



All Saints Parish Paper

MARGARET STREET, LONDON W.1

FEBRUARY 2007

£1.00

VICAR'S LETTER

In a piece about All Saints which you can read below, P.D. James writes of “**the dignity and beauty of its services**”. In this issue you will also find the sermon I preached recently on the subject of Evensong. It may seem strange to some to preach about worship. Don't the people who go to Evensong know what it is about? Well, that is something we can no longer assume, even if we ever could. As more than one person said to me after hearing the sermon: “It is good to be reminded what we are doing and why.” As I discovered while preparing the sermon, even someone who has been doing it every day for years can learn something new or be reminded of something forgotten, and be refreshed and reinvigorated.

The Church of England's Liturgical Commission, having completed the production of the Common Worship series of services which, along with the Book of Common Prayer, are the authorised services of our Church, is now turning its attention to what it calls “liturgical formation”. It recognises that it is not enough to provide a set of services, then simply leave people to get on with it. Priests need to be helped to celebrate them appropriately and effectively. People need to know what is going on so that they can pray with understanding. This is not to say that we need a GCSE in liturgy before we

can come to Church, but it is to recognise that worship is both art and work and that we need to learn its disciplines and skills. As our culture becomes increasingly dominated by the instant results and satisfactions of the media and consumerism, we need to be trained for the long haul.

There is a widespread misconception that the great rift in the Church is between those who love old forms of worship and those who opt for modern liturgy: Common Prayer versus Common Worship. This is too simplistic to be helpful. The real and more significant rift is, I believe, between those who recognise the importance and value of liturgical worship and those who reject it in favour of enthusiasm and spontaneity.

Enthusiasm and spontaneity are not wrong in themselves. Our forebears in the 19th Century were certainly devoted to liturgical order, but they recognised that colour and drama, music and singing, could all enliven what might become dry and lifeless routine. They were people of profound devotion, whose hearts were moved by Christ, yet they recognised the gift of a liturgy which carries us through those times when we do not feel enthusiastic and spontaneous; which celebrates a broader and deeper understanding and vision of the Christian faith, than any of us can manage on our own. Our founders lived in an age when the dominant ethos was one of rather emotional piety which assumed that true

religion could only be found outside the walls of a church, in a prayer meeting or in a “quiet time” rather than in Common Prayer. They recognised the dangers of this: sentimentalism, spiritual exhaustion, narrowness of experience and vision.

This continues to be a real issue. I expect it will be until the kingdom comes. We live at a time when many in the Church are openly and noisily contemptuous of our way of worship — whether it be at its most splendid or its most simple. The former is attacked for being too formal and stuffy; the latter for being too plain and austere. And yet people keep coming to it who have been wearied by constant efforts at enthusiasm and spontaneity and find something which feeds and supports them.

Some argue that only a particular kind of personality is attracted to our kind of worship — the introverted, the “up-tight”. This is not the whole truth but there is just enough in it to make us aware of the danger of simply providing a refuge for those who want to be reinforced in the way they are, rather than transformed into what God would have us be. Most of us have been to one of those churches which considers itself the acme of liturgical correctness — but not a soul speaks to you.

Here at All Saints, we enjoy one of the richest liturgical programmes in the Church of England. Maintaining it is an important part of our common calling and mission. This is not just for our own benefit — that would be to reduce our religion to a variety of consumerism. It is for others as well as ourselves. It is for others in the Church like the parish priest who wrote to me recently to say how much support he found for his ministry in coming to Sunday Evensong. It is not a possession of ours, but a gift we

have in trust for others. It is for those who do not yet believe and worship. There is a lovely prayer in the House Prayers of the All Saints Choir School, which I use at Morning Prayer on Sundays sometimes, which expresses this well:

“Lord, who dost ask of thy people love for love, and worship in return for life: Assist us to keep holy, week by week, the day of thy Son’s mighty rising from the dead, and bless us in the breaking of the bread and the prayers; that others of thy children who behold our joy may seek thy loving kindness in the midst of thy temple...”

Here at All Saints we have our “School of Worship”, but there is a sense in which our worship is our school, where we are constantly learning the ways of God.

With my prayers that the Lent which begins this month may draw us closer to Christ — not least through a careful celebration of its liturgy.

Yours in Christ.

Alan Moses

THE RESTORATION APPEAL

Time is marching on and the day draws closer when we will have to fire the starting gun for the works we intend to carry out. Our architect Colin Kerr tells us that it will have to be done by the end of the summer if we are to complete the work in time for the 150th anniversary of the consecration.

We are now entering on a very important phase of our fund-raising efforts in making applications to grant-giving bodies both large and small. We are grateful to **Dr**

Harry Brama for spearheading this work, bringing his experience in fund-raising for the Royal school of Church Music and then for our own organ restoration. He is being assisted by **Jacob Philips** — who is taking time out from his theology studies and his work as a pastoral assistant at St John the Divine, Kennington, to lend his word-processing skills.

This does not mean that we can relax in fund-raising within the congregation. So, we continue to encourage our own people to think about how they can help.

Do you have ideas for fund-raising? The Appeal Events Committee would like to hear from you. Please contact **Chris Self**.

Pledge forms from members of the congregation continue to come in. If you have not yet considered this, it is not too late. As I write this, Dennis Davis tells me that a donation of £1,000 Gift Aided has arrived in the morning post.

We are planning to invite representatives of local businesses to an evening event in the early summer at which there will be a presentation about our plans. If you would like to help with this, please contact **Frances O'Neil**.

There is a new display about the Restoration Programme in the Baptistery. Our thanks to **Nick Mayhew-Smith** for producing this.

Martin Cullingford has been recruiting a number of well-known figures with All Saints connections to write short pieces for the Website. For those who do not have access to the Internet, we will reproduce them in the Parish Paper. Here is the first of the series.

P.D. JAMES writes:

“All Saints, Margaret Street, is architecturally one of the most remarkable Victorian churches in the capital. The architect was William Butterfield, who managed on the small and difficult site to produce a soaring and magnificent house of God to serve the traditions of High Anglicanism. It is celebrated for its fine music and the dignity and beauty of its services, but above all it is a church of prayer and silence. Even when the church is empty, to enter its incense-scented interior is to feel the cares and preoccupations of daily living fall away in the contemplation of the beauty of holiness. It was partly because of this unique atmosphere which the church holds for me, and my great joy in describing it, that I used the church for a significant meeting place in my novel The Murder Room.”

(It was a pity that the makers of the television adaptation did not think it necessary to use the real thing and substituted an anonymous church. AM)

**The Appeal has raised: £561,000.
We need to raise a total of £2.1million.**

AM

Sunday February 18th

EASY LIKE SUNDAY EVENING

An evening of light musical entertainment
with the Choir of All Saints

7.30 p.m. at the Phoenix Pub
(west end of Margaret Street)

Tickets **£10** in advance from
the Parish Office and Sunday Shop

All proceeds to the Restoration Appeal

PEOPLE

Farewell to Nick Hewlett

Nick has sung in the choir for over 5 years. Last year he took up a new post as head of geography at Magdalene College School in Oxford and has now decided that the time has come to transfer his singing activities too. His last service was on the feast of the Epiphany and when the Vicar had thanked him for all that he had contributed to All Saints he received a round of applause. Nick will be joining the choir of St Mary Magdalene's church.

Welcome to Isabel Violet Waters

Isabel was baptised on the feast of the Baptism of Christ. She had as her godparents two much-loved former members of our choir and congregation: Richard and Lianne Poyser who now live with their two daughters in Witney.

Congratulations to Pat Phillips

Pat has been a regular worshipper during the week for a number of years. She was awarded an MBE in the New Year Honours List for her work with SPCK. Now that Pat is living in London, we will see rather more of her.

In Memory of Valerie Hargreaves-Smith

The Nativity panel on the north wall was cleaned before Christmas in memory of Valerie. A number of her family and friends were at All Saints at Epiphany when she was remembered during the Prayers at the Crib.

New Homes for Mary Bishop and Con Tweed

Increasing age and failing health have

meant that both Mary and Con have had to move into nursing homes. Mary is now living close to Lily and Norman Caplin and Con in Pimlico — again close to a number of friends from All Saints.

May They Rest in Peace

Richard Routledge and his wife Lesley first came to All Saints in Fr Ross's time. They have been living in Dorset for a number of years but still had fond memories of All Saints. Richard died just before Christmas. Philip and Yvonne Harland were able to represent us at the funeral service at which some of Richard's favourite music he associated with All Saints was played.

Robert Lacey. Robert's connection with All Saints was much more recent. He came to know All Saints through the marriage here of his daughter Olivia. Although he had been brought up as Methodist, he enjoyed worshipping at All Saints which had rekindled his faith. He had been ill for a number of years and died on Christmas Eve. His funeral took place at St Mary's, Billingshurst in Sussex. As the Vicar of St Mary's was away on his post-Christmas break, the service was conducted by Fr Alan.

CHRISTMAS PAST

We took my parents to see "Guys and Dolls" on the Friday before Christmas. Walking back through Golden Square, we encountered a Christmas Tree on the pavement, stripped of decorations and thrown out for collection. No sooner was Christmas Day past than the maelstrom of the "January Sales" began on Oxford Street.

At Christmas central London parishes experience an Exodus of regular worshippers who leave the city to join their families in other parts of the country. It is sometimes forgotten that London is a city not just of immigrants from the rest of the world, but from the rest of our own country; and has been for centuries.

Those of us who remain work hard to maintain All Saints services and welcome to visitors who join us for Christmas worship. Before Christmas itself, we had our own Lunchtime Carol Service followed by mulled wine and mince pies in the courtyard. Our thanks to Janet Drake — who is now our resident wine-muller — and her helpers for the catering.

That morning our organ scholar James came in bright and early to begin his practice, only to discover that the instrument stubbornly refused to come to life. James showed commendable steadiness under fire, contacted tuners and engineers, and the organ finally began to work with half an hour to spare.

It will need some work done on the electronics in the crypt which will necessitate the instrument being out of action for a couple of Sundays. This work will be scheduled for Lent when the organ is used less.

The Christmas tree — blessed at the lunchtime carol service — was decorated by Chris Self, Janet Drake, and Jean Castledine — with a little help from the Vicar. The process was reversed at Epiphany by Cedric Stephens, Ross Buchanan, Craig Williams, Dominic and Maria Aquilina — again with the assistance of the Vicar.

The Family Court in Wells Street came for their tenth carol service and as well as splendid singing there was an enjoyable party at the Court afterwards.

At Midnight Mass the Vicar preached on the new Crib which continues to draw many admiring comments. More than one person has said: “How can we get one for our church?” Our congratulations to Paul Weston for his inspired design.

The congregation at High Mass on Christmas Day continues to increase steadily in numbers. Christmas Cake, provided again by the Vicar’s mother, was served with coffee afterwards.

The Sunday after Christmas can be a “low” Sunday but we usually have a good turn out even though many of our folk are still away. This year was no exception.

Epiphany is now widely kept in many, if not most, parishes on the nearest Sunday but we are still able to maintain a full High Mass with a large congregation. This year our visiting preacher was the Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, the Bishop of Woolwich in the Diocese of Southwark. Bishop Christopher is well-known to many in our diocese where he served until called to the mission fields of south east London. His sermon will be published in a forthcoming issue of the Parish Paper.

The feast of the Baptism of Christ was made a lovely family occasion by the baptism of Isabel Violet Waters. The celebration lunch was part of the parish lunch downstairs.

Christmas draws to a close with the feast of Candlemas. We will welcome as our preacher this year, Canon Andrew Nunn,

Sub-Dean of Southwark Cathedral.

There will be something else special this year. The incense to be used at High Mass will be the frankincense presented on behalf of the Queen at the Chapel Royal at

St James's on the Feast of the Epiphany. It has been sent to us by Prebendary William Booth, the Sub-Dean of the Chapel Royal and Chaplain of St James's. He knew that we would put it to good use.

LENT 2007

“GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD”

A Series of Sermons at Sunday Evensong on God, the Church and the World

February 25th Prisons

The Revd Peter Hannaway, St Matthew's Westminster and the Home Office Prisons Department

March 4th Health Care

The Revd Edward Lewis, Hospital Chaplaincies Council

March 11th Armed Forces

The Revd Patrick Irwin, Chaplain to the Household Division

March 18th Business

Clive Wright OBE, Author of “The Business of Virtue”

March 25th Education

The Ven Stephan Welch, London Diocesan Board of Schools

John 3: 17 is said to be the most famous verse in Scripture, yet it is often interpreted in terms of individual salvation rather than God's love for the whole world.

Our visiting preachers this Lent all have significant experience in areas of our world's life which pose serious questions to the Church's mission. They bring a wealth of experience and insight which I am sure will stimulate us.

Fr Peter Hannaway, assistant priest at St Matthew's, Westminster, works in the Prisons Department of the Home Office and has been deputy governor of a prison.

Those who have been with us on the National Pilgrimage to Walsingham will recall his spirited leading the singing of the Pilgrimage hymn on the coach.

Fr Edward Lewis, a Welshman, was a parish priest in Wales, then a hospital chaplain there and in England before becoming the Chief Executive and Director of Training of the Hospital Chaplaincies Council of the Church of England.

Fr Patrick Irwin trained for the priesthood in Edinburgh, where I first knew him. He has also studied at the Liturgical Institute in Trier and taught theology at Brasenose College, Oxford. He has been

a Chaplain to the Forces since 1992 and is now Chaplain of the Household Division, based at the Guards Chapel. He has been an occasional worshipper at Evensong here for a number of years.

Clive Wright is a well-known face at All Saints on weekdays and on Sundays when he and his wife Joy are not in Suffolk. Clive chaired the governors of SPCK until recently. He worked for over 30 years in the oil and chemical industries, in the UK, Africa, Europe and the US. He has written and lectured widely on different aspects of

the relationship between Christian faith and the world of business. He is the author of “The Business of Virtue” published by SPCK.

Fr Stephan Welch became Archdeacon of Middlesex and Chairman of the London Diocesan Board of Schools last year. The Board is responsible for around 150 schools in the Diocese of London at a time when church schools are both popular and successful and, at the same time, under attack from secularist voices in the media.

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THE DIOCESE OF LONDON LENT APPEAL 2007

This year, on March 25th, we mark the 200th anniversary of the abolition by Parliament of the Slave Trade after the long campaign led by the great evangelical William Wilberforce.

The Bishop of Willesden writes:

“As Christians, like William Wilberforce 200 years ago, we believe that human beings should be free. But according to the UN, there are now at least five times as many slaves as there were in Wilberforce’s day.

“For the 2007 Diocese of London Lent Appeal, we need your help to raise £250,000 to help free enslaved people. We want to see an end to slavery in all its forms: to proclaim freedom for those imprisoned by poverty, to release the oppressed and truly show the year of the Lord’s favour.

*“The London Diocesan Appeal 2007 is supporting partners around the world through **SAMS, Tearfund, the Mothers’ Union, CMA and Christian Aid.** All the money you give will go towards changing the lives of those vulnerable to trafficking and modern slavery.”*

DIARY DATES

Friday 2 February — The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas)

6.30 p.m. Procession and High Mass

Preacher: Canon Andrew Nunn, Sub-Dean, Southwark Cathedral

Friday 9 February

The Cell of Our Lady of Walsingham and All Saints

6.30 p.m. Low Mass;

7.00 p.m. Talk by **Canon Martin Warner**, Master of the Guardians of the Shrine of OLW: **“Images of Mary in St Paul’s Cathedral”**

Wednesday 14 February

**7.00 p.m. School of Worship Sermon, Song and Sacrament:
an introduction to Methodist Liturgy — The Revd Geoff Cornell,**
Superintendent Minister to the West London Methodist Mission

Ash Wednesday 21 February

6.30 p.m. High Mass and Imposition of Ashes
Preacher: The Vicar
Low Masses (with ashing) at 8.00 a.m. and 1.10 p.m.

Wednesday 28 February

7.45p.m. The Cell of Our Lady of Walsingham and All Saints
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY... an ecumenical evening
with **Dr Michael Nazir-Ali**, Bishop of Rochester (C of E), **Fr Donald Bolen**,
Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City (RC),
and the **All Saints Choir**. With the participation of
THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF WALSINGHAM

Tuesday 13 March

7.00 p.m. School of Worship The Welsh Liturgy — Dr Michael Duggan,
member of the congregation of All Saints, Margaret Street

LOOKING AHEAD:

Friday 1 - Sunday 3 June Parish Retreat to St Francis House, Hemingford

Grey Conducted by Canon Donald Gray. *Contact Martin Woolley for
details on 07976 275383 or at m.g.woolley@btinternet.com*

Friday 22 - Sunday 24 June Annual Parish Weekend Pilgrimage to Walsingham

Contact Fr Ivan Aquilina for details.

Parish Pilgrimage to the Holy Land 22 - 29 August

We shall be visiting: Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Bethany, Jericho, Mount Tabor, Nazareth, Cana, Capernaum and Galilee.

We shall have a daily Mass and reflection, walk the Via Dolorosa and sail on the Sea of Galilee and free time for relaxation and private exploration. Total cost is £1,045 sharing. Secure a place by sending a £39 cheque made out to McCabe Pilgrimages to Fr Ivan Aquilina.

More details from Fr Ivan or from the back of Church.

Cell of Our Lady of Walsingham and All Saints', Margaret Street, London

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY...

AN ECUMENICAL INSIGHT

Wednesday February 28th at 7.45 p.m.



SPEAKERS

Dr Michael Nazir-Ali

Bishop of Rochester

Fr Donald Bolen

*Pontifical Council for
Promoting Christian Unity*

and

All Saints' Choir

With the participation of the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham

All Saints' Church

Margaret Street, London W1

Underground Station: Oxford Circus (Bakerloo, Central and Victoria Lines)

Telephone: 07947 139263 **Email:** allsaintscell@yahoo.co.uk

CONFESSIONS BEFORE LENT

Monday 19 February

12.00 - 1.00 p.m. Fr Gaskell

5.00 - 6.00 p.m. The Vicar

Shrove Tuesday, 20 February

12.00 - 1.00 p.m. The Vicar

5.00 - 6.00 p.m. Fr Aquilina

Ash Wednesday, 21 February

12.00 - 1.00 p.m. Fr Aquilina

4.45 - 5.45 p.m. The Vicar

Prior to those dates, a Priest is in the Confessional Monday to Friday 12.30 - 1.00 p.m. and at 5.30 p.m. and on Saturday at 5.30 p.m. (*or by appointment with any of the Clergy*).

ALL SAINTS FESTIVAL 2006

THE SERMON BY FR RODERICK LEECE, RECTOR, ST GEORGE'S, HANOVER SQUARE, AT EVENSONG ON FESTIVAL SUNDAY, 5 NOVEMBER

‘Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses let us look to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand on the throne of God.’

It is a real treat to be invited to what is unquestionably the most glamorous of local sister churches, made up so beautifully for your Festival celebrations — thank you Fr Alan. At this time of year I imagine that like me you are not sure on which day to categorise your prayers for departed loved ones. Family members and friends on All Souls, but those who have been an inspiration on your Christian pilgrimage get two outings (Fr Joseph Warrilow OSB of Quarr Abbey was such a one for me). All Hallows — all the saints or holy ones of God, the canonized ones, the Catholic saints, the Christian saints, and holy people of whatever faith who in their lives respond to the light they encounter.

You often hear the comment that

conceiving of saints with haloes around their heads above an altar in glory, misses the reality of the immanence and presence of saints within our own lives, and daily routine. But I would challenge any attempts to downplay or reject those haloes, and point out rather than being a barrier to understanding, those haloes still survive here and now as well. Think of the aura of sanctity, of a quality of holiness that is attractively and unmistakably present in the lives of some people you know, and furthermore is generally recognisable by others. A halo seems as good an image as any other, as a way of conceiving this hallowedness. It may be that some people think piety, rather than holiness, is implied by haloes — but if so, I think that is a pity.

When I was at Mirfield, tales were rife (in that kind way well known in Catholic theological colleges), and the hagiography much developed, concerning the tall, good looking, athletic, prayerful, slightly pious, blond seminarian. He was quickly brought down to earth by his peers. People

spoke of the marvel of a new apparition in college, of a little flower, blessed with the body of St Therese of Lisieux, and gifted with the spirituality of Attila the Hun. You can imagine how being left with such an amusing image might rather delay your own relationship with St Therese, apart from which I'm as suspicious as anybody about cardboard cut-out saints, which is what she is in danger of being seen as. But anyone who says, as Saint Therese did, 'I wish to spend my heaven doing good on earth', has the mark of authenticity, especially when compared to the comfortable heavenly haze of a gin and tonic rest that some of us aspire to, me included. I have a great devotion to the Little Flower of Lisieux.

Saints tend to be regarded as super-humans with extraordinary spiritual gifts, but on close inspection we notice that their character faults weren't always conquered, and that they retained their passions, though redirected to the love of God and service of others. One idea of holiness is indeed to speak of it as a converted passion.

Any monk or nun will tell you that saints can be difficult to live with. Many were founders of orders, congregations, charitable or educational institutions, and I guess needed relentless persistence, in achieving their aim for the benefit of others. I can speak personally, having worked at St Christopher's Hospice 25 years ago, of the dogged resolve and focus of Dame Cicely Saunders, who made such great strides for the hospice movement. She was not always easy to work with, but her achievement was remarkable and godly.

Every parish has their saints, and I am sure you'll have an idea of whom you regard as the holy ones of God in this place, and all of us are called. We were very lucky in my last parish in Stamford Hill to have at

least two remarkable souls, possessed with an unshakeable joy and confidence in the loving purposes of God and this radiated out to all. My experience in ministry has been that sanctity often goes hand in hand with suffering. Antjie Krog, in her book 'Country Of My Skull' about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, reports something similar when Desmond Tutu observed that those who had suffered most cruelly and terribly, were also the most generous, and forgiving to their torturers during the hearings.

Canon Martin Warner hosted a Deanery clergy visit to St Paul's last month, and will probably not realise just how attractively he described the ministry of the Cathedral, and the life of the Christian community there. I thought what an inspiring account of their Christian witness, and how desirable, and I went on from there to reflect on the difference between credibility and desirability in the life of faith. I went to that Deanery meeting expecting a 'feria' outing — a credible account of their work, but came away thinking so much more. How often, I thought, do I aim for 'credible' when preaching, and in my apologetics (which as you know involves defending faith as a reasonable position amongst mostly non-Christian agnostic friends). But faith is more than belief, and the hunger and search is for hearts and souls to be possessed and enraptured by the love of God, in the company of Jesus the Lord, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

I suspect we have as a Church allowed ourselves to be cornered into defending credible positions within a secular and sometimes hostile, or increasingly just plain bewildered and ignorant, world. I realise that philosophical discourse has moved on some way since I was a student,

but in the late 70s and early 80s the general atmosphere was not even to allow the questions of faith, let alone any meaningful debate. Maybe this background has left us with a timidity, a reluctance to offend, and a tendency to survive with an acceptable minimum of the deposit, of what is after all quite an extraordinary galaxy of faith. Not least as recounted in the letter to the Hebrews, and to which in living memory can be added practitioner martyrs such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Oscar Romero of San Salvador, Janani Luwum of Uganda, or the nameless saints who end up martyred as a result of anger towards the policies of the US and Britain in the Middle East, or the shining kindness of a Mother Teresa who did something so beautiful for God. The saints remind us we need to move beyond a credible to a desirable faith that looks to Jesus as pioneer and perfecter of our faith. Tony Blair still thinks he made a credible case for a war that was never just

or desirable from the Christian perspective, and even if there had been no credibility gap, my argument is that credibility, alone, is never enough.

I realise that credibility and desirability are of course linked, and would not wish to overplay the point. Most certainly we need to learn a credible faith, but ultimately and only to live, a desirable one. Living a desirable faith will require us to pay attention to our sins, and a constant resolve to bridge any credibility gap between faith and practise. The turning wheel of constant repentance is a given in the Christian life, but more worrying in our mission as Christ's saints in today's world would be to leave a desirability gap.

I end with a short quote from Francis Thompson who makes the point in more poetic language when he said: *'To most people, even good people, God is a belief. To the saints, he is an embrace'*.

A SERMON PREACHED BY THE VICAR ON “EVENSONG” 2 EPIPHANY, JANUARY 14th 2007

Tonight I am going to speak about the service we have just been celebrating: Evensong. Those who read the Parish Paper know I was prompted to do this by a comment from a parishioner who worried aloud about the future of Choral Evensong here — while at the same time confessing that he rarely came to it these days!

But first, I want to lay the foundation for what we might say about any form of Christian worship. There is an idea abroad in the world of the stand-up comedy — that worship is something demanded by God as if he was some eastern potentate insecure on his throne and requiring regular doses of sycophancy to reinforce his crumbling self-image. Or that God is some irascible and

unpredictable elderly relative who needs to be placated.

Well, I do not do stand-up comedy, but I am going to do some stand-up theology.

We do have to recognise honestly that this is sometimes how Christian worship comes across. I received a letter only recently from a devout Christian woman who had attended a Christmas service in which the burden of the sermon was that God was angry with the people there and they had better shape up. Yet they were given no opportunity during the service to confess the sins with which God was said to be angry. A Church which cannot stand a bit of being laughed at or about is not in a

very healthy spiritual state.

But this is in fact a mistaken view of what Christian worship is about. Our understanding of God comes from our Lord Jesus Christ — someone who did not go for courting public expressions of approval.

The English word comes from “**worship**” — so it is something we direct to the one we recognise as worthy of praise, love, adoration.

In the marriage service, bride and groom say, “**with my body, I thee worship**”. We would not think much of a husband or wife who demanded to be worshipped by their partner — but we would be equally unimpressed by one who did not willingly worship or honour theirs.

Christians worship God because we believe that the God revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ as perfect love is worthy of praise. We worship too because our lives made in the image of God need to be reordered and focused on God if we are to fulfil our destiny.

Worship is not something God needs to be God:

it is something we need that we might be fully human.

So then to Evensong as an act of worship, whether celebrated Sunday by Sunday here with all our resources of music and ceremony we can muster, or simply and quietly during the week with a small group of people.

I do not want to spend much time on the history of its development. Suffice it to say that Thomas Cranmer combined brilliantly the two evening services of the mediæval office — Vespers and Compline — into one. In fact they had often been run

together by hard-pressed clergy and were usually known in England as Evensong.

Cranmer and his fellow-Reformers were concerned with how the Church “**must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love**”. This was not just a matter of force-feeding people with information about God. It was about the transformation of people and the community to which they belonged by being suffused in Scripture and prayer.

Cranmer begins his service with the Penitential Prayers just as Compline had its examination of conscience at the end of each day. We do not use this every Sunday here — except in Lent — because most of the people who come to Evensong will already have confessed their sins at the Eucharist earlier in the day.

By confessing our sins, those things we have done, and those we have left undone, we leave them, as it were, at the door, disposing of them at the outset of the service. This teaches us that our shortcomings cannot stem the ever-flowing stream of God’s love. Our sins do not determine the shape and end of the Christian story. Instead they are outweighed, absorbed into a greater and more powerful story in which God has the first and the last word.

When our sins are forgiven, we can stand to open our lips in praise and to glorify the triune God. God has picked us up and set us on our feet.

The Psalms are at the core of the office and have been the Church’s hymnbook from the beginning. They provide us with words

which allow us to explore the life of faith, of our relationship with God, the world, each other, ourselves. They are by turns, passionate, confident, occasionally even self-satisfied, mystified, wondrous, brutal, proud, humble, grieved, desperate. But the one thing they are never is sentimental. They are the songs of a people who have been through the mill.

They show us a world, not of polite speech, but one in which no thought is too terrible to utter, no Christian feeling too fearful to express in prayer to the God who knows the secrets of our hearts.

In the Prayer Book offices, the Scriptures are at the heart of the service, surrounded by Canticles and Prayers.

How does Scripture work in the office?

Let us not pretend that there are no problems with the reading of Scripture; that there are not things we can learn from critical study of it — although not always perhaps what some critics think we should learn. In fact, the continuous reading of the Scriptures can be an antidote to fundamentalism.

It is important that the Church, and Anglicanism in particular, places Scripture reading primarily at the heart of public prayer rather than private devotion — it is a communal activity — not just an individual one.

The constant reading of Scripture by a system which tells us what to read rather than allowing us to read what we like, means that Scripture becomes not so much something *we read*, something we control, but something which *reads us*, something which searches and interrogates us, something which challenges and transforms

us. We finish the cycle of psalms and readings and then start over again, because the task is never completed. The young Samuel in tonight's lesson needed to hear God's voice three times before he knew that it was God speaking to him. Compared with most of us, he was a quick learner.

Evensong has inspired composers to produce beautiful music. It has stimulated imaginations. Scripture makes us think, not simply in a narrowly rationalist way, but by feeding our imaginations with the stories and images of Scripture. The great panorama of Scripture, including its internal arguments help us to grasp the reality both of this world and of the next; the world as it is and the world as God would have it be.

We respond to the reading of Scripture in **Canticle and Creed**.

Cranmer took the two Gospel canticles of Vespers — the **Magnificat** and Compline — the **Nunc Dimittis** — to serve as responses of praise to the Scripture readings.

After the Old Testament lesson, we sing of the moment when all the longings of Israel are embodied in Mary, when all the promises of the Old Testament find their yes in Christ.

These two canticles represent two halves of Christian experience. The story of a young woman mysteriously pregnant. The story of an old man, a priest, a pillar of the temple establishment.

One is the story of God's bursting into history, in the life of an unsuspecting girl. The other is of the longing of an old man, representing the history of Israel. Simeon's yearning for God to answer his prayer was the yearning of the nation itself.

Both are stories of transformation. We

stand to celebrate the God who answers prayer, keeps his promises, remembers the downtrodden, vindicates the oppressed, turns the world upside down.

The Apostles Creed is the Baptismal Creed of the Western Church. As we say it we are reminded daily of our baptismal covenant. It is not just a summary of doctrines. It is an act of allegiance. It is a prayer: it ends with **“Amen”**. It rests on the foundations of all that has gone before: the revelation of the nature of God and his activity in readings: the description of God embodied in the Scriptures, extolled in the Canticles.

The Prayers Kyrie, Lord’s Prayer and Suffrages, Collects, are our response in intercession to the love of God in the readings. They were meant, as was Cranmer’s Great Litany and his Prayer for the Church in the Eucharist, to include the whole of the nation’s life in prayer for its transformation. The forms he provided were to prove insufficient — so more were added; some officially — the State Prayers, The General Thanksgiving, the Prayer for All Conditions of Men etc; others unofficially — prayers **“After the Third Collect”**.

“In choirs and places where they sing here followeth the Anthem.”

The office of Compline had an anthem of Our Lady such as the Salve Regina at its close. In cathedrals and collegiate churches with choirs, there was substituted for this an anthem which would usually be a musical meditation on scripture or season, another way of responsive meditation.

There is much that is unvarying about Evensong. It meets the complaint uttered

by C.S. Lewis more than half a century ago, that lay people wanted the predictability when they went to church — but that the clergy loved to inflict endless variety on them. It’s just as well he did not live to see the era of power-point screen in front of the reredos for the latest worship song. Nowadays it seems the laity often want to inflict variety on the clergy.

Evensong does have a form and reliable structure. Once you have learned it you never really forget it. In his desire to produce something which everyone — not just religious professionals — could use — Cranmer was perhaps a bit too ruthless. He wanted to keep office hymns — but he could not write verse — so it was left to later figures — particularly the Catholic revival to produce hymnody to accompany the office, as we have now.

However, when you think about it, within the framework there is a good deal of variety: as the psalms and scriptures are read, the collects change as the Christian Year proceeds on its annual cycle — not to mention hymns and anthems, extra prayers, the sermon. In fact it provides us with a much richer variety than we could manage by ourselves. For people who struggle to pray it is a school of prayer.

For those of us, and I suspect that is most of us, who are filled with occasional good intentions about our prayer life which go the way of most good intentions, it provides a discipline which keeps us praying when we do not feel like it.

(I am indebted to Professor Sam Wells, Dean of Chapel at Duke University and The Revd Dr Tim Jenkins, Dean of Jesus College, Cambridge, for some of the ideas in this sermon.)

100 YEARS AGO

Lent was early in 1907 and the Vicar's letter was entitled "**With Christ in the Wilderness**". It was a call to the observance of a holy Lent. What he wrote still sounds remarkably appropriate a century later and can be read for present spiritual benefit and not simply for historical interest.

"Once more the sacred season of Lent is upon us, laden as it always is with golden opportunities for progress in the spiritual life.

We cannot I think do better than approach it from the elementary teaching which our Lord's retirement into the wilderness brings with it.

(1) He was led by the Spirit into *solitude*.

If this discipline was necessary for the Son of Man, how much more is for us men and for our salvation.

There is so much to be done. Modern life is so complex and its fevered rush is so great that there is danger lest we be hurried into Eternity without ever having quietly retired from the bustle of life to consider the great, central and all important truths of God, the Soul, Sin, Redemption and Eternity.

...We indeed cannot in any strict sense of the term retire from the world. There are duties to be done which we cannot avoid doing even if we would.

But Lent does give us our chance of withdrawing as far as possible from this world for meditation, prayer, study and communion with God.

Let us therefore resolve first to set apart some extra time for devotion and solitary communion with our Lord.

The best form this can take will be to rise early and to be present at the daily offering of the Holy Eucharist either at 7 or 8.*

(2) He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness for *self-denial*. For forty days and forty nights he fasted. These are days when the temptation to neglect the austere side of our religion and rest only upon its milder and sweeter aspects is very great. Yet the austere side is there and cannot be ignored with safety. One practical expression of it in the life of the Church is the duty of fasting and almsgiving. To some fasting will take the form of either of taking less food, or for those who can bear it, of taking no food at all for stated hours or for taking food we like less.

But fasting in matters of food is only one form of self-denial. There are some to whom fasting in this strict sense of the term means very little. They are far less dependent on food than others. To such a very real form of self-denial is to take less sleep or to abstain from amusements as far as possible or to discipline the mind by some serious form of study or to abstain from some harmless luxuries. To others again Lent will mean an opportunity for self-denial in the matter of the giving of alms. I do not want to use this letter as an incentive to stir you to renewed exertions in the support of this church and its ministry, but I do not refrain from pointing out that there must always be a constant call in this relation upon your offerings which indeed I know you are forward to recognise. But the range of the Church's needs is very wide...

(3) He was led by the Spirit to *solitude*, and for *self-denial*. But chiefest of all he as led there for testing, for trial, for *temptation*.

It is of course true that we are always being tested and tried by our Lord, and alas! how miserably we fail under the searching probation. Fail indeed we do constantly, but we fail, not to

sink, but to rise to higher things; to deeper insight into God's ways and to stronger resolution to do better in the future. This is always true but it is pre-eminently true of Lent. Let us listen to some of our Lord's searching questions. What is your *real* attitude towards the Gospel message? Here is a rich opportunity for informing yourself concerning "the way". How far are you going to seize these opportunities or not? What is your *real* attitude towards the Holy Scriptures? Here is a golden opportunity for searching yet deeper into the priceless treasures of the written Word. How far this Lent are you going to give up time to study *the* Book or to use the opportunities afforded for the exposition of its meaning? Here is a golden opportunity for increased use of the means of grace, of prayer, of communion, of confession. How far are you going to avail yourselves of the Treasures of Grace? Here is a golden opportunity for kindness, for forgiveness, for the penitent's return, for the saint's progress in grace, for the renewal of peace in the home, for the rekindling of the fires of religious devotion, for probing into the realities of our spiritual life, for unveiling the innermost recesses of self-deceit, for conviction of sin by the power of the Holy Ghost, for the realising of the Peace of God which passeth all understanding. All these pass before our mind's eye. How shall we stand the *trial* of Lent? May our Lord give us grace so to use our opportunity that we may redeem the time and may Easter find us nearer God and nearer the higher life."

* It should be easier for more people today because we have celebrations at 8, 1.10 and 6.30.

SUNDAYS AND SOLEMNITIES MUSIC AND READINGS

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

HIGH MASS AT 6.30 p.m.

During Candle Ceremony: God is light
— Harry Bramma

Processional Hymn: 157

Introit: Suscepimus, Deus

Mass: Spatzenmesse — Mozart

Lessons: Malachi 3: 1 - 5

Psalm 24

Hebrews 2: 14 - end

Hymn: 156 (T 288)

Gospel: Luke 2: 22 - 40

Preacher: The Revd Canon
Andrew Nunn, Sub-Dean,
Southwark Cathedral

Creed: Credo II

Anthem: Nunc dimittis — Holst

Hymns: Fairest Lord Jesus, 187, 234

Voluntary: Improvisation on 'Lumen ad
revelationem gentium'
— Paul Brough

• SUNDAY 4 FEBRUARY THE THIRD SUNDAY BEFORE LENT

HIGH MASS AT 11.00 a.m.

Entrance Hymn: 343 (vv 3 & 6 Descant
— Whitlock)

Introit: Circumdede runt me

Mass: Missa Brevis — Palestrina

Lessons: Isaiah 6: 1 - 8
 Psalm 138
 1 Corinthians 15: 1 - 11
Hymn: 239
Gospel: Luke 5: 1 - 11
Preacher: The Vicar
Anthem: Ave verum corpus — Elgar
Hymns: 295, 344, And can it be
Voluntary: Prelude and Fugue in C minor
 BWV 549 — Bach

**SOLEMN EVENSONG
 at 6.00 p.m.**

Psalms: 1, 2
Lessons: Wisdom 6: 1 - 21
 Colossians 3: 1 - 22
Office Hymn: 54
Canticles: The Short Service
 — Ayleward
Anthem: Jesu, the very thought of thee
 — Bairstow
Preacher: Fr Ivan Aquilina
Hymn: 452

BENEDICTION

O Salutaris: Laloux
Hymn: 394
Tantum Ergo: Laloux
Voluntary: Lied — Vierne

**• SUNDAY 11 FEBRUARY
 THE SECOND SUNDAY
 BEFORE LENT**

HIGH MASS AT 11.00 a.m.

Entrance Hymn: 263 (omit *)
Introit: Exsurge, quare
Mass: Missa ‘Simile est regnum
 cœlorum’ — Victoria
Lessons: Genesis 2: 4b - 9, 15 - end
 Psalm 65
 Revelation 4
Hymn: 438

Gospel: Luke 8: 22 - 25
Preacher: Fr Ivan Aquilina
Creed: Credo III
Anthem: Ave verum corpus — Lassus
Hymns: 238, 254 (T 458), 265
Voluntary: Præludium in G minor,
 BuxWV 148 — Buxtehude

**SOLEMN EVENSONG
 at 6.00 p.m.**

Psalms: 147
Lessons: Genesis 1: 1 - 2: 3
 Matthew 6: 25 - end
Office Hymn: 54
Canticles: Service in five parts
 — Weelkes
Anthem: O how amiable are thy
 dwellings — Weelkes
Preacher: The Vicar
Hymn: 267

BENEDICTION

O Salutaris: Bach
Hymn: 285 (i)
Tantum Ergo: Bach
Voluntary: Voluntaries I and II
 — Weelkes

**• SUNDAY 18 FEBRUARY
 THE SUNDAY NEXT
 BEFORE LENT**

HIGH MASS AT 11.00 a.m.

Entrance Hymn: 410
Introit: Illuxerunt
Mass: Missa Brevis — Kodály
Lessons: Exodus 34: 29 - end
 Psalm 99
 2 Corinthians 3: 12 - 4: 2
Hymn: 177
Gospel: Luke 9: 28 - 36
Preacher: The Vicar

Anthem: Christ is the morning star
— Norman Caplin
Hymns: 389, 286, 178
Voluntary: Toccata — Whitlock

SOLEMN EVENSONG at 6.00 p.m.

Psalm: 89: 1 - 18
Lessons: Exodus 3: 1 - 6
John 12: 27 - 36a

Office Hymn: 54

Canticles: The Gloucester Service
— Howells

Anthem: Lord, thou has been our
refuge — Bairstow

Preacher: Fr Ivan Aquilina
Hymn: 247

BENEDICTION

O Salutaris: Norman Caplin
Hymn: 242
Tantum Ergo: Norman Caplin
Voluntary: Improvisation on
'Picardy' — Paul Brough

WEDNESDAY 21 FEBRUARY ASH WEDNESDAY

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

Entrance Hymn: 507
Introit: Misereris omnium
Mass: Missa 'Emendemus in
melius' — Palestrina
Lessons: Joel 2: 1 - 2, 12 - 17
Psalm 51
2 Corinthians 5: 20b - 6: 10
Hymn: 59 (T 60 (i))
Gospel: Matthew 6: 1 - 6, 16 - 21

Preacher: The Vicar
During the Imposition of Ashes:
Emendemus in melius
— Byrd
Psalm 103

Anthem: Miserere mei, Deus — Byrd
Hymns: 66 (T 63), 70 (i), 445

• SUNDAY 25 FEBRUARY FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

HIGH MASS AT 11.00 a.m.

Litany in Procession: Loosemore
Introit: Invocabit me
Mass: Mass for four voices — Byrd
Lessons: Deuteronomy 26: 1 - 11
Psalm 91
Romans 10b - 13
Hymn: 67
Gospel: Luke 4: 1 - 13
Preacher: Fr Ivan Aquilina
Anthem: Cast me not away from thy
presence — Wesley
Hymns: 507, 62, 65 (T 329)

SOLEMN EVENSONG at 6.00 p.m.

Psalm: 119: 73 - 88
Lessons: Jonah 3
Luke 18: 9 - 14
Office Hymn: 60
Canticles: The Short Service — Byrd
Anthem: Ne irascaris, Domine — Byrd
Preacher: The Revd Peter Hanaway,
Assistant Priest, St Matthew's,
Westminster
Hymn: 73 (i)

BENEDICTION

O Salutaris: 95
Hymn: 69
Tantum Ergo: 295

CALENDAR AND INTENTIONS FOR FEBRUARY 2007

1	<i>St Brigid, Abbess of Kildare</i>	Unity
2	THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE (CANDLEMAS)	Those in need
3	St Anskar	The Diocese in Europe
4	✠ THE 3rd SUNDAY BEFORE LENT	OUR PARISH AND PEOPLE
5	r Requiem (1.10 p.m.)	The departed
6	<i>The Martyrs of Japan, The Accession of Queen Elizabeth II</i>	Elizabeth II
		The Queen
7		Musicians
8	v for Unity	Christian Unity
9		Those in need
10	<i>St Scholastica</i>	Religious
11	✠ THE 2nd SUNDAY BEFORE LENT	OUR PARISH AND PEOPLE
12		The unemployed
13		The homeless
14	Ss Cyril and Methodius	Friends of All Saints
15	<i>St Sigfrid; Thomas Bray</i>	Unity
16		Those in need
17	Janani Luwum, Archbishop of Uganda	The Church in Africa
18	✠ THE SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE LENT	OUR PARISH AND PEOPLE
19		St Cyprian's Theological College, Tanzania
20		Preparation for Lent
21	ASH WEDNESDAY	Our Lenten observance
22		Unity
23	St Polycarp	Those in need
24		Walsingham
25	✠ THE 1st SUNDAY OF LENT	OUR PARISH AND PEOPLE
26		Deanery Synod
27	George Herbert, Priest, Poet	Spiritual Writers
28	Ember Day	Those to be Ordained

Please note:

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

r — The monthly Requiem — 1.10 p.m. this month

v — a Votive Mass

