as harmless fun: harmless enough unless you are the parents having to buy the merchandize or the unsuspecting neighbour at the receiving end of a trick or treat visit.

I have been amazed to read in the media that the Halloween market has grown up exponentially from £12 million 10 years ago to £120 million today. Although I am sure it is not unrelated, I imagine that this growth is not just due to your generosity to the All Saints Festival Appeal.

Many concerned parents and clergy have been trying to find ways to subvert the Halloween celebrations from their pagan origin by turning some of the activities into more wholesome and Christian focused ones, and a website has been dedicated to the promotion of that cause.

But as a Bishop pointed out in the letter columns of *The Church Times* recently, the best way to celebrate Halloween, or All Hallows' Eve, is by attending the first Evensong of All Saints, and to remember the saints whose lives have been lights of the world in their generations.

It is Pope Boniface IV who originally established an anniversary dedicated to the Virgin Mary and the martyrs when he consecrated the Pantheon on May 13, 609 (or 610). This Christian feast day was moved to November 1 from May 13 by Pope Gregory III in the eighth century in order to mark the dedication of the All Saints Chapel in Rome — establishing November 1 as All Saints Day and October 31 as All Hallows' Eve.

Initially this change of date only applied to the diocese of Rome, but was extended to the rest of Western Christianity a century later by Pope Gregory IV in an effort to standardize liturgical worship. It was instituted by the Church to honour all the saints, known and unknown, and, according to Urban IV, to supply any deficiencies in the faithfuls' celebration of saints' feasts during the year.

The coincidence of the two days, one Christian and one pagan, appears to be fortuitous, as there is no documentation that either Gregory III or IV was aware of or responding to the pagan feast in the choice of date.

And so we are gathered here today, not dressed up to ward off evil spirits, but ready to embark on this great festival and give thanks, ponder on and marvel at the faith of all the saints who have gone before, and also preparing to recommit to what we ourselves are called to become in our own lives: a holy people united together by our common life in God.

This, of course, may sound a very tall order. We need not look very far around us to know that the body of Christ is fractured, and as fervently as we are to pray for the unity and wholeness of the Church, this does not look as if it might happen any time soon.

And it may be that this is, in some part, a reflection of our own lives which are now so fragmented in the busy world we live in that the attainment for wholeness, or holiness, becomes an impossible feat.

Men (and perhaps some women too) may or perhaps not take comfort in the words of Ecclesiasticus which we heard earlier as we reflect on the qualities of those whose praises are sung: they ruled in their kingdoms, made a name for themselves, for their valour, they were intelligent, they spoke prophetic oracles, they led the people, they were wise, composed music or wrote poetry, they were rich and lived peacefully, they were honoured in their generations, some have left behind a name, for others there is no memory although their deeds also have not been forgotten.

There follows after this a long list of men who were indeed significant in the history of the people of God, from Enoch, Noah, and Abraham to Elijah, Hezekiah, Isaiah, and more.

But the end result of all this may be that, instead of encouragement, we may feel rather daunted: how can we possibly live up to the lives of these people who achieved great things.

Last week, I was privileged to lead the memorial service of one of our long time parishioners at All Hallows, a woman named Vera Harley. She was 95 when she died, and her life was indeed the catalogue of a life lived in the shadow of God. An actress in her younger years, she volunteered in the second world war, got involved with Toc H, the movement founded by my predecessor Tubby Clayton, and in particular was credited with integrating the women and men branches. She then moved to the YWCA in Kenya where she was involved in the setting up of numerous projects, and was involved throughout with the World Congress of Faith. She had a very deep faith, was witty, charming, sometimes stubborn, and kept her razor-sharp mind until the end. She could perhaps be a feminine embodiment of the qualities Ecclesiasticus listed. And as near to what we might easily call a saint.

But as I was reflecting on the qualities of the saints, and the juxtaposition of our consumer economy as witnessed in the Halloween celebrations, I could start to see a whole range of other people also involved in the weaving of the fine linen for the marriage of the Lamb.

Images of the countless number of children who, in Africa, are shouldered with the responsibilities of looking after their families because one or both their parents are living with HIV, and dying of AIDS. They may not have a choice in the matter, but they bear the responsibility that

no child should have to bear, while seeing the slow and painful death of their parents, and learning so soon the power that money has on their lives.

Image of those who have gathered day in day out at Faslane in Scotland, as they protest at the plans to replace Trident by more sophisticated nuclear devices at huge costs to the nations but especially to those who desperately need the money spent on structures to provide appropriate education and care.

Image of those who are currently embarked on a mission to save the planet by raising our awareness of the disaster that awaits if we remain complacent in the face of global warming.

Image of those who seek to create a more peaceful and just world by developing models of trade where all in the chain are able to make an honest living.

Image of those who, around the world, dedicate their life, and sometimes lose it, as they fight to protect peace.

Image of those who, in our streets, seek the dispossessed and marginalised, and try to give them what they need to survive as well as hope for the future.

Image of worshipping communities across the world who transcend cultural and economic differences to witness to the power of God here, now and for all eternity.

Many different images, and probably countless more that could be added, and which remind us that, in the here and now, God's presence is really felt in the world through these many, often faceless, saints,

who because of their faith and conviction that the Kingdom of God can be very near, are willing to commit their lives to that purpose. And they can inspire us to do likewise in our own lives.

In '*New seeds of Contemplation*', the hermit monk Thomas Merton, however, tries to tease out the meaning of holiness in the sight of God.

For him, the beauty of a clumsy colt on an April day is a holiness consecrated to God, as are the pale flowers of the field. The lakes hidden among the hills are saints, and the sea too is a saint who praises God without interruption in her majestic dance.

And so the question arises: what about you, what about me? Is it enough for us to simply be as nature intends? Is it enough for us to be individuals in order to qualify? And the answer is no: holiness is more than humanity.

For Merton, sanctity consists in being himself, and for others to be themselves: 'in the last analysis, he says, your sanctity will never be mine and mine will never be yours, except in the communism of charity and grace'.

Because God leaves us free to be whatever we like, we are at liberty to be real or unreal. We may be true or be false, the choice is ours. We may wear now one mask and now another, and never — if we choose — appear with our own true face.

And so as we consider our vocation today, in the midst of the cloud of witnesses which encircles us here in this place and wherever we are, we know that it is not only a vocation to be, but also a vocation to work

together with God in the creation of our own life, our own identity, our own destiny.

As Merton says, ‘We do not know clearly beforehand what the result of this work will be’, as the secret of our full identity is hidden in God. God alone can make us who we are, or rather who we will be when at last we fully begin to be. But unless we desire this identity and work to find it with God and in God, the work will never be done.

In this season of All Saints, we are reminded of the sanctity and holiness in the Church, and this is manifested in a variety of ways. It is joy filled, because the people who live the lives of saints are happy, blessed, bearing the characteristics of the Beatitudes. The holiness entails forgiveness

and love, and is rooted in the fact that we are all created by God and thus are called to become a manifestation of God’s love and saving plan.

We are God’s children and will one day live in the light, after a journey of pilgrimage towards the new and eternal Jerusalem, the site of God’s throne and where the hosts of God’s court sing songs of endless praise, the place where all God’s people are in communion with one another.

This Solemnity of All Saints is both a look back at those who have gone before, as well as a commitment to what we must become: a holy people united together by a common life in God. It is a hope of our future glory in the new and eternal Jerusalem.

Amen.

ALL SAINTS FESTIVAL 2006

THE SERMON BY THE RT REVD MICHAEL PERHAM, BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER, AT HIGH MASS ON ALL SAINTS DAY, NOVEMBER 1

Rejoice we all and praise the Lord, celebrating a holy day in honour of all the saints.

“Rejoice and praise the Lord.” That’s today’s invitation, for it is a feast day, a festival, and inaugurates a new and final phase in the Christian year, a time with truths of its own to tell and to celebrate. Our mood is festive, our hearts are full of hope and pleasure and excitement for All Saintstide. Or so it should be. It is a spirit of joy that’s in the air today. At least it is in the air here in Margaret Street. Nowhere, probably in the world, makes more of All Saintstide than Margaret Street.

But the truth is that out there in the Church of England, not to mention the society in which we are set, people are feeling less than festive. “What’s so special?” they would ask if they had a clue what we were up to this evening. And we would want to give them an answer that would send them away with real joy bubbling away inside them.

In a book published about ten years ago, entitled *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*, Ronald Hutton, Reader in History at the University of Bristol, describes just how much impact the celebrations of the Christian year made on the lives of

ordinary English people as the mediæval period gave way to the Renaissance and the Reformation, how people delighted in all the rituals, celebrations and customs that marked the year and were extensions of the Church's liturgy. Of course in a sense the Reformation had to happen, and when it came it brought good things that needed to come. But the decline of the ritual year that he describes, especially in the reign of the first Queen Elizabeth, is one of the sadder tales, where something precious was lost.

This is how he describes All Saints' Day in the reign of Henry VII.

All Saints' Day marked the formal opening of winter, falling at the time of the first frosts when most of the leaves and flowers have withered and the darkness had trickled back into the afternoon. At this time of death, it was the human dead who were remembered. Upon All Saints' Day the king dressed in purple velvet and his courtiers in black, the colour of mourning. For that evening many churches laid in extra supplies of candles and torches, to be carried in procession and to illuminate the building. Some of them made payments for the most famous custom of the night, the ringing of church bells to comfort those departed souls which were enduring the torments of purgatory. In a few places the rites were repeated, or took place upon, the following evening, known as the feast of All Souls. In this way the opening of the season of darkness and cold was made into an opportunity to confront the greatest fear known to humans, that of death, and the greatest known to Christians, that of damnation.

Now not all of that is attractive, but it does present a picture of an All Saintstide, Hallowmass, that makes its impact on the whole community. It is part of the culture. We have lost that. Indeed **they** lost it, very quickly, within a couple of generations. All Saints' Day does not feature in the lives of any but the devoutest church-goer.

And yet we also live in an age of a strange new phenomenon: the rise of the new ritual year. Driven partly by commercialism, but also by a deep human need to mark the cycle of the seasons and to celebrate community and family, there is the new ritual year that includes the secular New Year, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day (so called), and which makes contact at any depth with the Christian tradition only at Christmas.

Increasingly one of its high points is Hallowe'en. Hallowe'en is a significant event in the new ritual year. It claims a long antiquity, though its customs are mainly modern, not least its "trick or treat" that needs sending back across the Atlantic, from which it came only a generation ago, as soon as possible. It claims, in all the business about ghosts and witches, to be recovering a pagan pre-Christian set of concerns, so that there is a strange cycle by which a Church that christianised pagan rituals, now finds Christian ones secularised. And of course there is a legitimate interaction between the sacred and the secular, which was the very strength of the mediæval ritual year.

But the new secular Hallowe'en has all sorts of dangers and drawbacks, and churchmen seem suddenly to have caught on to this and are into the denunciation game. Some Christians are more worried

about this than others. Certainly much dressing up in black hats with broomsticks and creating funny faces out of pumpkins is harmless enough. But there **is** a sinister side.

There is too the imbalance of the celebration. It is all about witches, ghosts and evil spirits. It is not about vanquishing evil, about celebrating the saints. It's all Hallowe'**en** and not Hallow**mass**. Indeed there is a lack of any serious religious content to the celebration. People may get Christmas out of balance, but at least at its heart there is a Christian story and a Christian truth of great potency. What is the Christian truth at the heart of Hallowe'**en**? If there is one, it is well hidden. We fail to proclaim the Christian good news; yet there **is** Christian good news for this season, as for every other, and it is this good news that makes All Saints a day of festival.

So what is it? What is it that ought to thrill and delight and reassure today? It is that, as winter takes hold and darkness descends, Christians have the light of Christ. It is that, when during long autumn evenings people left alone remember those who have gone before them, or when people wear poppies and remember the loss of life in war, Christians have a hope in heaven, a hope for those who have died and a hope for themselves. It is that, meanwhile, while we still walk our earthly pilgrimage, we are part of a great company, the Church of Christ in earth and heaven, the communion of saints, and to be part of that company is never to be alone, always to be surrounded by faith and hope and love, always to have heaven in one's sights. That is good news, Gospel. You have heard it and, if you will let it make its impact, it will thrill you and delight you

and reassure you. And, if you'll tell it, it is good news for the world too, and it needs to be heard and celebrated and ritualised. Saints are much more real than witches or ghosts. Goodness is much more powerful than evil. Light always drives out the darkness. We go into winter time affirming those marvellous truths. But we do it, not with a kind of superficial refusal to face the darker side of our selves and our world, so the mood is one of faith and trust, yes, but also one that looks to God who is judge and looks to him confident of his mercy.

This subtlety of mood, that was there in the mediæval celebrations with bells ringing to comfort the dead, expresses itself in our two-fold festival. All Saints, all glitter and gold and goodness, a day of rejoicing and confidence. But, balancing it, All Souls, sombre, restrained, with almost a touch of anxiety, certainly a willingness to allow some deep emotions and some tears to surface. It isn't that we categorise the dead and keep one day for the saints and another for the sinners. All of us, in a sense, are saints **and** sinners. All Saints and All Souls are the two sides of the same coin. We are celebrating our faith in God and glorying in Christ's mighty resurrection. But we are not forgetting his cross, we are not suppressing our fears, we are recognising the fragility of life and faith. Both sides are part of us. Both sides were part of those who have gone before us. We bring them both to God. And in the contrast we hold on to an important paradox.

And then this All Saints and All Souls inaugurates a period that takes us on to Advent. We name the Sundays through November "Sundays before Advent" and the Church of England's calendar tells us: "The period between All Saints' Day and

the First Sunday of Advent is observed as a time to celebrate and reflect upon the reign of Christ in earth and heaven”. To talk of the reign of Christ in earth and heaven through the month of November helps us to relate a series of days and themes that do belong together — the falling leaves of late autumn and the early dusks of winter, the departed at All Saintside, the Kingdom of Christ over against the false kingdoms of the world as Remembrance Sunday reminds us of human folly and futility, all bring us on towards Advent, that has its own concern with judgement and with the coming of Christ’s kingdom. And, as it happens, though this is not the real point, as we reflect on these themes and hold them together, and let them interact, November is specially rich in its saints’ days, so that, as Martin gives way to Hugh, and Hilda to Edmund, and Cecilia to Katherine, we go on having held up before us goodness and light and sanctity, the reign of Christ and the communion of saints a delightful reality. And it brings us to the Sunday next before Advent, the feast of Christ the King, and we picture the Lord in the assembly of the saints.

Why do we rejoice? Because what we say in the Apostles’ Creed is not dry theology, but gospel truth and good news for us and for this age: *I believe in the communion of saints.*

This communion is wonderfully expressed in Thomas Cranmer’s great collect for today written in 1549:

O Almighty God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of thy Son Christ our Lord.

It proclaims an important truth about the nature of the Christian family. “I believe

in the communion of saints,” we affirm, and in affirming we say something about relationships. We say that the primary significance of the saints lies not in their past lives, heroic or holy as these may have been, lies not in their example, encouraging as that may be, but in their fellowship, their relationship, their friendship with us. How often people speak of saints as if they **were** once upon a time. But that’s unimportant. They **are**. Mary and the apostles are, Nicholas, Aidan, George, Francis, Clare, Oscar Romero, Teresa of Calcutta, are, are our friends, our family.

*Still are centred all in thee,
Members though distant of one head;*

wrote Richard Baxter

*In the same family we be.
By the same faith and spirit led.*

It is important that we proclaim and celebrate this communion of saints, this fellowship of prayer and praise, this family relationship, because so few people have a clear and confident understanding of our Christian belief about life beyond death and our relationship with the departed. It is because the Church’s faith is heard so hesitantly that other impoverished and eccentric theologies can develop, and express themselves on many a cemetery headstone. It is because even our prayer in the communion of saints is so impoverished that people turn to spiritualists and worse, to maintain contact with their dead, instead of rejoicing in the Christian closeness to the departed that is very real in all prayer and supremely in the celebration of the Eucharist. We have a Gospel for those who mourn that needs to be heard.

Yes, all this we celebrate with joy at this

season — the vision of heaven, the glory of the throne of God, with the saints at worship, our communion with them and with all God’s faithful people when we pray and praise. And, for me, Cranmer captures it all in that magnificent collect with its talk of “one communion and fellowship” and the “unspeakable joys prepared for them that unfeignedly love” God.

Yes, I believe in the communion of saints, but I also believe in the forgiveness of sins. And behind both of those I believe and trust in the life everlasting and I thank the Lord for All Saintstide which puts me in mind of all three.

It brings to the forefront of my thoughts and my prayers those who have gone before me, the ones whom I hold in my heart, and inspires me to say, not as cold creed, but as wonderful Gospel truth:

I believe in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins and the life everlasting in Jesus Christ our Lord.

This is not just something to believe, though heaven knows it is a stupendous set of truths to hold. But this is to be lived, to be celebrated, to be shared, to be told. Hallowmass must be as compelling as Hallowe’en, and the ritual year once again become the Christian year.

So, people of God, rejoice and praise the Lord, celebrating a holy day in honour of all God’s saints. There is much to celebrate, much to be festive about. Let it be seen. Let the world know. Forget the pumpkins and the broomsticks, and abandon the dreadful trick or treat. Christ is King, the saints are very much alive, we are of their company, and goodness, light and sanctity are not to be defeated.

FUNERAL MASS FOR SISTER ELIZABETH MAY
OCTOBER 20TH 2006
ALL SAINTS CONVENT, OXFORD

This sermon is something of a joint effort between Fr Gerald Reddington and myself. It is sad that Gerald cannot be here to preach it. He had known Lizzie longer and better than I had.

It is not going to be a detailed narrative of Elizabeth May’s life in the Community; that life which began not long after she left the orphanage she grew up in. Although she had family in Manchester whom she valued and holidayed with, (and it’s good that some of them are here today), there is a sense in which the Community was her family.

It was a life which encompassed places and works which were part of the history of community and Church — Tonge Moor which she often reminisced about and where, as a north country lass, she was perhaps happiest. There was London Colney and Eastbourne and Margaret Street and then here. The greater part of her life was before I knew her; before even some of her sisters did. She loved being in London for those last active years of her active life. She enjoyed the freedom, having her list of people she looked after, and enjoying the variety of people who came to No 82 and the church. I hope someone will write that

up before it is forgotten. It should be part of the communal memory.

The religious life can seem to the outsider quite eccentric, even mad; and yet mysterious and fascinating. It attracts myths which must be a source of amusement or frustration, in equal measure, to those who live in it. One of these is that all those who follow Christ in this way are serene, angelic, naturally devout figures who glide through life as if on castors. Another is that life in a religious community insulates them from the pressures of the real world.

Those who live that life, or are in some way associated with it, know full well that all these myths are far from the truth. A religious community has at least the same variety of characters and personalities — and clashes of personality — as any family, with less chance of escape. Vocation is often a struggle; a worthwhile and rewarding one, but still hard work. Commitment to living with a group of people under vows is a serious and demanding business and not for the faint-hearted. Problems which can be avoided and ignored in other walks of life are much less easy to escape within the walls of a convent — even one of an active community like this. There is no hiding place. And that is just as well, otherwise the religious life would be something for angels and not for human beings.

Elizabeth May was very much a human being. She would certainly not have claimed to be an angel — nor did she always come across as one! She could be peppery, even vinegary at times — but what is food without some savour!

Gerald speaks of her as a sparrow — intense, active, busy, in a hurry. I would see her from my study window — setting

off on some errand — purposeful, knowing where she was going. I imagine her more as a wee terrier — a Jack Russell.

She was not pious in any demonstrative, emotional or sentimental way. That does not mean that she did not love God; that she did not pray. The bird-like activity was always set within the purpose of God. Prayer for her was I suspect work rather than play. It was something she was committed to as part of the life to which she had dedicated herself. It was a serious but matter-of-fact business. Unless it was down-to-earth it would never reach up to heaven. She had a simple approach to life. She lived for “the sacrament of the present moment”. She was perhaps more Martha than Mary.

I would often see her purposefully heading for her place in the south aisle as I prepared for the lunchtime Mass. In those days, Jean Margaret and Barbara Mary were early birds, larks — 8 o'clockers during the week — but Lizzie, rather surprisingly, got going later.

Although she could tell stories of the past, she was not one to take refuge in nostalgia. I can remember sitting out in the garden here during the summer with her and some other residents of St John's Home. Someone looked back with rather rose tinted spectacles to the “good old days” when things were done properly, and nuns wore proper habits. Lizzie intervened quietly but firmly to say that much about those days was not good; that there was a great deal of sheer drudgery which we could be thankful to be free of. Even if her memory was going, she had not lost her marbles.

What she did bring from the past was the experience of hardship in her

childhood. This gave her a sympathy and understanding for the difficulties of others which perhaps some of us born and raised in happier circumstances did not have.

She may not have had the educational opportunities of many, but she had a sharp brain. She could often get the point quicker than others and she would worry that this made her critical of what she considered their slowness. She could sometimes have a short fuse; she did not suffer fools gladly — even Vicars of All Saints. But having said what was on her mind, she was always contrite and she never nursed grudges.

Life had taught her everyday, homespun wisdom, a sort of sanctified common sense, often encapsulated in those many sayings she loved to quote. One of her favourites was, **“You can’t have the penny and the bun”**. In other words, “you cannot have your cake and eat it”, which is what most of us spend our time trying to do.

Lizzie had known tribulation in her childhood. She had lived through more than 60 years of enormous changes in the world, in the Church, in the religious life to which God had called her. In her life she experienced what it means to have here **“no abiding city”**. Yet we can see that not only places but stages of life are all **“dwelling places”**, in God’s house, caravanserais on our pilgrimage.

In her last years she had to cope with illness and restriction — no longer able to march off briskly down the street to wherever she wanted to go. Her memory began to go, but with it some of the fear of death which she would, with straightforward honesty, admit. Whenever I came to see her she would always break into a smile and she would always tell me how grateful she was

for the kindness of her sisters and the staff of St John’s for all that they did for her.

Lizzie remained faithful, she persevered in her calling. Now her pilgrimage in this life is over and we, her beloved sisters and her friends, commend her into the loving care of the Lord she served faithfully all those years. Heaven in scriptural imagination may be populated by angels, but it is also a place for us, for Lizzie.

If we may forsake the prosaic of modern translations for the grandeur of the old, there is surely in heaven a **“mansion”** for a poor Lancashire orphan lass who became an All Saints Sister of the Poor.

A.M.

VISITORS TO ALL SAINTS

Throughout the year, a steady stream of groups from various bodies visit All Saints: universities and colleges, summer schools, the Victorian Society and others.

The most recent was by the London Members Centre of the National Trust for Scotland. After Anne Merritt, an experienced London guide, had spoken to them about the building, the Vicar spoke about the history and life of the parish and showed them some of our plate and vestments.

Their Visits Organiser has written:

Dear Mrs Merritt,

What a splendid visit we had to All Saints on Thursday! You gave us such an informative talk and had gone to such trouble to lay out for us your wonderful “treasures” that it was truly one of the most enjoyable visits we have had. It was such a pity that we were on such a tight timetable, which led to

our rather unfortunate rush. Next time we will ensure that we have more time and do justice to such a beautiful and remarkable building.

SUNDAYS AND SOLEMNITIES

MUSIC AND READINGS

● SUNDAY 3 DECEMBER ADVENT SUNDAY

PROCESSION AND HIGH MASS AT 11.00 a.m.

Litany in Procession: Tallis

Introit: Ad te levavi

Mass: Mass for four voices — Byrd

Lessons: Jeremiah 33: 14 - 16

Psalm 25

1 Thessalonians 3: 9 - end

Hymn: 14

Gospel: Luke 21: 25 - 36

Preacher: The Vicar

Anthem: Hosanna to the Son of David
— Gibbons

Hymns: 3 (ii), 501, 9

ADVENT CAROL SERVICE at 6.00 p.m.

A Service of Readings and Music for Advent with the Choir of All Saints.

● SUNDAY 10 DECEMBER ADVENT II

HIGH MASS AT 11.00 a.m.

Entrance Hymn: 55

Introit: Populus Syon

Mass: Missa 'Alma redemptoris
Mater' — Victoria

Lessons: Baruch 5: 1 - 9

Canticle: Benedictus

Philippians 1: 3 - 11

Hymn: 12

Gospel: Luke 3: 1 - 6

Preacher: Prebendary John Gaskell

Anthem: The Angel Gabriel
— Basque Traditional

Hymns: 18, 501, 7

SOLEMN EVENSONG at 6.00 p.m.

Psalms: 75, 76

Lessons: Isaiah 40: 1 - 11

Luke 1: 1 - 25

Office Hymn: 1

Canticles: The Short Service — Byrd

Anthem: Rorate coeli desuper — Byrd

Preacher: Fr Ivan Aquilina

Hymn: 169

BENEDICTION

O Salutaris: 493

Hymn: 17

Tantum Ergo: 393

● SUNDAY 17 DECEMBER ADVENT III

HIGH MASS AT 11.00 a.m.

Entrance Hymn: 16

Introit: Gaudete

Mass: Mass in B flat — Schubert

Lessons: Zephaniah 3: 14 - end

Psalm 146

Philippians 4: 4 - 7

Hymn: 170 (i)

Gospel: Luke 3: 7 - 18

Preacher: Fr Ivan Aquilina

Creed: Credo II

Anthem: This is the record of John
— Gibbons

Hymns: 5, 501, 499
Voluntary: Prelude in C minor,
BWV 546 — Bach

SOLEMN EVENSONG

at 6.00 p.m.

Psalm: 50: 1 - 6, 72
Lessons: Isaiah Ch 35
Luke 1: 57 - 80

Office Hymn: 1

Antiphon: O Sapientia

Canticles: Service in E flat — Wise

Anthem: Prepare ye the way of the Lord
— Wise

Preacher: The Vicar

Hymn: 13

BENEDICTION

O Salutaris: Byrd

Hymn: 11

Tantum Ergo: Byrd (No 2)

Voluntary: Fugue in C minor, BWV
546 — Bach

● SUNDAY 24 DECEMBER ADVENT IV (of Advent IV)

HIGH MASS AT 11.00 a.m.

Entrance Hymn: 10

Introit: Rorate

Mass: Mass in G — Poulenc

Lessons: Micah 5: 2 - 5a
Psalm 80
Hebrews 10: 5 - 10

Hymn: 17

Gospel: Luke 1: 39 - 45 (46 - 55)

Preacher: Fr Neil Bunker

Creed: Credo III

Anthem: Vox dicentis: Clama
— Naylor

Hymns: 8 (T 128 (ii)), 501, 186

SUNDAY 24 DECEMBER CHRISTMAS EVE (of the Nativity)

MIDNIGHT MASS AND BLESSING OF THE CRIB

AT 11.00 p.m.

Entrance Hymn: 29 (v 4 Descant
— Willcocks)

Introit: Dominus dixit

Mass: Missa Sancti Nicolai — Haydn

Lessons: Isaiah 9: 2 - 7

Psalm 96

Titus 2: 11 - 14

Hymn: 32 (v 5 Descant
— Armstrong)

Gospel: Luke 2: 1 - 14

Preacher: The Vicar

Anthems: Away in a manger

— Kirkpatrick, arr Sidwell

Ding dong! merrily on high

— French trad, arr Wood

Hymns: 35, 42 (vv 3 and 6 Descant
— Gray)

Motet: Hodie Christus natus est

— Poulenc

At the Procession

to the Crib: 30 (omit v 4, vv 6 and 7
arr Willcocks)

At the Crib: Infant holy, Infant lowly

— Polish trad

Voluntary: Dieu parmi nous — Messiaen

MONDAY 25 DECEMBER CHRISTMAS DAY (of the Day)

HIGH MASS OF THE DAY

AT 11.00 a.m.

Entrance Hymn: 30 (omit v 4;
v 7 Descant — Fleming)

Introit: Puer natus est
Mass: Missa Brevis in B flat — Mozart
Lessons: Isaiah 52: 7 - 10
 Psalm 98
 Hebrews 1: 1 - 4
Hymn: 24
Gospel: John 1: 1 - 14
Preacher: Fr Ivan Aquilina
Creed: Credo II
Anthem: A virgin most pure,
 arr Wood
Hymns: 28, 31, 26 (omit*;
 v 3 Descant — Willcocks)
Voluntary: Radetzky March
 — Johann Strauss I

● SUNDAY 31 DECEMBER CHRISTMAS 1

HIGH MASS AT 11.00 a.m.

Entrance Hymn: 34 (v 5 Descant
 — Willcocks)

Introit: Dum medium silentium
Mass: St Ignatius Mass — Laloux
Lessons: 1 Samuel 2: 18 - 20, 26
 Psalm 148
 Colossians 3: 12 - 17
Hymn: 45
Gospel: Luke 2: 41 - end
Preacher: The Vicar
Creed: Credo III
Anthem: A New Year Carol
 — Britten
Hymns: 39 (v 5 arr Willcocks), 40, 37
Voluntary: No 1 in C — Stanley

Evening Prayer is *said* at 4.30 p.m.

STAFF

Vicar:

The Revd Alan Moses 020 7636 1788 / 9961

Assistant Priest:

The Revd Ivan Aquilina 020 7636 1788

Honorary Assistant Priests:

The Revd Neil Bunker

The Revd Preb John Gaskell 020 7436 3287

The Revd John W. Rick III 020 7637 9367

Parish Administrator:

Mr Dennis Davis 020 7636 1788 / 9961

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Sundays Low Mass at 6.30 p.m. (Sat), 8.00 a.m.
 and 5.15 p.m. Morning Prayer 10.20 a.m.
 HIGH MASS and SERMON at 11.00 a.m.
 SOLEMN EVENSONG, SERMON and
 BENEDICTION at 6.00 p.m.

Monday to Friday Morning Prayer at 7.30 a.m.

Low Mass at 8.00 a.m., 1.10 p.m. & 6.30 p.m.

Confessions from 12.30 - 1.00 p.m. & 5.30 p.m.

Evening Prayer at 6.00 p.m.

Saturday Morning Prayer at 7.30 a.m.

Low Mass at 8.00 a.m. and 6.30 p.m.*

(* First Mass of Sunday)

Confessions 5.30 p.m.,

Evening Prayer 6.00 p.m.

Confessions are also heard by appointment

020 7636 1788

Instruction in the catholic faith as taught by the
 Church of England can be obtained on application
 to any of the priests, who will also give help in
 preparing for the sacraments.

PARISH OFFICIALS

Churchwardens:

Mr John Forde 020 7592 9855

Mr Christopher Self 020 8858 6370

PCC Secretary:

Dr Dilys Thomas 020 7794 3626

Hon Treasurer:

Mr Patrick Hartley 020 7607 0060

Director of Music and Organist:

Mr Paul Brough 01273 686021

Associate Director of Music & Assistant

Organist:

Mr Andrew Arthur 020 8279 0909

Honorary Assistant Organist:

Mr Norman Caplin 020 8989 3295

Electoral Roll Officer:

Miss Catherine Burling c/o 020 7636 1788

CALENDAR AND INTENTIONS FOR DECEMBER 2006

1	<i>Charles de Foucauld, Hermit</i>	Those in need
2		Our Restoration Appeal
3	✠ THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT	OUR PARISH AND PEOPLE
4	<i>John of Damascus; Nicholas Ferrar</i>	Religious
5		Retreat Conductors
6	St Nicholas, Bishop of Myra	The unemployed
7	St Ambrose, Bishop of Milan	Unity
8	The Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary	Those in need
9		Local stores and businesses
10	✠ THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT	OUR PARISH AND PEOPLE
11		The homeless
12		Church Schools
13	St Lucy, Martyr at Syracuse Ember Day	Friends of All Saints
14	St John of the Cross	Unity
15	Ember Day	Those in need
16	Ember Day	Vocations to the Priesthood
17	✠ THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT	OUR PARISH AND PEOPLE
	O Sapientia	
18		The Samaritans
19		World Peace
20		Wells Street Family Proceedings Court
21		Unity
22		Those in need
23		The sick and disabled
24	✠ THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT	OUR PARISH AND PEOPLE
	CHRISTMAS EVE	
25	CHRISTMAS DAY	Thanksgiving for the Incarnation
26	ST STEPHEN, FIRST MARTYR	Witnesses to the Faith
27	ST JOHN, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST	Proclamation of the Gospel
28	THE HOLY INNOCENTS	Children's charities
29	St Thomas Becket	Those in need
30		Society of All Saints Sisters of the Poor
31	✠ THE FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS	OUR PARISH AND PEOPLE

Please note:

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



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