



All Saints Parish Paper

MARGARET STREET, LONDON W.1

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VICAR'S LETTER

On my way home on the Underground recently, I set about the crossword in one of London's new free evening papers. One clue was "All Saints' Latest Hit?". I suspected that this did not refer to our choir's latest CD. In fact, much to my family's surprise, I knew the answer: "**Rock Steady**". I confess that I only knew this because I had seen it advertised at Oxford Circus and anything with the title "All Saints" always catches my eye.

At about the same time, someone told me that when he comes into All Saints to pray on his way to work, he has taken to sitting by one of the pillars because it symbolises the strength and reliability he needs in his daily struggle with addiction. It is for him a "rock steady" place.

I have been working my way through a book with a very different title: "**Living Free**" by the late Fr Harry Williams CR. Harry was a curate here in the late 40s and while his spiritual quest took him into regions which some Margaret Street worshippers, then and now, would find very uncomfortable, he retained an affection and respect for the place. He was to become one of a loose-knit group of radical theologians, mostly associated with Cambridge, who set about disturbing

the slumbers of the Church of England in the 1960s. The book lay on Williams' desk at Mirfield for a good many years and it seems he had given up any intention of publishing it. As one reviewer has pointed out, it has a very dated feel; very much the product of its age. That does not mean that it does not contain some sharp insights that remain relevant.

A nervous breakdown and coming to terms with his sexuality involved him in long courses of analysis and treatment. This led to an intensive study of psychology; which more than anything determined his critical attitude to traditional Christianity. He saw himself, and wanted others to see, that God's activity was not confined to the walls of the church. Much of his frustration with the Church seems to spring from his awareness of its inability or unwillingness to relate to people outside it.

This did not mean that he derided entirely what happened in churches. He says of All Saints and churches like it:

"Church services, I know, have been an inspiration and source of renewal and strength to thousands of people. When I was a curate in London at All Saints, Margaret Street, hard-worked people, or people living under considerable strain of one sort or another, or happy

young people who were students or shop-assistants, or old people who were feeling the disabilities of age, all sorts and conditions of men and women, used to write and tell us what a joy and recreation it was to attend our High Mass or Evensong, and how they went away feeling equipped as they weren't before to cope with life. So I am aware from my personal experience of how God can and does give himself to people when they worship him by means of what goes on in church. And this remains gloriously true in spite of the few to be found in most churches (and religious communities) for whom religion in the sense of church is what Freud (wrongly, of course, in my view) said religion always is — an obsessional neurosis. Such people, think, speak, plan and fantasize about nothing but church, as golf or railway fanatics drive you mad with boredom as they endlessly expatiate on their particular cult. But the abuse of something is no argument against its proper use, even if the corruption of the best is the worst.”

Anyone who has worked in a city centre church will vouch to the truth of what he has to say: both the positive and the negative. We still receive letters of appreciation from all sorts of people. However, what he says about the neurotically religious remains true also. Indeed it has been supported by recently published work in a study of the future of the parish church.

Williams hoped for a future in which churches would be more centres of contemplation than places where services were held. I must confess that I do not understand why liturgy and contemplation

should be seen as mutually exclusive. I am confirmed in this view by another comment about All Saints which has been passed on to me recently. It comes from Mother Rosemary of the Sisters of the Love of God. She had lived at All Saints House before entering the community some 30 years ago. She wrote to our own Hilary Rodger, an Oblate of the community.

“...half an hour in All Saints, Margaret Street, on the way to a cousin ...I was quite bowled over by the sense of prayer — my first visit since I joined SLG.”

SLG is a contemplative community, so Mother Rosemary knows what she is talking about.

Contemplative prayer involves us being drawn into the mystery of God which we celebrate in the liturgy. It is challenging as well as comforting. Contemplation in liturgy, scripture and silence brings us back constantly to the God who is infinitely greater than ourselves. It challenges our false foundations; those which are not built on the rock which is Christ, the Church's one foundation.

At Christmas we celebrate the Christ who is both human and divine; the child in a manger, one with us and the eternal Divine Word, infinitely greater than us. It is not, “either-or” but “both-and”. Our celebration, our contemplation should lead to the healing and restoration of our humanity, which for all its sinfulness, even its obsessional neurosis, is made in the image and likeness of God.

That report on the future of the parish identified the ‘niceness’ of clergy and

of many parishioners as part of the problem; an unwillingness to confront bad behaviour. I acknowledge that there is truth in this. But the alternative to a nice church is not a nasty one. It is vitally important that we continue to work hard at being not only prayerful but hospitable. Let me end with another note of encouragement which has come my way recently.

Robert Brown and Paul Maranger from the Church of the Redeemer in Toronto write:

“We attended High Mass this past Sunday, first Sunday in Advent, during our short holiday in London. We found the liturgy and music meaningful and beautiful — a wonderful worship experience. Your congregation is very welcoming. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting members of the All Saints community following the service and were delighted to be included in the weekly Sunday lunch – wonderful fellowship and delicious food. We especially thank Richard, Craig and Ross who kindly invited us to join them at lunch and we thank everyone else at All Saints who made us feel welcome.”

With best wishes and prayers for Christmas and the New Year.

Alan Moses

FROM THE VICAR'S BOOKSHELVES

Sir Ninian Comper

A new book on Comper by Anthony Symondson and Stephen Bucknall has been published by Spire Books. Comper is the second of the two great architects

associated with All Saints. His work is most obvious in the sanctuary and the Lady Chapel.

In 1909 he restored the altar screen by William Dyce on the east wall. Dyce's panels had almost entirely perished and Comper replaced the series, painted on mahogany boards with zinc backings, in order to protect what was left of Dyce's originals. The main figures were lengthened to improve the proportions. In 1916 new figures, of the Fathers of the Eastern and Western Churches, and child saints and martyrs, were added to the blind tracery on the north and south sides of the sanctuary.

In 1911, the chancel vault was decorated, and a set of silk damask hangings provided for the lower east and south walls; the high altar was lengthened; wrought iron brackets were provided for the sanctuary lamps.

(The authors comment that Comper's work effectively changed the character of All Saints by drawing the sting from Butterfield's constructional polychromy. His proposals for lime-washing the interior were not accepted; something for which we be thankful.)

Lady Chapel, altar, carved altar screen and tester.

Hanging tabernacle of silver presented by the Duke of Newcastle as a war memorial to the members of the choir, with an electric hoist, dedication brass and marble slab.

1937 - 40 he designed the memorial brass to Prebendary Mackay which can be seen on the wall above the Vicar's stall.

In 1928 he proposed a black iron *reja* for the chancel screen. Unlike many other gothic revival churches, All Saints does not have a full screen separating chancel from nave. A *reja* is a Spanish style iron screen which allows greater visibility of the altar than a carved wooden one. If you want to see an example, there is one by Comper in the Warriors Chapel in Westminster Abbey.

“The Daily Telegraph Book of Carols” by Ian Bradley

Dr Bradley teaches at the University of St Andrews. He has written widely on hymns and music in church life, and the spiritual significance of musicals, and his latest offering is a Christmas stocking full of good things about Christmas carols.

He writes of how for many Christmas begins with “Once in Royal David’s City” from King’s College, Cambridge, on Christmas Eve. (Did mine begin this year, I wonder, when I heard it for the first time in the food hall of Marks & Spencer in the middle of November?)

We assume that carol singing is an essential part of Christmas worship, but it has not always been so. Carols began life as pagan tunes and then became popular Christian celebrations of the birth of Christ. St Francis of Assisi and his emphasis on the humanity of Christ, followed by late mediæval humanism, gave them a real boost. At the Reformation, Luther liked them but Calvin did not. Scotland and England tended to follow the Genevan line and nothing other than metrical psalms and paraphrases could be sung in church — that is where we get “While Shepherds watched” from.

High Church Anglicans like Lancelot Andrewes were more well-disposed but during the Commonwealth period they were banned along with other Christmas celebrations. At the Restoration, Christmas came back but carols remained out in the cold, liturgically speaking.

Thomas Hardy, in “Under the Greenwood Tree”, lamented the passing of the old church gallery band who had also gone out carol singing, and laid the blames for this firmly on high church clergy with their surpliced choirs and organs. In fact, says Bradley, it was these same Tractarians who ended the liturgical tyranny of the metrical psalm and literally brought carols in from the cold and into church. Figures associated with all Saints appear in this, Frederick Oakeley who translated *Adeste Fideles* into English, John Mason Neale, and Christina Rossetti, whose “In the Bleak Midwinter” is now the nation’s favourite carol.

PREACHING AWAY

Fr Alan preached at Holy Trinity, Sloane Street, on the Feast of Christ the King. Our former Vicar, Bishop Michael Marshall, is now the Rector, assisted at times by another former Vicar of All Saints, Canon David Hutt, now retired from Westminster Abbey.

Fr Alan preached at St Andrew’s, Romford, for St Andrew’s Day. The Vicar there, Fr John Francis Friendship, was a parishioner here in Fr Marshall’s time.

SUNDAY EVENSONG

Some parishioners expressed their concern to me recently about the future of Sunday Evensong — although they candidly

admitted that they rarely attend these days. It used to be said that Evensong in many a Church of England Parish was killed off decades ago by “The Forsyte Saga” on television. It is certainly true that there are relatively few parishes in London which now have Sunday evening worship. Some of those that do are evangelical in tradition. They have services in the evening with songs, but they would hardly be recognizable as Prayer Book Evensong.

All Saints is, I think, the only parish church in central London which maintains a Sunday-by-Sunday service of Choral Evensong, Sermon and Benediction. A good proportion of those who attend are from other parishes; some are our own people who are in old-fashioned evangelical language “twicers”. A good many of our people rarely or never come. They may not even be sure what it is all about.

I am pleased to note that at least two theologian-priests have written recently in praise of Evensong, not as a cultural artefact, but as a spiritual discipline. Like them, I believe there are positive reasons for commending Evensong and I would like to share them with you. I could write about it but that would be rather like writing about music or swimming. To get the real sense of what is involved, we need to do it.

So, on Sunday January 14th, I am going to preach at Evensong about Evensong. I hope that this might help those of you who already know and love the service to grow in understanding and that those who know little or nothing of it may discover something of its power. *AM*

AN INTRODUCTION TO ST LUKE’S GOSPEL

While I am on the theme of understanding the liturgy, many of you will be aware that this year our Sunday Gospel readings come mainly from the Gospel according to St Luke.

I will give a talk about the particular characteristics and qualities of this Gospel, its picture of Jesus and its place in the life of the Church on Wednesday January 17th at 7.00 p.m. *AM*

ADVENT CAROL SERVICE

Advent Sunday is one of the few Sundays in the year when we give up our normal Sunday Evening routine. Instead of Evensong and Benediction, we have a service of readings and music for Advent. This year there was an excellent congregation, considerably younger in average age than that at Evensong and a good deal larger; we ran out of service sheets.

Our next special service on Sunday evening is our **Epiphany Carol Service** on Sunday January 7th.

SOME HOME IMPROVEMENTS

The Crib

While much of our attention is dedicated to the Restoration Programme and Appeal, it is inevitable that in a church like ours, things wear out and need repair or replacement.

A kind parishioner noted a couple of years ago that our Crib was not exactly worthy of its setting. In fact, John Forde had been working wonders with limited resources for some years past. That generous parishioner has funded the design and construction of a new crib and the figures have been renovated with funds from the Friends of All Saints. The whole ensemble — new and refreshed — will be in place for Midnight Mass. It will be installed below the Nativity panel on the north wall which has been cleaned in memory of Valerie Hargreaves-Smith.

Sanctuary Stools

These too had reached a sorry state and had been out of use for some time. It is good to report that they have now been reupholstered and restored to use.

The Paschal Candle Stand

This magnificent item has accumulated the dust and dirt of the ages. It will be cleaned and restored professionally in time for Easter.

Both these projects are the result of generous gifts.

Westminster in Bloom

Janet Drake and Fr Alan attended a reception hosted by the Lord Mayor of Westminster for those who had won awards in the competition. All Saints won first prize in the Public Buildings section. On Advent Sunday, the Vicar presented the prize, again, to Janet, Craig Williams and Monica Hall, who with Sandra When, make up the gardening team.

A Bench for Guy

A bench for the courtyard has been

presented in memory of Guy by Richard Connon. It was dedicated after the evening Mass on December 11th, the anniversary of Guy's death. A large gathering of Guy's friends attended.

The Restoration Appeal

A very enjoyable and successful quiz night was held at St Botolph's Church Hall in Bishopsgate; so successful that the Vicar who acted as chief scorer and adjudicator, mused aloud that it would probably become an annual event.

John McWhinney writes:

"Led by Fr Ivan, the Walsingham Cell organised a popular parish quiz night in November to raise funds for the Restoration Appeal. The idea was not only to support the campaign to restore the church but to encourage people to make new friends within the All Saints community.

"The plan seems to have worked on both counts. The evening of laughter and friendly competition brought 80 people together and raised £585 for the Appeal. For a donation of £10 each, participants were entertained to sandwiches and wine and pondered their way through ten rounds of questions on history, food and drink, English Literature, to name but a few.

"Two members of the Choir laid down their hymn sheets and rolled up their sleeves. Mhairi Ellis secured the free use of the beautifully panelled parish hall of St Botolph's, Bishopsgate. She also added up scores quicker than Carol Vorderman. James Sherwood showed his other voice talents as our comedian

compere, entertaining all eleven teams with jokes between rounds and reading out some of the more amusing and creative answers.

“The ubiquitous Cedric Stephens marshalled the troops, offering his indispensable organising skills with a gently guiding hand, while a generous donor added flair to the fun with a giant silver balloon twinkling above each team’s table.

“As the evening commenced, a hush fell over the assembly as Domenico and Maria Aquilina carried in a tub of water. This was to immerse the mobile of any contestant caught phoning a friend. Domenico and Maria served as our indefatigable runners and part-time scorekeepers for the evening. Questions and answers both were kept in utmost secrecy before the event by the three ‘magi’ who set the quiz, Jean Castledine, Paul Weston and this writer.

“The Vicar proved an adept and generous chief adjudicator, tactfully allowing any reasonably close answer. He intimated that, in the light of the fun, he could see this becoming an annual event.

“But who won this year’s quiz?

“One of the two teams of servers competing, the brainy “Fortescues” demonstrated that they knew more than “The Ritual Reason Why”. They pulled well ahead of the pack, despite the Vicar’s insistence that there be no round of detailed questions about vestments and church plate.

“Our special thanks go to Fr Aquilina, to St Botolph’s, and to everyone who braved transport problems on the night to join the fun. All were agreed, ‘We really must do it again!’.”

The Play of Herod

Areana, a group of students from Cambridge, offered to perform the “The Play of Herod” which was written in the French monastery at Fleury in the 12th century. The play is a dramatic musical retelling of the Christmas story. The whole work is sung in Latin to plainchant tones — indeed regular worshippers would recognise some of the chants such as the *Gloria* and the *Te Deum*.

The play was originally performed at Epiphany, the end of the 12 day feast of Christmas. It recounts the journey of the Magi who follow the star from the East to Bethlehem by way of Jerusalem and King Herod. Rather than a stage, the play uses processions through the church to symbolise the physical and spiritual journey of the Wise Men.

Even if some of us were struggling with half-remembered Latin, we all knew the plot, and could follow what was going on in a darkened and atmospheric All Saints.

Our thanks go to Helen Foxhall Forbes, Christopher Hodgkinson and the other performers; as well as to Janet Drake and Chris Self who provided the first mulled wine and hot mince pies of our season. The event raised £370 for the Restoration Appeal.

A CHURCH CRAWL

As we are in the midst of our appeal for the restoration of the interior of All Saints, it occurred to me that it might be of interest and good for morale to see what has been achieved in other churches. Our near neighbours at St George's, Bloomsbury, have been engaged in a massive restoration of their Hawksmoor building. Hawksmoor was an architect as distinctive in his own period as William Butterfield would be in the 19th century.

We have arranged with the Rector, Dr Perry Butler, for a group from All Saints to visit St George's on Sunday January 21st at 3.00 pm. Fr Butler will give us a talk about the church and the restoration project.

If this proves to be a popular outing, we will look at the possibility of other visits during the year. *AM*

DIARY DATES

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.*

Monday 15 January

7.00 p.m. Meeting of the Parochial Church Council

Thursday 18 January

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity until the 25th

Sunday 21 January

11.00 a.m. High Mass Our visiting preacher will be **Fr Bill Franklin**
of the Anglican Centre in Rome

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

HINDE STREET METHODIST CHURCH

invites you to

THE HUGH PRICE HUGHES LECTURES 2007

“PRAYING TWICE”

(St Augustine: “He who sings, prays twice”)

February 13 at 7.30 p.m.

Canon Lucy Winkett,

Precentor of St Paul’s Cathedral

“Singing as an Act of Resistance”

March 13 at 7.30 p.m.

Professor Dick Watson

Emeritus Professor of English at Durham University

and scholar of Charles Wesley’s hymns

“If the Bible were lost” ...Charles Wesley and Scripture

April 3 at 7.30 p.m.

The Revd Dr Tim Macquiban

Principal of Sarum College

**Passiontide Themes in the Eucharistic Hymns of Charles Wesley
an exploration in music and words**

May 8 at 7.30 p.m.

The Revd Dr Paul Chilcote

Professor of the Practice of Evangelism, Duke University

and President of the Charles Wesley Society (USA)

“The Gift Inspeakable in Song”:

Charles Wesley and the Language of Faith

June 12 at 7.30 p.m.

The Revd Dr Brian Wren

Conant Professor of Worship, Columbia Theological Seminary

and Hymn Writer

**“Sing Lustily and with Good Courage!” — A Hymn-Poet’s
Appreciation of John Wesley’s “Directions for Singing”
and Charles Wesley’s Hymns**

Admission Free

ALL SAINTS

MARGARET STREET
LONDON W1

www.allsaintsmargaretstreet.org.uk

Sunday January 7th
6.00 p.m.

EPIPHANY CAROL SERVICE

A Service of Readings and Music
with the Choir of All Saints

ALL SAINTS FESTIVAL 2006

THE SERMON BY FR ALAN GYLE,
RECTOR, ST PAUL'S, KNIGHTSBRIDGE,
ON ALL SOULS DAY, 2 NOVEMBER

Dying and living...

+In nomine...

What, I wonder, do you find yourself saying when you hear the news that someone has died? It is one of the great social challenges we all face, for however fortunate we are, death is ultimately inescapable in our lives and at some stage we are all confronted with the news of the death of a friend, or a friend of a friend. And what do you say?

Sometimes of course we are overwhelmed by grief, and our response comes

from somewhere deep within us, uncharted by our rational minds, especially when that death is close to us or is quite unexpected. But more often we *are* able to choose — and indeed we *have* to choose, and to decide what it is we shall say.

It is hard, isn't it, one of the hardest things of all.

What we say, I think betrays a fundamental human attitude to the reality of death and the process of dying.

from death as it is now fashionable to do, we usher the fact of death in through the main door, get out splendid vesture, make special preparation and not least in our musical offering, and in this liturgy throw ourselves into the acknowledgment and remembrance of death: the deaths of our dear departed, our founders and benefactors, all those whose gift to us in our age has been life and opportunity but from whom the gates of death distance and separate us.

All of which, to the casual contemporary observer wandering in from Margaret Street outside, must seem either to be slightly mawkish self-indulgence, or absolute counter-cultural madness, or perhaps (and most damningly of all) just a little ‘quaint’, another example of the church’s out-of-touchness, its failure to move with the enlightenment of the secular age... an attractive annual *mediævalism* surviving, just, in the modern city.

But embracing death, welcoming it in and acknowledging its centrality in our experience as Christians is neither madness nor maudlin romanticism: it is simply to put death where death is and ought to be — at the heart of life. For the Christian, true life is shot through with the pattern of dying and death as watered silk: and the whole of the church’s life, in fact, is an enacting of that pattern — dying and rising — drawing something humans instinctively seek to ignore right into the heart of things. And that because at the heart of our life is a death: the death of Christ.

For all Christians, dying is a daily part of life. Death not confined to All Souls Day — far from it. Dying and rising: daily

in prayer and confession, rehearsed daily in creed and at the altar, and expressed repeatedly and powerfully in the liturgy of the Church; dying to self the hallmark of our spirituality — an embracing of dying and death no longer ‘the enemy’, but a way of living, and living most fully.

All around us in this place, after all, are the signs of death: emblems of the Passion, and most prominently of all, above the altar, Comper’s stunning image of a dying man. That is our pattern, the death we must embrace: an echoing in lives that die to self, of that *perfect* self-giving of Christ on the Cross, even to death.

Not, in our case, always perfectly, of course... And at this Mass we pray both that God will strengthen us to be more faithful in our revealing of Christ crucified — and that God will receive our dear departed with mercy... But if, in our case, not perfectly, then at least with commitment: never ultimately turning aside from the task, and always being assured of that grace and forgiveness that is God’s gift to us.

It sounds gloomy and terrible, doesn’t it? Dying every day... The Christian message, talked about in abstraction, sometimes sounds less than appealing. But we know in our communities, in our churches, in the warmth of our fellowship, our love of life and in our laughter, that this way of dying daily is a way also of deep and abiding joy.

It is this conviction that gives us hope. Not simply the anodyne consolation that, as the Book of Wisdom says, in some way ‘the souls of the righteous are in the

hands of God’ — but a real and living hope that transforms — because through the dying and rising of Christ in which we share daily through baptism, all of God’s creation is being brought to fullness and to a salvation (as the First Epistle of Peter says) ready to be revealed at the last time, in God’s eternity. And that fills us not with mild comfort as those gathered

for an annual act of remembrance might feel soothed in their loss — but, at this Mass, with confidence and with what that Epistle describes as “an indescribable and glorious joy”.

Which is why, when confronted by death, at this and every Mass we do know what to say: Alleluia, thanks be to God!

ALL SAINTS FESTIVAL 2006

THE SERMON BY FR MARK BIRCH, CHAPLAIN, HELEN AND DOUGLAS HOUSE, OXFORD, AT HIGH MASS ON FESTIVAL SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5

‘(God) will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death for ever.’

Isaiah 26: 7.

Every time Christians celebrate the Mass, we celebrate the demise of death. In bread and wine we show forth the one who died and who yet lives, and who is therefore the bread of life for us. We celebrate the accomplishment of God’s purpose that life should have the final word — and in this festal octave we celebrate the Saints who have professed this faith, who have lived and died, as James Alison puts it ‘as though death were not’. The Mass celebrates the demise of death. It is an audacious claim — a claim that leaves many, indeed may at times leave us, quite baffled.

I have recently started work as Chaplain to two hospices in east Oxford — places

where to say that death is defeated can be particularly baffling. These hospices have a special link with All Saints, as many of you well know. They were both founded by Sr Frances Dominica, of the All Saints Sisters of the Poor, the religious order that first cut its teeth in the streets around this very church in the mid-nineteenth century. Helen and Douglas House, in Oxford, offer care and support to children and young adults with life-limiting illnesses — they are offered as places where such children and young adults can come to live, to give them and their families some respite from the relentless round of daily care and medical intervention, but they are offered primarily as places where children and young adults can come to die. So what on earth can it mean to celebrate the Mass, to celebrate the demise of death, in such places, and indeed in any place, since even within the congregations of lively London churches, death imposes itself from time to time.

In the Mass we celebrate the demise of death. But is the Mass, and therefore our faith, simply a gross act of denial; a simple pretending that death is defeated despite the evidence of it all round us, and indeed within us? We heard texts today that prophesy God destroying the shroud; the final clothing to swaddle a dead body; the dumb cloth that hobbled and gagged the corpse of Lazarus as he spluttered back to life; the folded linen that was left so neatly on the stone ledge in the empty tomb. In the Revelation to John the new heaven and the new earth is accomplished — It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end — and death, we are told, will be no more. The raising of Lazarus, and above all the resurrection of Jesus himself, is the sign that this is not just some distant future possibility — it is here, now, accomplished — we are being baptised into it, and sharing, at this altar, in Isaiah's great banquet on the heavenly mountain; sharing sublime food, tasting eternal life. Is this all simply an evasion, a denial of the fact that none of us finds easy to face — that death comes to us all unbidden, most times unwelcome, and that it is final?

Certainly in Oxford we face a fair deal of self-righteous atheism, of which Professor Richard Dawkins is the undoubted High Priest, telling us that for the sake of humanity, for the sake of the whole world, we must give up this God delusion and take proper responsibility for our own lives and deaths. For him, to celebrate the Saints, to aspire to Sainthood ourselves is basically an exercise in sucking up to God. We, people of faith, are accused of being morally weak, for we only ever do anything good if we think it will win us brownie-points with

the big man upstairs and give us a good deal in the after-life. And since, in a non-theological world-view, it is all just a variation on self-interest anyway, why not just cut out the middle man, God, or whoever; forget the after-life stuff and just do whatever serves your own interests or the interests of those you are interested in? Celebrating the Mass, celebrating faith, according to these secular voices, is not just an evasion or a denial of our true responsibilities, a distraction from the apparently quite simple business of living and dying, celebrating the demise of death is positively malign, irresponsible, a delusion for which (in one of Dawkins' favourite phrases) there is not a single shred of evidence, and which brings untold conflict and discord into the world. No doubt we have all heard, and smarted under, similar rhetoric.

Well I particularly love his phrase — not a single shred of evidence — because he clearly doesn't think that history, or human experience is of any weight or significance whatsoever. Whatever he may want to assume, we do not hold the faith out of sheer bloody-mindedness — just because we fancy it — we hold it because of certain events in history, to which the Scriptures bear witness, and which are distilled in the Mass; events which generation after generation have found compelling, impossible to simply brush aside, because they herald the demise of death. It is not a question of us choosing this stuff because it makes us feel better, or helps us avoid the serious and nasty bits of living and dying — in fact the evidence seems to be that people of faith are precisely those more likely to devote themselves to the nastier, sharper spheres of life and death — witness the

work of saints like Harriet Brownlow Byron and her sisters in this parish, and the whole hospice movement, spearheaded for adults by Dame Ciceley Saunders, and for the young by Sister Frances Dominica. We, like them and all the Saints, did not choose the Mass out of some personal fancy — but because we are addressed by it, stopped in our tracks by it.

We did not dream up the demise of death; it happened and we live in the aftermath of that happening.

But I suspect what Professor Dawkins wants is evidence here and now. He wants Lazarus's being called from their tombs up at Highgate today, not just in Bethany two thousand years ago. The events that the Mass represents are too singular, too unique for his particular brand of scientism, where repeatability is the only guarantee of authenticity — science has no equivalent for 'once only and once for all'. In the science lab, if it ain't repeatable then it can't be true. Unfortunately when you are dealing with theology, monotheistic theology at any rate, uniqueness and singularity rather go with the territory. It's not that science and theology are irreconcilable, they just use different methods.

Of course, with those who have eyes to see, the defeat of death is evident even in the places where people are dying. The love and concern shown for people as they die, and for their bodies after death, suggests a valuing of the person that is completely undiminished by the brute fact of their bodily death. Death is not 'nothing at all', but it is not what defines that person — not the most important thing to

be said about them — and certainly does not mean that love suddenly ceases. Even within grief a certain defeat of death can be discerned — death has not managed to extinguish the significance of that person — it is not so clean and final as it pretends to be.

Grief may be painful, terribly so, but we would rather live with grief for someone we have loved, we would rather really miss them than adopt a more 'rational' attitude of simply shrugging your shoulders and 'getting on with life'. In our grieving and commemoration of the faithful departed and our celebration of the triumphs of the Saints, we refuse to yield them to the dominion of death — we refuse to let it extinguish them — and our only confidence in doing this is Christ, the demise of death that we celebrate in the Mass. So, by the grace of God, the evidence for the defeat of death is even within us, if we can but see it — in our determination to go on loving and remembering.

So the Mass is no evasion, no denial of death, and our faith is no whimsy, nor wish-fulfilment. The defeat of death has been announced, in the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, and it is those who ignore or dismiss this announcement who are more properly guilty of evasion and denial. And in the aftermath of this announcement, made once for all, we can live and die as if death were not, for its days are numbered and the eternal banquet for all peoples is prepared. We celebrate the Mass in the midst of death and decay to remind us that the victory is already won and the gates of the heavenly city stand open.

And if, at times, this seems baffling to us (as sometimes it does to me), standing, as we are, in the midst of time, watching death taking hold of those we love, taking hold of us, then let the Mass be for us a vehicle; something to carry us; familiar arms to support us and gentle, hopeful words whispered into our ears; until it is time for us to step beyond the bafflement, when the grave-clothes will be loosened from around us and, like Lazarus, we will be called into the light by the one who has known death and has defeated it for us.

For... '(God) will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death for ever.' Alleluia.

100 YEARS AGO

Our current debates about the relationship between religion and the secular, and in particular the place of religion in education, was foreshadowed in the Vicar's letter:

"We are threatened with the secular solution. I do not believe that the English people desire any such solution and it would spell disaster to any political party which adopted that cry. In my judgement even the secular solution would be infinitely preferable to that of the Bill. We could at least take care that in other ways the children of Church could be taught the faith. But we can come to no terms with a religion which leaves our Blessed Lord's Divinity an open question. If the Bill should pass, the establishment of nobody's religion at everybody's expense will not last long. We shall never rest until it is

altered. ...There are many who hoped for great things in social reform from this government and who lament that it should have delivered itself, bound hand and foot, to the narrowest and most bigoted religious fanatics who are animated by a blind and malignant hostility to the venerable Church of God in this land. I feel strongly on this question, and I have written frankly whatever may be the issue."

AM

SUNDAYS AND SOLEMNITIES MUSIC AND READINGS

SATURDAY 6 JANUARY THE EPIPHANY

PROCESSION AND HIGH MASS AT 11.00 a.m.

Processional Hymn: 50 (T 338)

Introit: Ecce advenit

Mass: Missa Solonnelle — Vierne

Lessons: Isaiah 60: 1 - 6

Psalm 72

Ephesians 3: 1 - 12

Hymn: 49 (ii)

Gospel: Matthew 2: 1 - 12

Preacher: The Rt Revd Christopher

Chessun, Bishop of Woolwich

Creed: Credo II

Anthem: When Jesus our Lord /

Say, where is he born

— Mendelssohn

Hymns: 48, 52, 47

Voluntary: Prelude to a Te Deum

— Charpentier

● **SUNDAY 7 JANUARY**
THE BAPTISM OF
CHRIST
(EPIPHANY 1)

HIGH MASS AND BAPTISM
AT 11.00 a.m.

Entrance Hymn: 55

Introit: In excelso throno

Mass: Mass in G — Schubert

Lessons: Isaiah 43: 1 - 7

Psalm 29

Acts 8: 14 - 17

Hymn: 58 (T 128 (ii))

Gospel: Luke 3: 15 - 17, 21 - 22

Preacher: The Vicar

Anthem: There shall a star from Jacob
 come forth — Mendelssohn

Hymns: 51, 57, 352

Voluntary: Prelude in C minor
 — Mendelssohn

EPIPHANY CAROL SERVICE
at 6.00 p.m.

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

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

● **SUNDAY 14 JANUARY**
EPIPHANY 2

HIGH MASS AT 11.00 a.m.

Entrance Hymn: 56

Introit: Omnis terra

Mass: Missa 'O magnum
 mysterium' — Victoria

Lessons: Isaiah 62: 1 - 5
 Psalm 36
 1 Corinthians 12: 1 - 11

Hymn: 486

Gospel: John 2: 1 - 11

Preacher: Fr Ivan Aquilina

Anthem: This lovely lady
 — Bryan Kelly

Hymns: 431, 274, 484 (T 167)

Voluntary: Improvisation on 'O magnum
 mysterium' — Paul Brough

SOLEMN EVENSONG
at 6.00 p.m.

Psalm: 96

Lessons: 1 Samuel 3: 1 - 20
 Ephesians 4: 1 - 16

Office Hymn: 46

Canticles: Service in G minor — Purcell

Anthem: O magnum mysterium
 — Victoria

Preacher: The Vicar

Hymn: 485

BENEDICTION

O Salutaris: Byrd

Hymn: 420

Tantum Ergo: Byrd (No 1)

Voluntary: Voluntary in G — Purcell

● **SUNDAY 21 JANUARY**
EPIPHANY 3

HIGH MASS AT 11.00 a.m.

Entrance Hymn: 438

Introit: Adorate Deum

Mass: Missa Brevis in D, K 194
 — Mozart

Lessons: Nehemiah 8: 1 - 3, 5 - 6,
8 - 10
Psalm 19
1 Corinthians 12: 12 - 31a
Hymn: 407
Gospel: Luke 4: 14 - 21
Preacher: The Revd Dr William Franklin
Anthem: Cradle song of the Blessed
Virgin — Barnby
Hymns: 302, 513, 235
Voluntary: Passacaglia in D minor
— Buxtehude

SOLEMN EVENSONG

at 6.00 p.m.

Psalm: 33
Lessons: Numbers 9: 15 - end
1 Corinthians 7: 17 - 24
Office Hymn: 46
Canticles: The Second Service
— Gibbons
Anthem: Almighty and everlasting God
— Gibbons
Preacher: Fr Ivan Aquilina
Hymn: 362 (T 185; v 3 Descant
— Caplin)

BENEDICTION

O Salutaris: Tallis
Hymn: 481 (T 462)
Tantum Ergo: Victoria (No 2)
Voluntary: Voluntary in C
— Tomkins

● SUNDAY 28 JANUARY EPIPHANY 4

HIGH MASS AT 11.00 a.m.

Entrance Hymn: 410
Introit: Adorate Deum
Mass: Missa Brevis — Berkeley
Lessons: Ezekiel 43: 27 - 44
Psalm 48
1 Corinthians 13
Hymn: 367 (ii)
Gospel: Luke 2: 22 - 40
Preacher: Fr Neil Bunker
Creed: Credo III
Anthem: Steal away to Jesus
— trad Spiritual, arr Tippett
Hymns: 206, 366, 361 (T 322)
Voluntary: Prelude and Fugue on a
theme by Vittoria — Britten

SOLEMN EVENSONG

at 6.00 p.m.

Psalm: 34
Lessons: 1 Chronicles 29: 6 - 19
Acts 7: 44 - 50
Office Hymn: 46
Canticles: St John's Service — Tippett
Anthem: Of a rose — Murray
Preacher: The Vicar
Hymn: 336

BENEDICTION

O Salutaris: Paul Brough
Hymn: 209
Tantum Ergo: Paul Brough
Voluntary: Processional — Matthias

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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.

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CALENDAR AND INTENTIONS FOR JANUARY 2007

1	THE NAMING AND CIRCUMCISION OF JESUS	God's blessing on the New Year
2	St Basil the Great and St Gregory of Nazianzus	The Bishop of London
3		The unemployed
4		Unity
5		Those in need
6	THE EPIPHANY	Renewal in witness
7	✠ THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST (The First Sunday of Epiphany)	OUR PARISH AND PEOPLE
8		The homeless
9	r Requiem (8.00 a.m.)	The departed
10	<i>William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1645</i>	Friends of All Saints
11	<i>Mary Slessor, Missionary in West Africa, 1915</i>	Unity
12	St Aelred of Hexham, Abbot of Rievaulx	Those in need
13	St Hilary of Poitiers	Teachers of the Faith
14	✠ THE 2nd SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY	OUR PARISH AND PEOPLE
15		Parochial Church Council
16		ALMA*
17	St Antony of Egypt	Religious
18	v The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity until 25th	
19	St Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester, 1095	Those in need
20	<i>Richard Rolle of Hampole, Spiritual Writer, 1349</i>	World Council of Churches
21	✠ THE 3rd SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY	OUR PARISH AND PEOPLE
22	<i>St Vincent of Saragossa, Deacon, first Martyr of Spain, 304</i>	Roman Catholic Church
23		The Orthodox Churches
24	St Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, Teacher, 1274	The Free Churches
25	THE CONVERSION OF ST PAUL	Unity of the Church
26	Ss Timothy and Titus, Companions of Paul	Those in need
27		Society of All Saints Sisters of the Poor
28	✠ THE 4th SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY	OUR PARISH AND PEOPLE
29		Hospitals
30	St Charles, King and Martyr, 1649	The Queen and Royal Family
31	<i>John Bosco, Priest</i>	Church Schools

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 — 8.00 a.m. this month

v — a Votive Mass

*ALMA — The Angola, London & Mozambique Diocesan Association



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