

# newdirections

October 2021

 **FORWARD  
IN FAITH**  
supporting  The Society

published ten times a year by Forward in Faith which supports the work of The Society in seeking to renew the Church in the historic faith

## Loving Witness

Mark Michael on the importance of public religion

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Cranford, by Martin Travers  
(1886-1948)**



Articles are published in *New Directions* because they are thought likely to be of interest to readers. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or those of *Forward in Faith*.

*Bompas & Parr's jelly St Paul's* is part of *Shaping Space* — Architectural Models Revealed on at the Building Centre in Bloomsbury from 24 September-28 January

# The witness of public worship: the most loving thing to do

Mark Michael makes the case for public worship and its part in the life of faith

I have expressed concern that the normalization of so-called hybrid worship in our churches may accelerate trends toward “worship switching” among contemporary Christians, with online “content” viewing treated as a sufficient substitute for public gathering and sacramental communion. Some churches seem poised to encourage these trends by framing worship as primarily passive: a time for consuming spiritual knowledge through listening to sermons, which might just as well be accessed on demand from the comfort of one’s easy chair.

In one sense, there’s little new here. People in all ages have found churchgoing tedious. And latter-day consumerist temptations only cater to the ancient greed, laziness, and self-centeredness rooted malignly in every human heart.

In another sense, Anglicans in particular will do well to avoid certain errors we have long resisted; errors associated with old-fashioned Protestant worries about liturgical ceremony, and the “tennis game” of responsive prayer. While Puritans and Presbyterians, for instance, maintained robust forms of communal discipline, they also tended toward an overreliance on intellect as a means to spiritual progress. Anglican writers responded with carefully crafted discussions of the duty of public worship, set within a defence of liturgical forms and ceremonial practices. Their arguments remain fresh and pointed for the pastoral challenges of the current moment.

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## Public acts of worship uniquely demonstrate God’s universal reign and benevolence

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I propose to gather some of the fragments of these wonderful old apologies — from Richard Hooker’s landmark *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1593-97) to Herbert Thorndike and Symon Patrick a century on — answering the challenges of the ancestors of today’s Baptists and Congregationalists. Poor Patrick was given the exhausting task of “regularizing” the church in Ireland after the Restoration. Worn out by the polemics of Scots Presbyterians recently transplanted to Ulster, he gladly accepted translation to Ely two years later. His closely argued ‘Discourse Concerning Prayer’ (1686) may be the most comprehensive treatise of the genre, but many Prayer Book commentaries of later generations follow suit, including those by John Keble and the pioneers of the Parish Communion Movement.

Classical Anglican authors often begin by insisting that the primary purpose of Sunday services is to praise God, not to procure a store of religious goods for ourselves. We come to church to give, not to receive; to perform a duty that is itself a high privilege. Echoing Thomas Aquinas, Hooker argues that “the public duties of religion” are the highest form of human

action, most expressive of our “dignity,” since human beings sit atop the created order — even individually, and all the more in “societies, that most excellent which we call the Church.” It follows that “there can be in this world no work performed equal to the exercise of true religion, the proper operation of the Church of God” (*Laws*, V.vi.1).

Hooker’s claim that society — the gathering together of human beings in groups — enhances human dignity finds its origin in God’s own delight in the assembling of his people into a unity of praise and obedience. God himself, these authors argue, is more worthily worshiped when many join together to sing his praises in concert. In the words of Thorndike, in his ‘Of Religious Assemblies and the Public Service of God’ (1642): “as the strength of men’s bodies, joined to one purpose, removeth that which, one by one, they could not do; so united devotions prevail with God to such effect as severally they cannot bring to pass” (1.1). On this count, the assembling of God’s people fulfills his promises made through the prophets (Isa. 2:2-4, Micah 4:1, Zeph. 3:9), to gather the Gentiles in the last days to share in Israel’s life of worship. As Thorndike reflects, the Gentiles

*...should flow like the waters of a deluge to learn the will of God which the Church teacheth; they should crowd in like a multitude, with one shoulder, to serve God with that language which he had sanctified. Who can read this, and not think what God recommendeth to Christians? One current to the Church, to learn his will there; one shoulder, striving who shall crowd in first; one lip, one language that soundeth nothing but his praises. (‘Religious Assemblies’ 1.2)*

Patrick similarly cites a maxim of Tertullian’s: “We come by troops to make our prayers to God, that being banded, as it were, together, we may with a strong hand sue to him for his favour. This violence is grateful unto God” (‘Discourse’ xii.2).

These authors also emphasize that witness, the public declaration of God’s goodness to us and our commitment to him, is an essential part of public worship, according to the scriptural warrant of Tobit 12:6-7:

*Bless God, praise him, magnify him, bless him for the things he hath done unto you, in the sight of all that live. It is good to praise God and exalt his name, and honourably to show forth the works of God. Therefore, be not slack to praise him; it is good to keep close the secrets of a king; but it is honourable to reveal the works of God.*

Patrick differentiates between our duties to worship, honour, glorify, and serve God. The Christian who reads his Bible and prays at home can, indeed, truly worship God. But honouring and glorifying God cannot be done “unless others see by out-

ward signs and tokens the inward regard we have to him" ('Discourse' xi.1).

On this count, public acts of worship uniquely demonstrate God's universal reign and benevolence, and function as something of an apologetic for the Christian faith to an unbelieving world. As Patrick writes: "Great numbers meeting together to do their homage to him" present a "most natural sign" that we take God to be "the Sovereign of the world, the Lord of all, above all, [and] good unto all" (xii.2). These acts of worship "maintain a sense of God in the world and preserve the notion of him" (xii.1).

By contrast, merely private, "close and retired" devotion gives the impression that our faith is a hobby, a private pursuit for like-minded enthusiasts. Without public acts of worship that proclaim God's mighty acts and invite all to embrace the gospel, those outside the Church may conclude that God is only a fleeting fancy or opinion of some individuals ('Discourse' xii.1).

It's a question worth asking today when some leaders in our church seem set on besting the public-health mandarins in their zeal for social distancing. What witness does staying safe at home really offer to our non-believing neighbours? Is it really, especially at this point in the pandemic, the most loving thing to do?

In a posthumously published Epiphany sermon (1884), John Keble echoes Patrick's themes with a story from parish life at Hursley. He writes movingly of the aged in his congregation who "had become so deaf that they could not hear a single word," but who have still "come religiously into the congregation, and have done their best to join in the service." If worship were really about consuming content, he suggests, they would have been better off reading the same prayers and lessons at home. But in that case ... *there would have been no public worship: their light would not have shone before men: they would not have been giving the same glory to God, nor bearing the same witness to him in sight of their fellow men. Thus, a great part of their duty to him would have been left undone.*

These authors also emphasize the emotional support that public worship provides for the life of faith. The "hearts of plain simple members," Thorndike observes, rely on more spiritually mature believers for encouragement and confirmation. Without the "guidance" of the larger congregation, they would struggle to make progress ('Religious Assemblies' vi.5). But all

human beings will find their "spiritual fervour quickened" more surely in the company of a larger assembly than "when we are retired by ourselves," writes Patrick. For the "holy zeal of those who join with us in the same petitions" provides "a great help and spur."

Similarly, *the seriousness, the gravity, and the earnestness of [the one] who ministers the service of God there; which together with the authority of his office, the sacredness and majesticness sometimes of the place, set apart entirely for such services, is apt to raise in us more ardent devotion, than we can easily raise in ourselves alone* ('Discourse' xii.3).

Above all, perhaps, public worship offers a foretaste of heaven, "the other world," as Thorndike says,

when men's desires are all satisfied, and all the subject of prayers possessed — the Angels, the elders about the throne of God, and all the ... Jews and Gentiles which encompass it (Rev. 7:9), cease not to join in the praises of God, when the Church is become perfectly one. ('Religious Assemblies' vi.5)

Within this multitude, even now, may be found every language, race, and nation together praising Christ the Lamb. Here, in this holy worship, we find our human dignity, enacted in the person of the Son, who is strong to save. Placing us within the perfect communion of his body the Church, he spans all social distance and removes every screen that would separate.

Come, let us worship and bow down! Let us see and hear "the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders," numbering myriads and thousands and singing with one voice:

*Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!* (Rev. 5:12) 

*Fr Mark Michael is the editor of The Living Church magazine and rector of St Francis Episcopal Church, Potomac, Maryland. This article is reproduced by kind permission of Living Church.*



Mass and Ecumenical Vespers at the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham on her feast day on 25 September

# A heart broken upon the cross and the call to renewal

Norman Banks contemplates death and discipleship through Our Lady of Sorrows

*'Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.'* (Isaiah 7)

I have an image in my head of the Pietà of Michelangelo in St Peter's in Rome, which is just to the right of the main doors as you enter. It is one of the first thing of beauty that the pilgrim encounters on entering the basilica. I can remember when you could walk around it and get up really close before it was sadly attacked and had to be separated from us by a glass screen. It is one of Michelangelo's earliest masterpieces, he was only twenty two when he completed it, and to this day it remains something of a mystery how such a young artist could make the marble so flow and almost melt, as Mary holds her dead son in her arms. It is as if there are no longer any bones in Our Lord's body as it lies limp and vulnerable for all to see. And Mary in her helplessness, protects the child of her womb, the child of her dreams, neither keeping him to herself nor offering him to the world, as it is as if the life in her has also flowed away with grief and anguish.

Several years ago, I accompanied a friend to a Commonwealth War cemetery to find the grave of her elder brother. No one from the family had ever been there in the sixty or so years since he had been laid to rest. It was a poignant and never to be forgotten moment, when among the white stone and the blue irises, we found the grave of her brother. Hearts were near to breaking as memories flooded back of the young man who had set out from home as a teenager, never to return. Little was said that day, but the next morning we made a visit to St Peter's in Rome. On entering the Basilica she was immediately drawn to Michelangelo's Pietà and lingered there a long, long time. Later she told me how it had affected her at a very deep and personal level. Her own mother had been much on her mind at the war cemetery, and she found herself comparing the experiences of both women in the terrible loss of their sons. Mary had at least held her dead son, Jesus, in her arms while her own mother had only a telegram, a fragment of paper to hold, on which was written a few words, words that had broken her heart.

Jesus' heart was quite literally broken upon the Cross. God's son, all-powerful, all-knowing had self-emptied himself of his divinity to share fully in our humanity, risking everything, even to death on a cross for love of us. And his heart, so full of love and compassion, had broken upon the tree. And in that moment Mary's heart had broken too. All the hope and promise invested in her charismatic Son ended in a tortured, lifeless corpse. Mary who had been given the gift of all gifts, the privilege of bearing God's Son, who had dandled him upon her knee, and watched him grow up, now experienced emptiness and heart-breaking loss.

As the Poet Laureate Cecil Day-Lewis so wisely observed, as he pondered the image of the dead Jesus in the arms of his mother in Saint Peter's, Rome:

I was lost, ill at ease here, until by chance  
In a side chapel we found a woman mourning  
Her son: all the lacrimae rerum flowed  
To her gesture of grief, all life's blood from his stone.  
There is no gap or discord between the divine  
And the human in that Pietà of Michaelangelo.

I too have spent many a few moments in the presence of that most poignant of sculptures and to my mind nowhere else has stone been rendered so fluid and liquid, no-where else has flowed from the hardest of materials such intense and poignant emotion.

The special day, Our Lady of Sorrows, is given us by Holy Church so that we might pause a little and reflect on Christian discipleship, learning from Mary's own personal example and honestly measuring our own. Some churches and cathedrals, such as Norwich with its own chapel of Our Lady of Pity, even have places set aside to ponder the mystery of our redemption.

Christian discipleship is a risky business. The Scriptural imperative makes heavy demands on all of us. An event like a retreat or diocesan conference can be an opportunity to pause, reflect and respond afresh to the call of the Incarnate and Redeeming Lord. We need all the help we can muster from wherever it is offered. And a good resource, often under-valued and under-used in the Anglican tradition is a daily relationship with the Holy Family rather than one that is confined to the Christmas season.

And images such as Michelangelo's Pietà do help. Because they can touch us at a deep level and express things inside of us that are hard to express. Our sculpture, more than words can ever do, can help express our deepest feelings and emotions as we struggle with the deep experiences of our human condition. Of death and life, of ugliness and beauty, of youth and feebleness, fullness and emptiness, success and failure, joy and pain, height and depth all that makes up the rollercoaster of emotions that is us. We need these signs, pointers, triggers, images, insights that help us in trying to make sense of it all, in our personal lives and in our Christian ministries.

And so, we end as we began with those words from Isaiah Seven: *'Again, the Lord spoke to Ahaz. Ask for a sign of the Lord your God: Let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. And the sign: 'Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.'*

May our Lady of Pity pray with us and ever point us to her Son. May we all find renewal as we commit ourselves again and again to journeying in faith with the Man of Sorrows, the Prince of Peace, our Redeeming and Resurrected Lord, Christ, our Saviour, brother and friend.

*Adapted from an address given by Bishop Norman to the clergy of Norwich diocese last month.*

# Martyrdom, and being not of the world

Luke Miller looks at what martyrs can teach us about mission and ecclesiology

*They are not of the world any more than I am of the world...  
As you sent me into the world, I sent them into the world.  
(John 17)*

**S**S Cornelius and Cyprian were both martyrs, but they are linked together because of their correspondence on the nature of the church. Ecclesiology is suddenly the issue of the moment. As someone said to me the other day, how refreshing that people are standing for General Synod on issues other than sex. The issue our saints were considering was the nature of the primacy of Peter, and the seniority of the Bishop of Rome. Later centuries have viewed the correspondence through the prism of later debates, but it seems that the African Bishop Cyprian may have begun with a more 'modern' and 'western' view of the authority of the successor of Peter over all the churches, and later developed a view that all local Bishops share that authority and preside from the Chair of Peter for the local church.

Our own ecclesiological angst focusses on the parish. Whatever the source of our issues, every Christian has a concern with the church. Christ has sent us into the world; and that means that we have been divinely ordered for the work Christ has sent us to undertake. Our structures and institutions matter, for the church is the Body of Christ immanent in human society. Yet He has said that we are not of the world any more than He is of the world. The divine purpose leads us to see that the messy life of the church militant here in earth is one with the church revealed in the vision of the spotless Bride of Christ perfect in all things.

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## A parish for every community reflects the transcendent truth that Christ has come for all

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Cornelius and Cyprian discussed how the church on earth should best be ordered and behave. If someone lapsed under persecution, how easy should it be to come back into the communion of the Faithful? Cornelius said it should be possible after reasonable repentance. His opponent Novatian said it should be jolly hard. It was probably a good thing that the argument was not played out on Twitter, but Cornelius won, and was confirmed as Bishop of Rome. Cyprian meanwhile was criticised for deciding when persecution came to Carthage that that the African church was best served by him going into hiding. Both were grappling with practical issues of how the church which has been sent into the world should respond to politics and persecution. But at one and the same time they were not of the world. Both our saints were ready to face martyrdom, and both suffered in this world for the glory that is set before us.



Fr Luke Miller preaching at the Society of the Maintenance of the Faith Festival at All Saints, Notting Hill on 16 September

The great gift of our parish system is not the system itself but the three great things it delivers in the world that show that the church is not of the world.

A parish for every community reflects the transcendent truth that Christ has come for all.

Our parishes are a means of transfer of resources, so that the church is not only where she can locally afford to be, but the good news is preached to the poor.

And, in our own society, the parish enables those who never come to church to feel that in some sense they have a part of it whether that be through civic engagement, community activity, heritage and historical interest or recognition of the leadership which in some senses we are still able to offer, so that in some small ways the Father's will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

But we must also recognise that no one church can do everything, whatever the parish profiles pretend. Even the busiest church with the widest range of activities will miss out

on some of those it might reach. We do need things like chaplaincies and, yes fresh expressions and church plants seeking to serve specific interest groups and cultures with culturally competent Apt Liturgy. At its best that what all this mixed ecology stuff means.

Both the parts of the church which are parochial and those that are not can fall into the trap of allowing some aspect of the worldly work of the church to be conflated with the church and thought of as enough. The church of God is not a human institution to sustain for centuries; nor is she a private interest club of similar people who are drawn together by a common interest, as Fresh Expressions often are; nor is she a social club

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### The martyr is never more engaged as he participates by blood in the sacrifice of Christ

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with hymns, as parish churches too often become. Both are rightly criticized by Lord Williams's observation that a strong church is one in which you meet people with whom you would never otherwise associate.

As Patrons, your role is to place clergy in parishes. I remember being told by a wise priest as I arrived in Tottenham to remember that however much time I spent in the church 'it will never be yours in the way that it is theirs.' And that is right; the parish priest and the Leader of the BMO comes from elsewhere. In this he imitates Christ who was sent into the world, and is a sign that the people are called away from their community and into the Body of Christ. But his living in the community and life as part of it incarnates the paradox that the work of the church which is not of this world builds the local community so that ultimately one does not leave the community to enter heaven, but it has become heaven, a place no longer focussed on itself but on the Lord, so that to remain there is to have gone to Him.

Which is what happens in martyrdom. Focused on heaven, the martyr is never more engaged in the world, as he participates by blood in the sacrifice of Christ. I when I am lifted up, said the Lord, will draw all people to myself, and it is when Christ Crucified is the centre of our world, that at last it finds its purpose and meaning. So the church is most divine when she is sent into the world to take the physical things of everyday life, bread and wine, and offer them to be transformed into the material stuff of flesh and blood, by which we share in the things of heaven. In the end it comes back to the Altar. Whether it is a parish church or a chaplaincy or a plant it is here that we who have been sent into the world feed the world so that we may come to Christ, and know that we are no more of the world than He is.

To these things therefore let us now turn. 

*This sermon was preached by the Archdeacon of London on the feast of Saints Cornelius & Cyprian for The Society for the Maintenance of the Faith AGM and Festival at All Saints, Notting Hill.*

## The Pilgrimage for Healing & Renewal was held at the Anglican Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham on 30 August



# Remembering Fr Aidan Mayoss CR

Fr Aidan CR passed away in peace on Friday 17th September. He was in his 91st year and the 58th year of his profession in the Community.

## **Bishop Peter Wheatley offers a personal recollection**

I know the London Parishes of Holy Trinity, Stroud Green, in which Fr Aidan was baptised and the churches in Colindale and Burnt Oak which nurtured him and his family in the Catholic faith. He was grateful for this early formation, and for his subsequent training before and after ordination. I know little of his title post and training incumbent, except that it must have been good. I also remember his asking me what I had been reading. I replied that I had read the biographies of two Church of England bishops, among the most notable of the last fifty years. 'Just think,' he said, 'how much greater they would have been if they had had a good training incumbent.' He retained a lively sense of what makes for good parochial ministry and the formation needed in parish priests. As a member of the General Synod and on the national Board of Ministry he was forthright in holding officers and bishops to account. His service of the Church was recognised by the Archbishop of Canterbury awarding him the Cross of St Augustine.

For most of Fr Aidan's priestly ministry, he has been a member of the Community of the Resurrection. A community of priests is a strong force for exercising priesthood corporately. It is more than the sum of their numbers. The Community at prayer together is in itself a powerful force for bringing people to God and sanctifying them. A community can allow a degree of specialisation if a priest has particular gifts. We give thanks for Father Aidan's sharing in the life of the Community: preaching, missions, retreat-giving, trustee of the College of the Resurrection, sometime Bursar, spiritual director to a wide range of bishops, priests, laity and fellow religious such as the Sisters of St Margaret and the Sisters at Horbury. In London, he and Sister Mary Teresa SSM were an effective partnership in chaplaincy to university students, as no doubt he had been in South Africa at Stellenbosch. Many of those students have gone on to be leaders of their own church communities.

In 1958, Fr Aidan was ordained to the priesthood in Lichfield Cathedral by Bishop Arthur Stretton Reeve. A few months later, Angelo Roncalli was elected Pope John XXIII and two days later he told his Secretary that he intended to call a Council of the whole Church, with far-reaching consequences. How very different the Church is now to what it was in 1958 and we thank God for Fr Aidan's faithfulness as a priest and stalwart member of his community through all the changes and challenges of the subsequent 63 years.

A fellow bishop describes him as 'a great soul, deep yet light of touch, solemn yet such fun.' The Community will write their own insightful and affectionate obituary. May the memory of

Aidan help to inspire others to hear a call to the priestly and religious life.

## **Fr David Houlding recalls a faithful servant**

A tap on the shoulder from behind in the lunch queue; General Synod 1995. There was Fr Aidan who I'd not seen since he was assistant chaplain at Christ the King, Gordon Square, when it was the university chaplaincy and I was but a student. His expertise came to the fore again in 2000 when I asked him to become chaplain to the Catholic Group. He enjoyed it very much, as he did the whole Synod culture. At times he could be a little mischievous and wind people up, but he was extremely conscientious and took his responsibilities seriously. Perhaps that explains why he was always listened to and respected by all constituencies, even if he didn't have anything in particular to say. It was extraordinary. His friends were across the whole church but he was definitely a catholic and was especially loyal to the Catholic Group.

He collected bishops and was the same with them as he was with anyone he met on the street or in church after a service.

He was even known to tell bishops off. Certainly he enjoyed being in parishes, especially on missions. He preached for me several times and once came to All Hallows for Holy Week. After the Good Friday liturgy he went on ahead of me and I got home to find him in the garden opening a bottle of champagne. "It's all over," he said with a grin. "The triumph of the Cross!" There was something subversive about him which enjoyed breaking rules. He was partial to a tippie, usually Scotch, and it was said he kept a bottle under his bed at Mirfield.

Aidan lived for many years at the Community house in Covent Garden. It was wonderful having him in London and many clergy made a beeline there for quiet days and spiritual direction. The hospitality was very generous. He had the gift of encourage-

ment and could make you happy even in the deepest doldrums. He had empathy and was non-judgmental. The classic Aidan line on Holy Saturday: "Where is Jesus now? He's busy looking for his friend Judas!" He was always interested in news, he liked to know what was going on – 'to inform my prayers.' He was a great supporter of SSC, making a great effort to join its events. He was also one for a big do and never missed the National at Walsingham.

There can be no mistaking he was a serious, committed and loving person, with great loyalty. He kept going until the very end, including his involvement on the Number One Trust. I shall miss his humour, his friendship, and his understanding. A good holy man, fun to be with, and never pious. May he rest in peace. **ND**



**Father & friends:  
Aidan Hargreaves-Smith, Peter  
Wheatley, Aidan Mayoss CR,  
David Houlding**

# Looking forward, looking back

Thomas Hatton says farewell to Synod

I joined General Synod in November 2015 and represented Southwark Diocese. My principal motivation for standing was that it had no traditional catholic lay representation, which considering the number of Society parishes needed to change. At 23 I was one of the youngest members of synod too and wanted to allow an opportunity for to vote for a young candidate.

The first meeting of the any quinquennium is the inaugural service at Westminster Abbey attended by HM the Queen but I sadly missed it because of illness. Fortunately, some of the Southwark lay members helped me immensely with an induction in addition to the standard briefings. I found people to be very supportive in helping a new member through the protocols and rules, including how to participate in debates and navigate some of the legalese! My first meeting in Church House made an impression because of the 'ayes' 'noes' signs on the wall of the chamber, pointing back to when Synod used to vote by walking through the lobbies (as they still do in the House of Commons). Now, of course, it's all electronic.

This Synod was important for the Church of England because of the newly established Five Guiding Principles and Mutual Flourishing; there was a genuine sense of optimism. The women bishops issue had clearly taken up a lot of time and energy in previous Synod, and things had become extremely partisan, so the commitment to 'disagree well' and move forward together was very evident. Collegiality and fellowship are important aspects of synod culture so living and breathing these fully and honestly became even more crucial.

Synod has interesting debates on current social issues such as Brexit and racism. These, are touchstone issues in wider society and people on Synod can often think their debate is better there but that's rarely the case. It can become running commentary on current social issues, and in reality does not add anything new. The information and analysis is already there through things like the *Today Programme*, *Newsnight* and so on. More often than not Synod simply rehashes the larger debate and it ultimately adds very little. It can be particularly tiresome when it tries to be the moral conscience of the nation.

Synod's principal duty is to act as the legislative organ of the Church of England. Doctrine belongs to the Bishops who have a veto over such matters and Synod can forget that, leading to confusion in the media when news reports appear, especially given the low understanding of generalist journalists. That's when Synod members can appear fragmented, disconnected, and out of touch with reality.

I will not miss some of the protracted and bad-tempered discussions around human sexuality. There appeared to be a lot of bad faith there with caricatures, such as an orthodox view on marriage being described as homophobic. Nonetheless, the next Synod will need to embrace *Living in Love and Faith* project openly and honestly. I really hope that this debate develops in a compassionate and respectful way over the next Synod.

It is good at legislation. History and context are often given in background notes to explain and fill in some of the elements which are not otherwise obvious. This gives a lot of instruction and insight into how the church operates, particularly as an Established church. The changes to marriage legislation were an example of that. Proper scrutiny both on the floor and in committee shows Synod at its best. Synod members with a particular interest or expertise in an area will often find themselves on Revision Committees – and that's really valuable and allows members to engage in a meaningful way.

Fringe events are a part of Synod life, involving discussions on themes like the environment, climate change, or nuclear disarmament; just like a party political conference! These are often as important as being in the chamber because of what they entail. That knowledge is helpful for diocesan synod, deanery synod and also your own PCC. We do represent the diocese, after all, and being together with fellow members from your own patch is part of what it means to be an elected member. You have to take time off work – at least two weeks; there's lots of travel and reading. Bundles of paper keep appearing and you have to be disciplined about your interests and where you can add value. Thankfully, no one expects you to be completely on top of everything.

Socialising and fellowship are extensive and I spent a lot of time with other members of the Catholic Group – about 50 people and very diverse. Getting to know them as fellow members of Synod and Christians was very rewarding and they became friends too. We would say Compline together each night so were praying together as well as legislating together. We would similarly meet as a larger group with the catholic bishops and clergy. We would usually eat together, and there's some unwinding over a drink or two.

A big issue recently concerns the status of the parish and to what extent the Church of England is committed to that system. The recent media debates around this have sent out a powerful message There is a sense that the church has become too managerial. I suspect this will be a large focus of the next Synod, and one which will cut across different traditions.

Following developments in Wales and the Methodist Church, *Living in Love & Faith* will continue to take up time and energy. I think we will also see a focus on clergy well-being, quite rightly. And of course the wider societal issues such as climate change, and poverty will continue to be debated.

This last Synod became a six-year term because of Covid. The Church House team deserves a huge vote of thanks for switching it safely, efficiently and legally into a virtual system which worked well and maintained our legislative function. It's easy to be pessimistic about Synod because of the mood music and its overall impression, but the next one will truly undergo a test of what it is there for and what it needs to do. If Synod fails on this then it doesn't have a future. So much about the future needs deciding in this quinquennium we need to be in the best possible place for that. I wish them all well. 

# Sheffield's historic St Matthew's, Carver Street, launches major fundraising campaign

Founded in 1855, St Matthew's, Carver Street, in central Sheffield rose to prominence during the 54-year-long incumbency of the famous slum priest Fr George Campbell Ommanney (Vicar 1882-1936). The parish has now launched a £700,000 'Regenerate' fundraising campaign seeking to restore and renew the nave of the church and make necessary alterations for its future mission, ministry and community use.

On Sunday 5th September, over 100 people gathered in Sheffield to hear from representatives of the parish, architect Ulrike Knox, and Dr Cathy Wilcox author, congregant, and patron (pen name Catherine Fox) as they shared the plans behind the proposed work. The parish intends to improve access, renew the flooring, improve its facilities for hospitality, in-



Architect's view of how the church will look following the installation of a new floor

crease flexibility to the seating in the church through the use of new benches, introduce glazed-in spaces to the west end, and finally restore the chancel flooring and the noteworthy Arts and Crafts stalls.

A few days later, over 100 guests were hosted by friend of the parish Neil Logan-Green at The Travellers Club in London, including the Bishops of Sheffield, Beverley, Burnley, and Fulham. The Lord Mayor of Sheffield, Cllr Gail Smith, spoke movingly of her support for the campaign and commended the role of Parish Nurses who work amongst the most vulner-



Cllr Gail Smith, Lord Mayor of Sheffield, celebrates the role of the church and of the parish nurses in the city centre

able in the city. The Bishop of Sheffield, the Rt Rev'd Pete Wilcox concluding his own remarks with his own endorsement: "It is because I sincerely believe this project will enhance and enrich the worship of God and the mission of God in heart of the city of Sheffield that I commend it to you without reservation." Over £21,000 was pledged on the night.

Fr Grant Naylor Vicar has also expressed his appreciation. "The past week has witnessed a wonderful start to our fundraising campaign and I would like to say a huge thank you to those who have contributed. Since the launch we have now raised £41,000, but there is a long way to go and the hard work starts now. St Matthew's has always been a centre of worship, mission and blessing in Sheffield, acting as a centre for all those who are in need. Our work here is vital and I am supported by the most amazing team. We entrust this campaign to Our Lord and to the prayers of the saints."

More information on the project and ways to support can be found here: <https://stmatthewscarverstreet.co.uk> 

Photo credits: Stuart Barfield



Fr Naylor, Vicar of Carver Street, addresses those assembled for the London fundraiser

# Sustaining a seminary with hope in reform and renewal

Robin Ward introduces the new Edward King Centre

In 1970, the radical Roman Catholic priest Ivan Illich wrote a book called *Deschooling Society*. Illich was a cosmopolitan intellectual with a wide experience of working in education, who had spent most of the 1950s and '60s contributing to various church and governmental initiatives to forward 'development' in Latin America and the Caribbean. His experience left him disillusioned with the top-down model of instruction offered, which restricted access to teaching and learning to those able to access expensive and rigid institutional structures, what he called 'bridges to nowhere.' The most famous chapter of the book is titled 'Learning Webs,' in which he anticipates the sort of free access to knowledge that the technological innovation of the Internet has now made a substantive reality.

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## Theological education in the Church of England is about to face a profound crisis

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No one observing the size and shape of theological education in the Church of England today can be under any illusion that it is not about to face a profound crisis. The system is over-complex, unwieldy, inconsistent in what it delivers, and restricts access to teaching and learning in ways which appear increasingly anachronistic in a contemporary setting. Moreover it is evidently unaffordable, particularly in the light of what will be immense financial difficulties for many dioceses after the pandemic. Attempts to reform it, particularly in the case of the colleges, have been unsuccessful and inconsistent for the past thirty years, misapprehend both costs and the potential for revenue generation, mistake optimum capacity with the size of available buildings, and generate a thick miasma of tiresome and time-consuming compliance 'activity.'

What to do then? There are two positive signs for the future. First, the Common Award qualification validated by the University of Durham is the one great achievement in the sector since the 1990s. There is now a national qualification which can be accessed by everyone whose educational potential is recognised at selection, and which has the pedagogic flexibility to take candidates from a propaedeutic introduction to theological study through to an MA. Second, out of the dire circumstances of the pandemic has come a realisation across higher education that online tools, once the monopoly of the Open University, offer a whole new way of making 'Learning Webs.' There is now no reason why a person living on a farm in Westmorland should not be able to access teaching about the Second Council of Constantinople at St Stephen's House if this is what they are looking for.

To respond to this, the college is launching a new initiative – The Edward King Centre for Pastoral Theology. The intention of this is twofold: first, to deliver off-site and in a variety

of accessible ways the experience of teaching and learning that our resident ordinands already experience; second, to secure for the future the specifically Catholic character and content of pastoral theology, so that our lay people and ordination candidates are able to encounter a compelling experience of the riches of our tradition in liturgical, spiritual, moral and practical theology and practice. This is not meant as a partisan gesture; it comes from the conviction that without a specific investment of time and resources from the Catholic Movement in the Church of England at this moment, we will soon be reliant on training delivered by courses and colleges in which there is no expertise or particular commitment to the Catholic understanding of Christian thought and practice in our patrimony.

The Centre is not intended to be another ponderous institutional initiative. It will grow organically, adjust itself to what people want to learn, and gather together teachers and learners from outside the 'professional' structures of college staffing. To begin with we are focusing on three areas. First, we intend providing propaedeutic teaching and learning for those who wish to begin theological study and need the foundations in place in terms of basic knowledge and study skills before beginning more formal work, perhaps as ordinands or Readers. Second, we want to help those who have studied for the Common Award and been ordained to further their studies and shape their life-long learning by completing the Award to BA and MA level. Third, we want to set up a wide range of immediately accessible opportunities for theological education and engagement, partly through an Associateship programme and partly through a series of one-off occasions to access special events, lectures and days of teaching and encounter.

The Centre will begin to take shape over the autumn, and we have already been really pleased with the response from supporters: those who are looking forward to participating, and the generosity of funders who wish to support the project as it begins. It is crucial for the future of the college that we maintain a residential community of formation in Oxford, where candidates can continue to come to learn "Who is Jesus Christ, What is the Church, What is a priest?." A Movement unable to sustain a seminary is a movement which has lost hope in reform and renewal. But as Edward King took from his Oxford years a vision of Catholic life in the Church of England that was pastoral, ascetic, and liturgical, so the college which he founded needs to preserve and perpetuate these qualities according to the signs of the times and the opportunities they bring. So it is that we look forward to continuing our work in a new way and with new people, and 'break up the fallow ground.' **ND**

Canon Robin Ward is the Principal of St Stephen's House, Oxford.

# Unafraid to be extraordinary

**Ben Rabjohns** takes an anniversary to explore humanity, priestly gifts, and what they mean for the Church

I'm afraid that I'm not going to spend the next ten minutes or so telling you how extraordinary Fr Harri Williams is. If I was feeling really brave, I might dare to tease you, Father, and say that you're quite capable of doing this yourself. But, as I feel myself plummeting rapidly down the list of your favourite brothers-in-law, I'd better beat a quick retreat and say that if Father Harri were, perhaps, not exactly shy about his gifts and abilities, then he would be, just like any of us who are ordained: totally ordinary. A totally ordinary human mixture of gifts, talents and abilities – along with faults, flaws and failings.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit – whose presence and power we invoke in this Mass – to fill our human ordinariness with the very presence and power of God Himself. As Saint Paul says in our reading from the first letter to the Corinthians, 'working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them.' And today we give thanks that, 10 years ago today, the Holy Spirit was invoked upon Harri for the office and work of a priest – to work in a particular way, in this particular person.

The gift of the priesthood is an extraordinary gift - not because it is above or beyond other gifts given to people by God – but because, by the work of the Holy Spirit, in this gift our ordinariness is added to, filled, transformed, used by God for, as St Paul goes on to say, 'a good purpose.' The gift of the priesthood is one of the ways in which God blesses the Church and the world with His 'goodness.'

We give thanks to God for the ways in which He has already used Fr Harri's gifts and made up for his failings to bless His church and to work His 'good purpose.' Even more so, we give thanks to God for the extraordinary gift of the priesthood to His Church as the way in which, working in ordinary human beings, the Holy Spirit continues the ministry of Jesus to reconcile and bless, to teach and nourish His people.

It is an astonishing, a wonderful thing, that our humanity can be used in this way – with all its ordinariness and frailty. Astonishing, wonderful, almost unbelievable – and because it's almost unbelievable we can sometimes shy away from believing it. The Church in our day (or, at least, the Church of England or the Church in Wales) often seems to be frightened by this astonishing claim and to retreat from any idea that there might be some sort of special gift in the priesthood.

Priests can be tempted to retreat into ordinariness – pretending to be just like everyone else: perhaps a paid worker in a charitable organisation, or a particularly enthusiastic community volunteer; we sometimes prefer to measure our life and ministry in terms of emails answered or meetings attended because that is so much more ordinary, understandable, acceptable than our true purpose. And, added to this, we so often hear the priesthood spoken about as though it were something obsolete or outdated – or, even worse, which actively harms the church by stifling or overshadowing the gifts of others.



**Fr Ben Rabjohns preaching at the Credo Cymru Festival of Faith held on 11 September at St Theodore, Port Talbot**

How often do we hear talk of the need to move away from a reliance on priestly ministry in order to 'release' the gifts of the laity? And all of this is sold to us as though it is something obvious and undeniable – that thinking highly, or too highly, of the priesthood – relying on priestly ministry too much, valuing it too much – has stifled and suppressed the ministries and gifts of others. Speaking of the priesthood as something extraordinary has, we're told, led to other gifts and ministries being regarded as ordinary, unimportant, unvalued. And, so often, this seems to lead to the priesthood being reduced from a gift of the divine into a function within an organisation.

However well-intentioned some of this might be – and however necessary it might be to discover and to encourage gifts other than the priesthood – we start from completely the wrong place if we seek to do this by making any of the gifts of God, given through the Holy Spirit, more ordinary. Because the Holy Spirit always gives extraordinary gifts: gifts which, by God's grace, make us more than we can be by ourselves, in our human nature. The crisis of the church is not that we have made too much of one particular gift – making too many astonishing claims for the priesthood – but that we have lost sight of the astonishing gift which the Church is in herself, what an extraordinary thing the life of the Church is, how wonderfully, beautifully gifted each one of us is – simply by being a member of Christ's Body, the Church, even before we consider what other gifts we might have.

Listen to these, almost outrageously bold, words from Blessed Isaac of Stella:

‘The faithful and spiritual members of Christ can truly say that they are what he is, even the Son of God, even God. But he is so by nature, they by sharing; he of his fullness, they by participation. In short, what the Son of God is by birth, his members are by adoption, according to the words of scripture: “You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, enabling us to cry, ‘Abba! Father!’”

The Church is what Christ is; and the individual members of the Church – each one of us, whatever our calling – can make this outrageous, astonishing and yet life-giving claim: we are what he is, ‘even the Son of God, even God.’ Whatever other gifts we may be given, all of them find their foundation in this. Whether we’re called to be a priest or deacon, given gifts to evangelise or teach the faith to the young, to serve the poor or even simply to pray, none of this is done in our own strength or by our own power but ‘in Christ’ because we are what he is.

We speak so often of the Church being the Body of Christ – and yet, perhaps, we let these words trip too easily off our tongue and lose their true meaning: as though the Church were simply a collection of individuals brought together for a particular purpose; like the governing body of a school. We need to learn to be astonished afresh that the Church is not a collection of individuals with a shared interest or a shared aim but nothing less than Christ’s true body: living with His life, filled with His power, offered for the life of the world.

In our reading from St John’s Gospel we encounter a Church – the Church of the first disciples – which is trembling in fear. Locked behind closed doors the disciples tremble because, just as they have had to accept that Jesus’ great claims had failed and that he had turned out to be nothing extraordinary after all, and as they have perhaps begun to face the sadness – but also the safety – of their lives returning to humdrum normality, they encounter something which is beyond their imagining: the news that He is risen. Their lives tremble on the edge of what that might mean for them.

The Church in our day also trembles: fearful of being any-



thing other than ordinary; fearful of decline, irrelevance or even death; fearful of standing out; fearful of ridicule; fearful, ultimately, of being what those first disciples discovered they must be: the risen body of Christ Himself.

What does this fearful Church need from her priests? Well, we’ve heard an astonishingly bold claim from Blessed Isaac of Stella about what the Church is; let’s hear an equally astonishing claim about the priesthood from St John Vianney – a man, humble in his ordinariness and yet confident in the extraordinary nature of his vocation – who said that: ‘The Priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus.’

The love of the heart of Jesus – what a claim. Because that love can surely be no less than the bond of love which unites our Blessed Lord to His heavenly Father, and which flows from them both into the life of the Church and the world. Surely that love can be no less than the presence of the risen Jesus who stepped into that fear-filled room, spoke words of peace and breathed the Holy Spirit which gave each of those fearful disciples the courage to become what He is and to be sent with His continued ministry of reconciliation.

A fearful Church needs priests who are unafraid to be extraordinary. Who believe, in all humility that, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, their priesthood is given to the Church as the love of the heart of Jesus – a heart which burns with love for the world and for those who are His Body; a heart which calls to them and which makes them no less than what He is: ‘even the Son of God, even God.’

We thank God, Fr Harri, for your priestly ministry and for all that it has thus far been. May it continue to be, and may the ministry of all of us called to share in Christ’s priesthood be, a ministry which overflows with love from the heart of Jesus – love which casts out fear, love which empowers and sustains, love which brings courage from His heart for the Church to know, and to live, the astonishing truth that ‘we are what he is.’ **ND**

*The Reverend Ben Rabjohns is Priest-in-Charge of the Parish of Penrhiwceiber, Matthewstown and Ynysboeth, in the Church in Wales, and Team Rector designate of Heavitree in the Diocese of Exeter. This sermon was preached at the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary mass of the ordination of Fr Harri Williams.*



# ANGELS OVERHEAD - 4



Many of the best angel roofs are in East Anglia. The roof at Cawston (1: Norfolk) was probably constructed around 1460, in which year a man called John Barker made substantial bequest to the roodscreen and seating. It is a single hammerbeam, with angels not only on the ends of the hammerbeams (2) but also forming a frieze along the wallposts (3).

The roof at Needham Market (4: Suffolk) is slightly later; in 1486 Alice Tompson made a bequest to the “new church of Nedham if it be begun within 3 years after my decease”, so it was probably constructed in the 1490s. A substantial reconstruction was carried out in 1880, needed because of the insertion of a ceiling in the 18<sup>th</sup> c, so that in their present form the hammerbeams are Victorian (5).



Further reading: Michael Rimmer, *The Angel Roofs of East Anglia: Unseen Masterpieces of the Middle Ages*, The Lutterworth Press, 2015. 



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(Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday,  
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of Forward in Faith.

Individual copies are sold at £3.00.

All subscription enquiries should  
be addressed to FiF Office  
at the address above.

Subscription for one year:

£30 (UK), £45 (Europe), £55 (Rest  
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Printed by CPO

The next issue of **newdirections**  
is published on 5 November

# Editorial

The Director of Forward in Faith  
contributes this month's Editorial

The strains placed upon us by the pandemic and by the proposals emerging in many dioceses to reduce the number of stipendiary clergy, in some cases quite drastically, are such that we can at times feel weighed down and, in our less optimistic moments, wonder what value we are adding in what we do.

While not denying the presence of those pressures, it is worthwhile pondering some of the many good things – often heroic in their nature given our increasingly secular society – which representatives of our movement participate in, support, and promote.

In Plymouth, Fr David Way appeared on national media as he comforted those mourning the victims of a tragic and terrible shooting rampage. In Oldham, at the other end of the country, Fr Tom Davis has also been the recipient of media attention for his tireless work in running a local foodbank, providing for those in society in greatest need.

The point is not the media attention – welcome though it is when it highlights the positive work undertaken by the Church – but the selfless dedication of so many of our priests in places and in situations which others have abandoned.

Anglo-Catholic charities – many and varied as they are – continue to seek out opportunities to relay the Faith to which their founders saw fit to bequeath substantial sums. The Society of Mary recently marked its ninetieth anniversary with a novena prior to the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lady. The Society of the Maintenance of the Faith recently celebrated its annual Festival in a style befitting its illustrious history. And, early next month, the Guild of All Souls will host a Requiem Mass for the victims of the pandemic in our country.

In all these cases, we can delight in our laity working alongside our clergy so that both can apply their talents for the greater glory of God.

The Shrine at Walsingham has bounced back from the severe challenges presented by a series of lockdowns. Pilgrims are returning and, with them, comes a joyful rediscovery of this jewel in our crown.

The priests of the Society of the Holy Cross, commonly referred to as SSC, will shortly meet – in their hundreds – for an international synod. In so doing, they will reaffirm their commitment to a set of beliefs

which are at the very core of our movement, and which are represented in short form by their motto of 'In this sign conquer.'

Next month, The Society will launch its Catholic mission network, based on Fr James Mallon's *Divine Renovation* resource. It will start with small groups of Society priests discussing what works in mission and seeking to learn from one another.

With the help of the newly appointed Missioner to The Society, the focus on mission will fan out to parishes so that we can all live out our gospel calling to deepen our Christian faith and to share it with others. This will include, in due course, the development of a Society lay rule of life.

Within a year, we shall have two new principal episcopal visitors (PEVs), one in the west of the country and one in the north. This represents a wonderful opportunity for two priests of our integrity not only to provide pastoral and sacramental oversight to Society parishes in those areas of the country but also to lead those parishes in their mission and outreach.

Too often we feel pushed into a corner and end up thinking that we are only ever against developments in the Church and not for them. Indeed, our General Synod candidates can be made to feel in hustings as though they are some sort of social leper, denying what any right-thinking person would find commendable.

And yet none of this comes as a surprise. We know that to follow our Catholic calling involves making sacrifices, many of them painful, and even at times inviting and suffering ridicule. We also know that it can be no other way. It is our vocation, whether ordained or lay, and we must follow that calling through good times and bad.

It is not a statement of superiority or complacency to say that we adhere to the Catholic faith. It is a statement of enduring truth; a bastion against the passing fads of our current age – as it has been in ages past and as it will be in future ages; a comfort and a support as we journey through life.

Whatever else might be distracting us, we can be reassured that, when we say the Creed on a Sunday, we know what we are saying, why we are saying it and what it means for our lives. And we know that there can be no greater joy. **ND**

Tom Middleton

# the way we live now

Christopher Smith is nostalgic for the Muppet Show

One of the great TV memories of my generation is the Muppet Show, which was an ATV production filmed at Elstree, but all-American in its comedy. And it was American comedy at its best: a bit of slapstick, a bit of smaltz, and a self-deprecating look at the national character. Unlike so much in life nowadays, it didn't take itself too seriously, and it hit the spot that made it accessible both to children and their parents. I was surprised to discover that it was first broadcast as long ago as 1976, and it only ran for five series, finishing in 1981, but each of those series comprised 24 episodes, and so jollied us along through the dark evenings, running from September to March.

It was, of course, a puppet show put into the context of a music hall theatre, and through it all ran the love-hate relationship between Kermit the Frog and Miss Piggy. I now know, thanks to Messers Wikipedia and Sons, that there was an extra sketch in the UK version each week, because adverts in this country took up less time in the allotted half-hour than in the States: they needed to fill 26 minutes in the UK, but only 22 in the US. It's all carefully documented in an entry titled 'List of Muppet Show Episodes', which reveals that our American friends never got to see such gems as Rowlf the Dog (my favourite character) and Sam the American Eagle singing 'Tit-Willow' from the Mikado, which has certainly stuck in my mind since my ten-year-old self watched it in 1977.

Well, the rights to the Muppet Show are now owned by the Walt Disney Company, and modern-day Disney is jolly woke. 'As part of our ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusion, we are in the process of reviewing our library and adding advisories to content that includes negative depictions or mistreatment of people or culture,' their website tells us. And a number of Muppet Shows have been found guilty of the charge. If you want to watch those particular episodes on Disney's streaming

platform, you must first have a long look at an 'advisory' (which means 'warning,' I think), telling you that 'This program includes negative depictions and/or mistreatment of peoples or cultures. These stereotypes were wrong then and are wrong now. Rather than remove this content, we want to acknowledge its harmful impact, learn from it and spark conversation to create a more inclusive future together.'

Oh, heck. What was that all about, then? Something to do with the potential cross-species relationship between Kermit and Miss Piggy? Surely that's no longer disapproved of. Is the Swedish chef a little too Swedish, or Sam a little too American? Perhaps it was that sketch where Peter Sellers sang 'Gypsy Violin.' ('Have you got any requests?' 'Yes, but you're gonna play anyway'.) Not being a subscriber to the late Disney Brothers' television channel, I'll have to leave it to someone else to work out exactly what viewers need advising about before they risk watching the Muppet Show, but it is fascinating to observe how what was undoubtedly 'family viewing' in 1978 has become 'negative' in 2021.

All this was happening in February, but I must confess to having only just caught up with the news. I suspect I had other things on my mind at the beginning of this year. But I do find it galling that the company didn't make clear what aspect of each programme called for the warning. The press speculated, but viewers were never told. And the same warning has been slapped in front of some of those very familiar Disney cartoon films, like Dumbo, Peter Pan and the Jungle Book. And this takes us into similar territory as so-called 'cancel culture.' Without wishing to over-egg the pudding, I'd say that this sort of thing offends against the principles of natural justice.

How do these decisions get made? Who decides when something has fallen into a 'problematic' category? Who gets consulted? Where is the public discus-

sion? What actually is the problem? And if one person makes an accusation that somebody's work is inappropriate to be shown without a warning, a different person should, surely, take the decision about whether to impose a warning, since no-one should be judge in their own cause. If I were Jim Henson, the creator of the Muppet Show, I'd want to know who my accuser is, what exactly the charge is, and how I might appeal against the judgment. But, of course, no-one gets consulted, and, in any event, none of this happens for genuinely altruistic reasons: it's done so the relevant corporation or institution will not fall victim to the wrath of the online mob.

And perhaps what gives it away is the fact that the warning notice includes those words piously claiming that content that is deemed 'harmful' should stay in the broadcasts, so that we can 'learn from it and spark conversation to create a more inclusive future together'—even though we're not told what the harmful content is. If you can't name a possible problem, how can you begin a conversation about it? But, of course, genuine dialogue is neither welcome nor encouraged.

Meanwhile, remind me: which Hollywood studio made a film last year based on a Chinese legend which it filmed in the Xinjiang province of China—the province where the government is persecuting the Uighurs—and whose credits thank the 'public security bureau' there, which provoked a spat between British MPs and the studio about its attitude to human rights? That's the same film whose lead actress subsequently shared her preference for police over pro-democracy protestors in Hong Kong. Oh, and, if you'll forgive me for going back to Wikipedia, the film was criticised by Chinese critics for 'its cultural and historical inaccuracies, and its depiction of Chinese people.' Gosh. Worth an advisory notice? 

# views, reviews and previews

**art**



## THE MAKING OF RODIN

Tate Modern

until 21st November, 2021

**Paris will** always be Balzac, or at least Rodin's great bronze Balzac in a dressing gown at 136 Boulevard Raspail, just along from where we used to stay. A century from its making 'Balzac' is still a startling work, far removed from 'The Kiss' which Rodin used as a 'huge knick-knack' to persuade the public to accept the Balzac. But the public weren't persuaded, the commission was initially rejected and Rodin never saw the work cast in bronze.

Tate Modern's show gives us some of the original plaster casts for the Balzac, including the actual dressing gown. And even in an exhibition which deliberately creates something of the higgledy-piggledy of the artist's studio, the towering cast of the author, stripped of the signifiers of the writer's art, dominates the main gallery as the powerful gaze of the head of genius posed atop the folds of dressing gown commands our attention.

The lifesize-plus Balzac is one of two hundred plaster casts and drawings generously on loan from the Musée Rodin. The loan doesn't give us Rodin's complete range, but it is more than enough to be getting on with. And so broad a show allows us to take in the curators' teaching and weigh it against Rodin's achievement.

As the sculptor of the modern age (1890s) whose great work featured the writer of the modern age (1850s) it is to be expected that Rodin is hard to pin down. For the curators (2020s) Rodin's significance – rather than his ability as a sculptor – lies in the anticipations of found art and surrealism in his later work. Visitors to the show will make up their own minds whether an artist is best defined by what comes after her, but not many practicing artists hold to the Whiggish/Marxist/solipsistic view of their craft.

Another aspect of the way the present academic-curatorial guild judges artists by their own contemporary ethico-political stance is that they need to tell us how Rodin was wanting as a human being. And it is true, and well known, that he did give the impression his works were the result of his genius alone and he didn't acknowledge his studio assistants. He had a succession of mistresses whom he exploited alongside the long-term mistress he eventually married. He bought antiques which might have been looted in war and he messed around with them. He did not treat his models as equals and he kept his work white when he should have known that his classical models would have been coloured. It is important that these faults are recognised. And it would probably require another exhibition to unravel why a working-class artist with no formal arts or curatorial education needed so much self-belief to drive through his artistic vision – a shrinking violet would not have created the Balzac.

Still, we should be happy that this show gives us so much to enjoy. Part of the enjoyment is to see how Rodin works within the conventions of his time. Whereas Balzac had focussed on the unheroic society around him, Rodin often worked with myths and the great stories from the past, especially Dante's *Divina Commedia*. This gave him the famous 'Thinker' – an expression of genius and genius expressed in extreme physicality, for Rodin was a man for whom the physical was an expression of character. Other examples in the show of themes taken from Dante are the groups based on the cannibal Ugolino della Gherardesca. And from mythology there are nymphs and satyrs doing things which were carefully hidden under unfinished marble.

Rodin's most famous completed group taken from history is, of course,

the 'Burghers of Calais'. In this show the original cast has been repaired and we can see how plaster incarnates a story of human weakness in the face of power, a story of courage and vulnerability. Rodin is a great storyteller who was able to combine a romantic tradition with the world of the ordinary man and woman.

Another joy of the show is just how virtuosic Rodin could be. The first room is devoted to his breakthrough piece, 'The Age of Bronze' (again the mythic reference), a life-size sculpture of a Belgian soldier, Auguste Neyt. It is a remarkable evocation of masculinity. So brilliant is this work that critics thought



that in some way Rodin had simply cast Neyt himself. He hadn't, and to prove the point Rodin pointed out the imperfections in the sculpture, imperfections which came to be part of his way of making contrary to the classical tradition.

But even when Rodin critiqued the classical tradition much of his work was in dialogue with it, and not just to satisfy his patrons. The technical skill which that tradition demanded is on display not just with Tate's 'The Kiss' (and it is a little churlish of the curators to flag up so bluntly Rodin's view of a piece which is one of the gallery's most famous *objets*) but also with the small 'Jeux des Nymphes', where the marble is worked into both a beautiful smooth finish and also a strong and charming pattern of striations and marks.

The show is an opportunity to discover and rediscover why Rodin was one of the greatest artists of his age.

Owen Higgs



## NUNS ACROSS THE ORANGE A History of the Pioneering Anglican Community of St Michael and All Angels, Bloemfontein

Michael Sparrow

612pp, pbk ISBN: 978 1928424628

Available from the publishers from [media@sunbonani.co.za](mailto:media@sunbonani.co.za); or as an e-book at <https://doi.org/10.18820/9781928424635>

As the sub-title of Michael Sparrow's excellent history suggests, the Community of St Michael and All Angels (CSM&AA) was founded to undertake pioneering work in the vast diocese of Bloemfontein. Allan Becher Webb, second bishop of the diocese, determined that a Religious Community of women was vital to his efforts to evangelise such a large area, and set about seeking assistance from established female communities in England. Several offered support, but only Fr Chamberlain's Sisterhood of St Thomas the Martyr (Oxford) was able to supply practical help. Sister Emma of that community became the first Reverend Mother of the fledgling CSM&AA, and in March 1874 she and a small group of others set sail for Cape Town, and from there on to Bloemfontein where the Community began its work.

The first Anglican sisterhood in South Africa, CSM&AA quickly established itself as a forceful presence in the fields of nursing, education and mission. Under the supervision of Sister Henrietta Stockdale, the Community provided the first training course for nurses in South Africa, the first hospital in the Orange Free State, and the world's first State Registration of nurses. The Community was equally pioneering in the field of education, opening the first school for black african girls in the Free State, and establishing the prestigious St Michael's School for Girls. Bit by bit, the Sisterhood grew, both in number and in works. Indeed, the breadth and scope of work undertaken by the Sisterhood, and described here, is astonishing.

CSM&AA was distinctive in a number of ways. Having founded the Community, the diocesan bishop had authority over it in a way that would have made him the envy of his counterparts in England, many of whom despaired of the avowedly autonomous existence of most of the English sisterhoods. On the other hand, Bishop Webb understood what many English diocesans did not, that things such as vows and daily Mass are of the *esse* of the Religious Life, and not merely high-church trappings. Thus, both were a part of life in CSM&AA from the beginning.

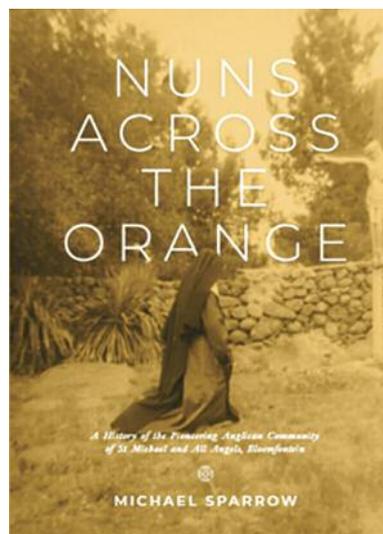
Another thing that made CSM&AA distinctive (though not unique) is that it was founded specifically by white English-speaking Anglicans, to work "across racial barriers, often in the face of some opposition from the White settlers," far away from their own homeland. This emphasizes the heroic commitment of the sisters (especially the earliest members), but may also explain why CSM&AA (like the Community of the Resurrection and others) did not succeed in attracting indigenous vocations in any number. However, CSM&AA's significant achievement in this field lay in the founding of the Basotho Community of St Mary at the Cross in 1923. This Community prospered, and in 1959 was placed under the care of the Community of the Holy Name, where it still flourishes as CHN's Lesotho Province. Thus, the legacy of CSM&AA continues.

It is a remarkable fact that in 1965, CSM&AA had been in existence for 91 years, and had known only three Superiors. Many felt that stability had become stagnation. With hindsight, it is

probable that this left the sisterhood particularly ill-equipped to deal with the pressing issues that faced most Religious Communities at this and in the decades which followed: the consequences of Vatican II, failed attempts to modernize and become 'relevant', ageing members and too few vocations, and an overarching inability to answer the question, 'what are we for?' . In 1973 Canon Trevor Verryn, Director of the Ecumenical Research Unit in Pretoria, was commissioned to advise CSM&AA about its future, as he did also for the Community of the Resurrection and several Roman Catholic communities. His report set out the challenges mentioned above, offered a number of suggestions for moving forwards positively, but also invited the sisters to consider whether it is 'perhaps the will of God that the CSM&AA, having fulfilled the purpose for which He called it, should now come to an end?'. This proved to be the most prophetic part of Verryn's report. Despite numerous attempts to adjust to new circumstances, the active life of CSM&AA came to an end surprisingly quickly, though the longevity of the remaining sisters meant the Community itself continued for some time: two of the last three sisters celebrated their 100<sup>th</sup> birthdays. The last sister died in 2016, and with her came to an end the earthly life of CSM&AA, after 142 years of service.

To write a complete history of a religious community – from foundation to conclusion – is both a gift and a challenge to an author. Fr Sparrow makes the most of the gift, and rises to the challenge. *Nuns Across the Orange* is a large and detailed book, but well-written and very readable. It captures the excitement, trials and outstanding achievements of the early years; the stability, life and work of the middle years; and the poignant sense of completion in the end years. In the words of Sister (formerly Mother) Mary Ruth, writing when three sisters remained and the Constitution was suspended in 2003: Bishop Webb of Bloemfontein founded the Community 'to open up a pioneer area in nursing, education, and mission. We recognise that the task is now accomplished.' *Deo Gratias*.

Ian McCormack



## THE INTERIOR SILENCE

### 10 Lessons from Monastic Life

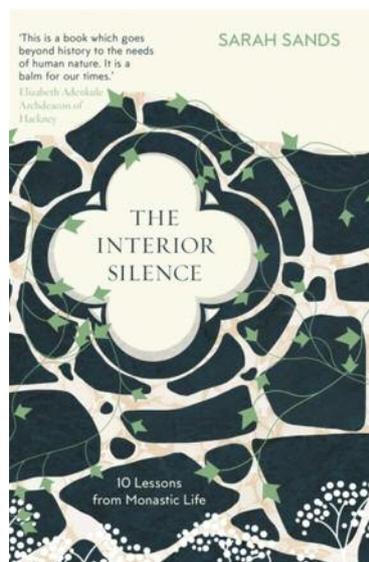
Sarah Sands

Short Books 2021 £12.99

ISBN: 978 1 78072 454 6

**Lockdown and** the pandemic have forced thousands of people to examine their lives and to discover they don't really enjoy the frenetic life style they live. Some in lockdown have found a simpler, calmer, more sensible life and are determined to hold on to it.

Sarah Sands is a journalist and, at the time of writing this book, was Editor of BBC's *Today* programme. Her life was filled with news reports, texts, Twitter, meetings, meals out and all that goes with a modern journalistic life. Before the pandemic came along she became fascinated by a ruined monastery at the bottom of her Norfolk garden. What did those nuns do? How did they live before Henry VIII destroyed their life? She began to investigate monasteries. She went to Buddhist monasteries in Japan and Bhutan, Coptic monasteries in Egypt, Catholic monasteries around Europe and Orthodox ones in Greece. She is intrigued, delighted, thrilled by what she finds. She records over and over again the beauty, the silence and the peace of the various monasteries she visits. She speaks with monks and nuns and finds them quiet, sensible, attractive people. She treats them all with respect, never mocks their way of life, tells no stories of negative encounters. Little snippets of her journalistic life appear from time and highlight the peaceful life of the monks. She becomes increasingly aware of the crazy life style she is living



and in the end she resigns from *Today*. The stability and isolation forced on her by the pandemic becomes desirable. Her life has changed.

Sarah writes well and is easy to read. She has read widely and quotations from Augustine, Socrates, Timothy Radcliffe and the people she meets on her journeys help to deepen the experience of her encounters. She says nothing at all about her own faith, though one suspects she has one. She barely mentions God or Christ. Perhaps this is intentional. She is writing for a non-religious world, a world that thinks God is irrelevant. Such a world is put off by the mention of God. Yet the people of that world still respond to silence, beauty and goodness. They see, some of them, the meaningless character of their lives. Can they

at least visit the silence of monasticism and discover what they have lost in the crazy, overloaded world in which we live? If they can that would be good. If we in the monastic life can offer it in a meaningful way, we should.

However, one must add that beauty, silence and peace are not the ultimate aim of Christian monastic life. They are the means to an end, and the end is God. The monastic life is not a life style choice; it is a response to the call of Christ. Otherwise it makes no sense for those who live it. The silence and beauty are important as they direct us to God, but it is just as important to learn every day how to treat one's brothers and sisters, and visitors, as Christ. The longer I live the monastic life the more I realise that it is a life trying to live with Christ, as Christ, in response to Christ. The constant failure to do that opens us up to the joyful humility we need to accept the loving grace of God.

Nicolas Stebbing CR

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## WHY DANTE MATTERS

### An Intelligent Person's Guide

John Took

206pp, hbk ISBN: 9781472951038

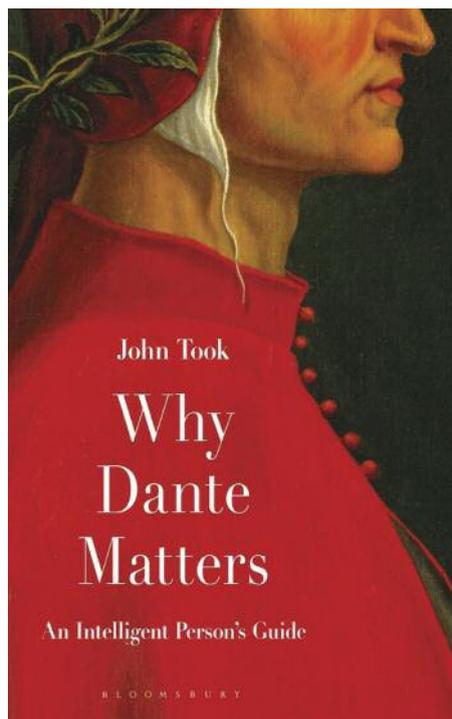
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This 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of Dante's death has brought about a small crop of new titles. There should be more, but Dante is too medieval, too Italian, too European, too theological, and too Florentine. This is a great pity because the multifaceted genius is worth exploring and even more so for anyone of faith. It is especially notable when taking in Dante's contribution to Christendom and the development of spiritual thought in the western world. Dante was an irrefutable Christian; his work articulates religious belief and poetic vision. Few minds have matched him since, and he is peerless in the towering achievement of the *Divine Comedy*, his great and final masterpiece.

That work alone is described by John Took, Emeritus Professor of Dante Studies at University College London, as 'monumental...the great work of Dante's maturity, its greatness being manifold' in his *Why Dante Matters – An Intelligent Person's Guide*. Took has also published a biography of Dante but this slim volume is more of an intellectual survey of Dante's output with a particular eye on existentialism. Took is an admirer of Paul Tillich (quoted extensively at the front) and here he gives us Dante with the "existentialist point of view". He quotes Heidegger too, ironically, and without reference to the part he played in Tillich's expulsion from Nazi Germany. This is squarely, therefore, a German Dante to add to the American Dante of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, or the Irish Dante of Yeats, Joyce, Beckett, and Heaney, and so on. Yet it is not specifically literary because Took's interest is more in phenomenology and a distinctly Schleiermacherean focus on ego and the self. At times it teeters perilously close to a Gnostic reading of Dante, and despite Tillich's thought being a stepping-off point, there is no deep engagement with his systematic theology. Anyone looking for a dialectic between Dante and Tillich will not find it here. Phrases such as "courage to be" are im-

ported, but a discussion of how Tillich's 'ground of being' might correlate with Dante's epistemology is frustratingly avoided.

It is a short book (200 pages) and much of it is taken up with long passages from Dante's main works followed by a translation. The opening of the *Inferno* is quoted five (five!) times, at least ten lines each time, although the translation does vary. The reader must assume that Professor Took is responsible for the translations from Italian (also Latin) as they are not attributed to anyone else. In this he marshals his skill artfully, and demonstrates a lifetime of Dantean companionship. The lines and words are sometimes over-manipulated to make a certain point, and he does not attempt either *terza rima* or iambic pentameter. Took's own style is somewhat baroque and could give John Milbank and Rowan Williams a run for their money in the more obtuse examples of their output. His Proustian paragraphs and



convoluted sentence structure look one moment like 'academese' and at another risk getting the reader as lost as Dante in the thickets of his deep dark wood.

That said, there is some original and thought-provoking insight here. Dante, of course, wrote in Italian and is rightly considered the father of that language, so Took's analysis of *lingua da si* as both the personal language of authenticity, as well as the only or best language of the vernacular, is valuable. He looks in detail

at the *Convivio* and *Vita Nuova* (although sadly not *De Monarchia*) charting Dante's exploration of love in varying forms throughout his life and work. Interpreting the *Comedy* as a resurrection journey is not entirely new, but he gives it some freshness and amplification, even if his 'transhumanity' description of the *Inferno* stops short of a more distinctly Christian transfiguration. Elsewhere he toys with the possibility of predeterminism in Dante's work (specifically the *Convivio*) and skirts around reconciliation themes without looking at atonement theories and what would have been Dante's own Anselmian reading. The Augustinian and Thomist elements are not brought out very much, and Dante's political life (not least the reason for his exile) is hardly touched upon. It would be difficult to do so many of those strands justice and his approach on the whole works for its disciplined attention.

Ultimately, and rewardingly, Took gives us in Dante the ethos and contours of love, exploring how love or concern for oneself is what compels towards deeper and greater unity with God. This "love to the loveless shown" is at the heart of Dante's life, thought, and philosophy – even those he condemned to everlasting torture in the *Inferno*, for there is much pity too. The experiential process is therefore one of self-discovery and brings the individual, when directed aright, closer to salvation.

Took does assume the reader knows the *Comedy* well, or has at least read it. In the Suggested Further Reading he cites impressive recent translations (Mandelbaum, Kirkpatrick) as well as classics (Sinclair) but not Dorothy L. Sayers or even H.F. Cary (Anglican clergyman and the first full-length blank verse poetic translation of the *Comedy* in 1814). Also left out are the *Hollanders'* version (2000-7) and the fascinating full-poem attempt by the late Clive James (2013). A single-minded selection once again. Took's book is a welcome addition to the Dante shelf all the same. He has original things to say, even if not always as clear as they could be, and he proves how Dante continues to be relevant and enthralling even today, eight centuries on.

Simon Walsh

# Book of the month

## THE ANGLICAN PATRIMONY IN CATHOLIC COMMUNION

### The Gift of the Ordinariates

ed. Tracey Rowland

T&T Clark, 2021 £21.99 240pp

ISBN: 9780567700247

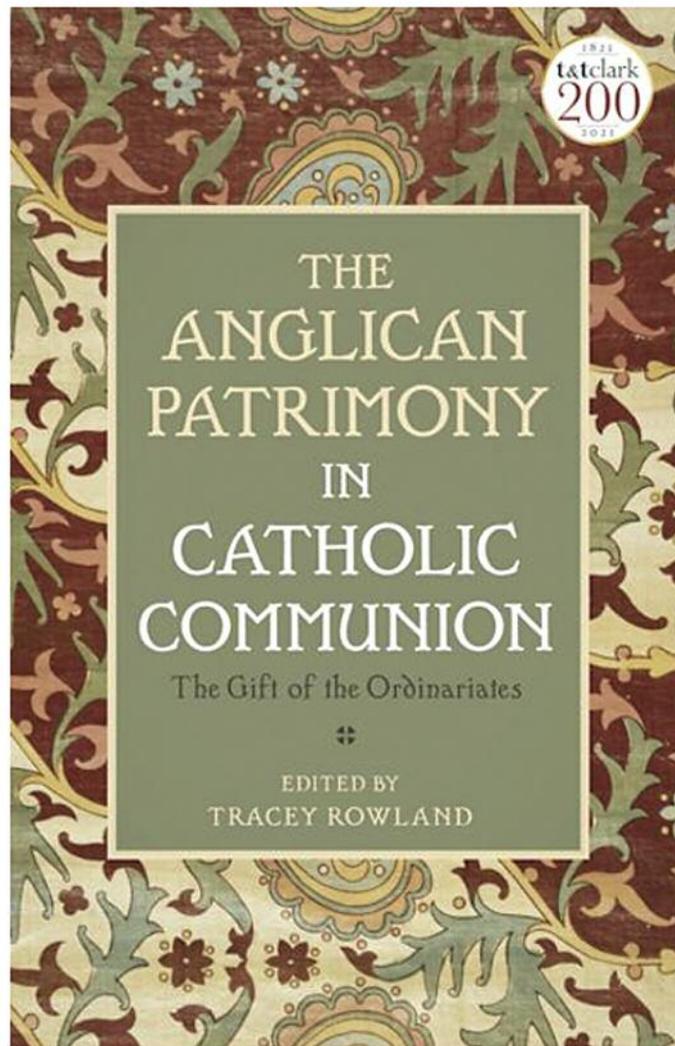


In 2009 *Anglicanorum Coetibus* made provision for an Anglican Ordinariate, intended to be both a 'home from home' for Anglicans coming into Communion with the Holy See, but also to "bring back home a treasure to be shared" by the entire Catholic Church.

These 11 essays seek to celebrate this initiative and to explore this treasure of *Anglican Patrimony* as experienced through its very diverse contributors. And here is the rub. One is left with the very familiar feeling that, as with many things about which we might care deeply, 'We know it when we see it' but how hard are its parameters to define. Perhaps, then, it is not surprising that the most coherent essays in this book are those that deal with an Anglican approach to liturgy, particularly as formed and informed by the Book of Common Prayer, and with its characteristic culture of pastoral care. Repeatedly there is the sense that the greatest gift that Roman Catholics may receive is that of a distinctive liturgical language: "expressing not merely formality but the reverence that is due the sacred offering. In a world overwhelmed with mundanity, language that exalts, lifting up the mind and heart, expresses value, the worth that underlines the very notion of worship". Words that the C of E may well take note in its apparent rush to relevance and inclusion.

But is there more to Anglican Patrimony than a reserved beauty in liturgy and courtesy and homeliness in the conduct of pastoral ministry and parochial fellowship? And are Anglican and Englishness one and the same, as a number of these chapters would seem to imply? How significant is it that the three established ordinariates are in the UK, North America and Australia, where English language and culture remain a shaping norm? Significantly there is no reference in these pages to what is to be celebrated and received from where Anglicanism is now most flourishing, in the Global South.

Other important elements of the Anglican inheritance are recognised but, in two areas especially, deserve a deeper consideration than found here. In 'The virtue of religion: the irreducible essence of the Anglican patrimony' James Bradley, whilst celebrating the liturgical legacy, wisely recognises that this is not so much the essence of the patrimony, but rather a vehicle for it, and from there proceeds to an exploration of its moral and ethical dimensions: "Religion as Virtue: the object of religious obedience, moral living and worship is the same - God." Yet more could be said of a tradition which stresses that moral case reasoning and spirituality, both devotional and ascetical, are lined; that ethical insight may be drawn from plural sources and not simply Scripture, or the decisions of popes or presbyteries on their own; and that in the formation of conscience the exercise of reason and the work of the Holy Spirit combine.



Hence an Anglican tradition that has linked moral theology to pastoral theology and spiritual direction, in contrast to a Roman emphasis conjoining Confession and Canon Law. "Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore of nicely-calculated less or more" - Wordsworth

Similarly an excellent piece on the Caroline Divines sketches a characteristically Anglican approach to theological scholarship; one emphasising Patristics (especially the Greek Fathers), the application of reason as a critical and imaginative faculty in the discernment of religious truth; a typological reading of contemporary events through the lens of scripture, a 'Divinity' which links integrity of study to holiness of life, and an ordered freedom informed by a reticent moderation (great religious truths are sometimes best served by defining less). How much I would have liked something on how this was taken forward by such as Pusey and Keble, Westcott and

Gore, Mascall and Farrer, Michael Ramsey and Rowan Williams.

As with any collection of essays the quality is uneven, ranging from the scholarly to the whimsical. The idiosyncratic pieces on 'Monarchy' and 'Eton' will seem quaint to even the most English of minds and add little to our understanding of Patrimony or Ordinariate. Others are illuminating beyond this narrow scope, and are worthy of reading in their own right. Cardinal Levada's excellent essay sets the establishment of the ordinariates in the context of 'Receptive Ecumenism' - a celebration and reception by the wider church of what of the older Christian tradition was preserved and developed to a high degree in separated parts of the Christian church, thereby bringing to perennial truths and elements of holiness a new focus and stress as, in a particular context, they have been lived. The Ordinariates are also seen as logically consistent with the consensus achieved through ARCIC and its agreed statements. Of note here is a tacit acceptance by Rome that any commitment to ARCIC and its outcomes, if it is to have integrity, must, in some sense, be ongoing and binding. What might this say about an Anglican Communion perception of its own participation, and its integrity as a partner in dialogue?

A similar question is raised by Steven Lopes' useful and insightful account of how the ordinariates came into being. There are hints also of what might have been, and maybe the question as to whether the provision will prove to have been 'too little too late'.

There is much worth pondering by Anglicans and RCs alike. Timothy Perkins reminds us that Evangelisation involves a drawing of all into that wholeness that unites each soul with God, and with others in one communion and fellowship within the larger church. Placed alongside a thoughtful piece on Newman with his stress on the role of personal influence and relationships in communicating the Gospel, and how serious evangelisation means that 'the church must be prepared for converts, as well as converts must be prepared for the church' - I found another word for our times. As, too, in Newman's prescient concern that: *'despite manifest evidence of sincerity and sanctity in its ranks, Anglicanism, considered as a system of compromise and equivocation (one lacking of visible centre of unity and a living magisterium) would over time reveal it's fundamentally liberalising character as a fatal solvent to truth, though perhaps thereby sharpening for some of its adherents he imperative summons to a deeper, truer conversion.'*

However hard it may be to define, the richness of Anglican patrimony is real. It behoves those who are Anglican Catholics to reflect deeply on how to faithfully embody and bear witness to it in a church which institutionally may seem no longer to care, and for those in the ordinariates to as a still fragile minority, to strive to keep the rumour of this inheritance alive. To that end ongoing conversation between us is vital too, in the faithful stewardship of the treasure that we share. **ND**

+ Michael Langrish



An SSC gathering at Worksop Priory for Holy Cross Day

# Theatre Notes

Simon Walsh has been enjoying the return of theatre

After a year in the doldrums with so many false starts and delayed openings, shows are back on, people are performing once more, and the numerous Covid-19 restrictions have been surmounted.

One of the first to get back to business was **The Prince of Egypt** (Dominion Theatre, London). Adapted from the DreamWorks film with great skill and originality, it's the Moses-Pharaoh story and a wonderful stretch-out of Exodus 1-14. Miriam doesn't give us 'horse and rider thrown into the sea' but the 11 o'clock is 'When you believe (There can be miracles)', also made famous Mariah Carey and Whitney Houston. There's movement and dance, fidelity to Scripture, a fair look at Jewish identity, and a lot of fun. Poignancy too, especially with the Plagues. Composed by Stephen Schwartz who gave us *Godspell*, *Pippin*, and *Wicked*, this is a very entertaining few hours. Highly recommended for parish trips, Sunday School outings, and any kids.



The Open Air Theatre (Regent's Park, London) rolled its abandoned 2020 schedule over into this year and the big musical was **Carousel**, although there was confusion. Transplanted from the eastern seaboard of the United States to somewhere indeterminate in the north east of England, with a range of accents to match, and a brass band to start things off in the overture. It felt like a pit-town cliché and perhaps wanted to make some sort of Brexit or Red Wall point, but then the pandemic and an alarming rise in domestic violence, so the storyline (which is there in the show) was brought to the fore. The creative team went back to the original source material (Hungarian play *Lilliom*) and fiddled with the ending so there is no redemption at the end for Billy Bigelow who is simply imprisoned in a purgatorial cage of fairground poles by angry women. His tragic death is turned back into a suicide too, which doesn't fit; R&H made all their careful changes for a reason. The costumes were Lowry-dour and the re-orchestration uninspiring. Joanna Riding was marvellous and the choreography of interest, but the rest was a bit grim.

Far better on the Rodgers & Hammerstein front was **South Pacific** at the Chichester Festival Theatre. An expert, finely-tuned production with stellar performances, this was faithful to the book yet still mined new depths in a piece that could so easily be old hat. Daniel Evans directed one of the most coher-

ent and moving productions for a long time. It was also apposite; American forces deployed to Asia on stage whilst US troops were pulling out of Afghanistan. There really isn't anything new under the sun. Alex Young and Gina Beck shared the role of Nellie and were utterly convincing to Julian Ovenden's smooth but tortured Emile. Joanna Ampil brought a fresh reading of Bloody Mary; *Happy Talk* became powerfully wistful. Chichester has often transferred its productions in the past so let's hope for another enchanted evening to come.

The one show that has given theatreland a shot in the arm bigger than any booster jab is **Anything Goes** (Barbican Theatre, London). Sutton Foster has been brought over from Broadway for the lead role of Reno Sweeney. She looks a million dollars (probably her salary too), can sing dance, act, do comedy. She's megawatt stuff. The rest of the cast just about manages to keep up. Robert Lindsay proves what a great comic actor he is, Felicity Kendal totters through to the end, Gary Wilmot hams it up. The three-tier set is clever and all around Kathleen Marshall's lively, energetic cast brings brio, bounce and joy to the flimsy plot which is little more than a showcase for the terrific Cole Porter songs. They loved being back on stage as much as we enjoyed seeing them there. It was a standing ovation and runs until 6 November.

Though Oliver Mears has been Director of Opera at the Royal Opera House since 2017, this new **Rigoletto** is his first outing there as stage director. The production replaces David McVicar's lascivious version first staged in 2001 and sets a more cultured tone. Halfway through the overture, the curtain rises on a beautifully lit Caravaggio tableau. Monterone is blinded by the Duke, like Gloucester in *Lear*. This is, after all, an opera about darkness and seeing. Much is observed from the shadows, and the opening lines are the Duke singing his intent to have the girl he has been looking at in church every Sunday these past three months. She is Gilda, and so with Monterone's curse on the court for the Duke having defiled his daughter, as we discover the girl from church is Rigoletto's own beloved daughter, there is tragic inevitability. Armenian tenor Liparit Avetisyan (last seen as Alfredo in *Traviata*) is sweet and a little soppy, like a puppy. He never convinces as a villain but you can see why everyone falls at his feet. Lisette Oropesa is perfect: her Gilda is naïve and hopeful, she sings with poise and clarity. It's a deeply affecting performance. Carlos Alvarez (last seen in *La Forza*) is drenched in the role and gives a masterful Rigoletto. In Act I, he's in court jester costume with his face painted like Batman's Joker; for the rest of the night he's in a double-breasted suit. There's a bit of Gotham dystopia there and Mears has not gone down the easy #metoo route ("all big men are monsters"), finding instead the evil inherent in all who enable the banality of evil. Pappano conducts tenderly, if with surprising and daring slowness at times, and always with his usual skill in bringing out lines and detail in the score. It comes back on in February 2022. **ND**

# ‘Yours devotedly, Basil Hume’

Robert Beaken remembers the late Cardinal Basil Hume OSB

In 1987-88 when I was an Anglican ordinand, I had the great good fortune to study as an ecumenical exchange student at the Venerable English College and Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. Slightly to my surprise, I found myself quite often encountering Cardinal Basil Hume, the Archbishop of Westminster, who would stay at the English College when visiting Rome on official business.

My first real encounter with the Cardinal was one warm Sunday in early October 1987 when he appeared at lunch in the college refectory. Afterwards, the staff and seminarians gathered in the garden for coffee. The Cardinal entered the garden, accompanied by the rector and vice-rector of the English College and a little group of priests and monsignori, and proceeded to do the rounds. He got to me and enquired who I was. ‘Robert Beaken, one of the Anglican students here,’ I replied. ‘Surviving?’ he asked me. ‘Yes,’ I replied, ‘and enjoying it enormously.’ ‘Oh, that’s *dangerous!*’ said the Cardinal, ‘you don’t want to enjoy it *too* much!’ Everyone laughed and the Cardinal moved on. A few minutes later I felt an arm across my shoulder and turned round to see Cardinal Hume who had shaken off the others. ‘Are you still enjoying it?’ he asked me quietly and seriously. I noticed he had gentle eyes that did not miss much. ‘Yes’ I answered. His humour returned, and, banging my shoulder vigorously, he said ‘Well, make sure they look after you here, do you hear? Any complaints, come to *me!*’ The last remark was bellowed out for all to hear.

I was struck on that occasion by Cardinal Hume’s humility, humour and concern. He was approachable and was rather more the Benedictine monk than the cardinal. His dress, too, was noteworthy: an ancient pair of black trousers, a black jacket that didn’t match and a black clerical shirt that had been washed so often that it had lost much of its dye.

I met the Cardinal on many more occasions. I walked to and from the Vatican with him several times and once accompanied him to Pope John Paul II’s early morning Mass in the Apostolic Palace.

Much has been written of Cardinal Hume’s prayerfulness. He seemed to me to *radiate* prayer. Another memory is of him prayerfully celebrating Mass in the English College chapel with great simplicity and quiet dignity. He was an innately humble man: I recall how embarrassed and flustered he became when everyone stood up whenever he entered a room in the college.

I also recall the Cardinal’s great sense of humour and fun. He allowed the seminarians to pull his leg and he gently pulled their legs in return. I recall him keeping his sixty-fifth birthday in Rome. He had us in stitches when, with mock alarm, he announced that he was one of very few people in England who would not receive an old age pension, because the bursar at Ampleforth Abbey had been too mean to pay the national insurance stamps.

The Cardinal sometimes used his sense of humour to make a point. It was recalled how on one occasion he had visited a rather grand Roman Catholic church in London. Everyone



was waiting on the steps of the church, trying to spot the first sign of the Cardinal’s chauffeur-driven car, when a red London double-decker bus pulled up at a bus stop outside and Cardinal Hume alighted, wearing his old black clothes and carrying his cardinal’s robes in a plastic carrier-bag. The point was not lost.

When the time drew near in 1988 for me to leave the Venerable English College and return home for my ordination in the Church of England, I had half an hour’s private talk with Cardinal Hume in his study. We spoke about my time in Rome, ecumenism, the ordained ministry and the spiritual life, and at the end he said a prayer and gave me a blessing.

On my final evening at the English College, the Cardinal ordained a priest in the college chapel. His sermon is etched in my mind. He said that a priest’s life is marked by two things: prayer and suffering. Prayer is the life-blood of a priest. It must undergird all his pastoral work and Christian teaching. Without prayer, the priest will dry up. Another part of the vocation of a priest is to suffer: from isolation, at the hands of the institutional Church, and at the hands of some of the people he has to deal with in the parish.

Cardinal Hume went on, however, to speak movingly in that ordination sermon about the deep joy to be experienced in fulfilling one’s vocation and opening one’s heart to the love of Jesus Christ, who uses the priest to reach out to other people.

Then, something unexpected happened in the ordination service. After the Eucharistic prayer and before administering Holy Communion, the Cardinal came over to where I was kneeling, carrying the Blessed Sacrament in a ciborium. He clearly could not give me Holy Communion as I was an Anglican, and I wondered what was going to happen. Bending down, he said: ‘I pray that Almighty God may pour upon you the riches of His grace for your own ministry in *His* Church,’ and then making the sign of the Cross with the ciborium he

added, 'and may Almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.' It was an intensely moving moment, and one that I have never forgotten. You will begin to understand why I often pray for Christian unity.

I returned to England after breakfast the next morning. I sent my ordination cards to Cardinal Hume when I was ordained deacon in the Church of England a few months later and priest the following year. I received warm replies from him each time, signed simply: 'Yours devotedly, Basil Hume.'

I last saw the Cardinal in Portsmouth Roman Catholic cathedral at the enthronement of a new bishop. We managed a short talk afterwards and he asked me how I was getting on in parish life. I told him how much I was enjoying parish ministry and was rewarded with a lovely smile and a characteristic flash of his blue eyes.

Cardinal Basil Hume died in London on 17 June 1999, aged 76. As he approached his death, he wrote to his priests: 'Above

all, no fuss.'

It is still too early to say how history will come to judge the Cardinal. It will take time for archival historians to work through his papers, establish their historical context and form a balanced opinion. That sort of thing is best done after some time has passed.

Suor Pia, one of the nuns who worked at the English College, once told me she thought the Cardinal was 'a great man.' My own recollection of Cardinal Basil Hume is of a warm-hearted, prayerful man, who was a most loving ambassador for his Master, Jesus Christ.

*Dr Robert Beaken is priest-in-charge of Catsfield and Crowhurst in the Diocese of Chichester. His latest book Cosmo Lang, Archbishop in War and Crisis has been recently published in paperback by T and T Clark. **ND***

## New Hymns for the Divine Office

Fr John Underhill SSC offers new hymns from his own pen for the Liturgy of the Hours, with suggested well-known settings

### Office of Readings

Within the watches of the night,  
Dear Saviour let us keep the fight  
Against the wiles of Satan's boasts,  
Supported by the heavenly host.

May shining torches our prayers be –  
Reflecting Your sweet charity –  
To ever seek Your Sacred Heart  
Amid the shadows and the dark.

All laud and glory, Son of God,  
Our light in darkness, Lord above,  
Who with the Father we adore,  
and Holy Spirit evermore.  
Amen.

#### Suggested tunes:

*Breslau (Take up thy cross the Saviour said)*  
*Herongate (It is a thing most wonderful)*

### Lauds

O Lord we place into Your hands  
Our duties on this new dawned day,  
And pray that You may lighten us,  
E'en as You draw night's veil away.

Embolden us to consecrate  
Our souls, minds, bodies, Lord to You.  
That, guided by Your saintly host,  
We may begin life's day anew.

O God the Son, our Daystar bright  
Accept our worship, laud, and praise,  
And Father too, with Paraclete,  
Be glory until end of days.  
Amen.

#### Suggested tunes:

*Herongate (It is a thing most wonderful)*  
*Winchester New (Ride on ride on in majesty)*

### Prayer during the Day

Dear Jesu bless our daily prayer,  
As we, our labours, lay aside.  
Refresh our weary limbs and minds  
As we approach You; Font of Life.

Our Christian duty You impart  
Afresh to us, at work or rest.  
So, sought by grace, refreshed by life  
We to Your Gospel e'er attest.

O Jesu lover of our souls,  
Who give us strength to labour well,  
With God the Father, glory be,  
And Holy Spirit, equally.  
Amen.

#### Suggested tunes:

*Eisenach (O love how deep how broad how high)*  
*Wareham (Rejoice O land in God thy might)*

### Vespers

As this day's ending falls on us  
Hear, gracious Lord, our twilight hymn.  
For of your gifts are heat and frost,  
Pray, let the evening peace begin.

Becalm our minds from fretfulness  
As shadows stretch and darkness comes,  
Enrich us with Your tenderness,  
That we may pray, 'Thy will be done.'

To Father, Son, and Spirit Blessed,  
This eventide, may honour be  
Your servants praise, Your saints attest,  
From now into eternity.  
Amen.

#### Suggested tunes:

*Brockham (Creator of the Starry Height)*  
*Rockingham (When I Survey the Wondrous Cross)*

### Compline

The darkling shadows round us draw,  
As we entrust our souls to You,  
Set evil shades to flight, O Lord,  
Preserve our hearts both pure and true.

About us set Your angels guard,  
Who, in Your Name, tread down the foe.  
Protect us from the devil's barbs.  
A blessed peace on us bestow.

Laud we the Father, and the Son,  
And Holy Spirit, by whose breath  
Our strength for praise and labour  
comes,  
To lie in peace and take our rest.

#### Suggested tunes:

*Rockingham (When I Survey the Wondrous Cross)*  
*Veni Creator Spiritus (Come Holy Ghost our Souls Inspire)*

Fr John Underhill SSC

# October Diary

William Davage has been ready for his close-up

Last month I wrote about the writing of two books during the sustained period of lockdown. There was one other major preoccupation during that time: filming a video.

One of the fruits of the pandemic was the online liturgy that was some compensation for our enforced absence from communal worship, less by the state than by episcopal fiat, now acknowledged as being somewhat over-cautious. Much of the liturgy was creative and effective. Not all of it, of course. The Lambeth Palace kitchen communion was a decided low point. It could not, of course, replace nor replicate being in church, participating in the eucharistic action.

The clergy of Christ Church, Hampstead, Canon Paul Conrad, the Vicar, Fr Barry Orford and I, thought that a short teaching video for the parish website on the Seven Sacraments would be a useful project. Karol Danielewicz, a talented photographer and artist, had been on the point of setting up his own company which would also produce videos. The pandemic put that into enforced abeyance. Our project gave him an opportunity to make a film and us to do something useful and practical.

A script was prepared based on the sacramental teaching of the Book of Common Prayer: the two dominical sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, and Confirmation, Anointing with Holy Oils, Confession, Marriage, Holy Orders. Some would be more easy to illustrate than others. Not least because filming would require adherence to the whirlwind of instructions and guidance relating to Covid-19.

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## Walking towards the camera required a naturalness that had to be rehearsed

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Karol spent several long sessions in an empty church planning the shooting and filming aspects of the church and artefacts that would be used in the final version. Filming for the clergy, a new experience for all of us, came on a Saturday in autumn. My colleagues filmed their parts of the commentary and both proved to be first-take masters. They were able to talk to the viewer through the camera, and use the teleprompter, with masterly insouciance. I was told not to address a public meeting, shades of Queen Victoria and Mr Gladstone, not to preach but to talk to the camera, or through the camera, to an individual. After several takes, I seemed eventually to pass muster.

It is odd and disconcerting how self-conscious you can become when doing something for a camera. The simplest of tasks seemed complicated. Even walking in file into church seemed odd. And we did it several times as we were filmed

from several angles. Pouring water from a ewer into the font required concentration. Walking towards the camera to land on a spot without looking down or tripping up required a naturalness that had to be rehearsed.

Our cameraman-director-producer was patience personified. He had to do everything. He was his own sound recordist, scene-setter, movement coach, editor and as he set everything up, he cleared everything away.

The first filming was in autumn but at Christmas our producer acquired a state of the art camera and a new computer which was also an editing suite. Rather sheepishly, we were asked to perform again as the difference in quality between the carers would be obvious. The clergy reappeared during Lent to film their commentary again and to repeat some of the previous shooting. Now old-stagers, veterans of stage and screen, accomplished character players, we donned the motley and required fewer re-takes than previously.

The original intention was to illustrate the sacraments from pictures and artefacts in Christ Church. However the oil stocks were not very photogenic and, search as we might, we could find no image of the Holy Spirit in the church, no hovering dove to be seen. Fr Philip Corbett (late of this parish) came to our rescue and was rewarded with his thumb making a cameo appearance. The oil stocks and anointing were filmed there.

The laying-on of hands at confirmation needed a bishop we did not have. It seemed unreasonable to invite one for what would probably be less than a minute's screen time. There are some who would have jumped at the chance. One of the churchwardens and his son played their parts to perfection.

Although this was a modest project and employed the human and inanimate resources that were to hand, the project took several months and the real creativity took place in the editing suite. During that extended, concentrated and intricate process, I saw something of how the disparate elements, were brought together. How what seemed odd at the time of filming and recording, began to make sense. How the director's mind had been working from the beginning and how we fitted in to his conception. There were changes and a few extra takes as the work progressed. One of the most time-consuming tasks was finding and fitting music to the visual images.

None of the clergy had seen the final cut until after Mass on a Sunday in July when we met for post-Mass drinks and a private viewing of the completed film. It lasted fifteen minutes and at its conclusion we sat in silence for some time. As I turned to my colleagues, the were tears in their eyes. The Vicar said, simply, "It is beautiful". And so it is. The premiere in the parish was after Mass at the beginning of September. It can be viewed on the church's website: [christchurchhampstead.co.uk](http://christchurchhampstead.co.uk).

**ND**

*Thurifer is away.*

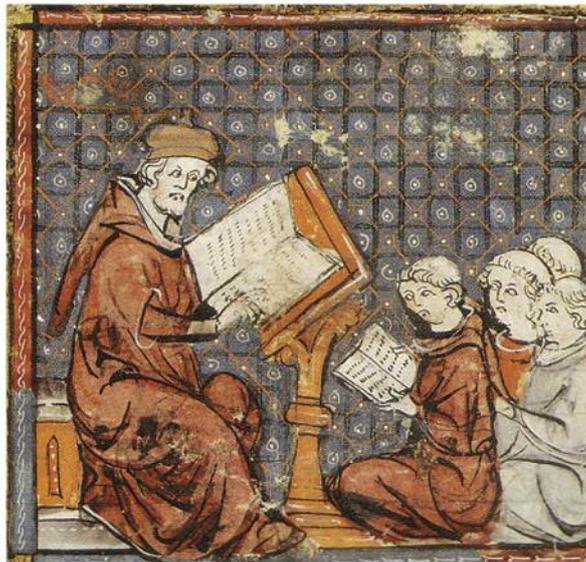
# Alcuin of York

John Gayford spends time with Alcuin: Master of Charlemagne's Palace School at Aachen; Abbot of Tours.

The life of Alcuin divides neatly into three phases: his beginning at York, his post with Charlemagne and finally becoming Abbot of Tours; but his interests and writings are continuous. He was a competent and versatile scholar with a keen interest in liturgical revision, biblical scholarship and specific theological topics. Some of his pupils became leading political and religious reformers. He wrote many letters to friends and disciples some of which remain, there are also a number of poems including his lament over the sacking of his beloved Lindisfarne by the Vikings.

Alcuin was born in Northumbria circa 740 about the time Bede died. He was entrusted to the *familia* of the clergy possibly due to early death of his parents, becoming a pupil at the Monastic School of York Minster and throughout his life he regarded York as his spiritual home. He became a gifted deacon, serving Egbert, bishop of York from 732 and continued when Egbert became archbishop in 767 to 778. Bede, whom Alcuin admired and imitated, had taught Egbert. Egbert was not only Alcuin's mentor but also his friend, and together they went to Rome and became acquainted with the intellectual elite.

When Egbert was consecrated Archbishop of York in 767, Alcuin became master of the cathedral school and was continuous in the praise of his archbishop. Alcuin was ordained a deacon but never a priest. It seems that Egbert retired some time before his death in 780. Eanbald was appointed successor and formally consecrated and installed during Egbert's retirement, but there was a problem of acknowledgement when he officially took office. So in 781 Alcuin was requested by King Elfwald of Northumbria to go to Rome and receive the pallium from Pope Hadrian I to certify Eanbald's position as archbishop. On his return from Rome, Alcuin was reacquainted with King Charlemagne who persuaded him to become Master of his palace in Aachen. This post he accepted in 782 and left England but kept in close contact with friends by many letters, returning for short periods. Charlemagne (748-814), the first Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, was no mean judge of people and said of Alcuin *he is the most learned man anywhere to be found*. Alcuin is sometimes described as a pupil of Bede although they never met, but he went on from where Bede left off and was responsible for the dissemination of much of Bede's work through Europe. Unlike Bede, Alcuin was a significant figure in the political and diplomatic world. He was an important bridge between the old world and the new world in which he lived.



Alcuin Teaching

Alcuin became the Master of the Palace School of Charlemagne known as *Urbs Regale*. His original function was to teach the royal children to be royal but under Alcuin's direction its purpose was extended to impart a knowledge of the liberal arts and the study of religion. This started with Alcuin teaching Charlemagne himself along with his sons Pepin and Louis, but also included others like young clergy attached to the palace chapel. From York, Alcuin imported others to assist him in his task of providing an institute of scholarship which became known as *the School of Master Albinus*. This continued

from 782 to 796, the result being that Alcuin prevented the king from following some of his extreme ideas that were not in keeping with the Christian faith. Alcuin had esteem for the king; there was an exchange of nicknames, but he also feared the king. The school was starting to attract scholars from other parts of Europe. Alcuin played a prominent part in the Carolingian Renaissance, an intellectual revival in the 9<sup>th</sup> century which unlocked the way to open-mindedness, the liberal arts and charity. He strove to restore the Latin of religious texts, especially of the Bible, and was keen on correct

Latin articulation free of common vulgarities which needed a clearly written text. Other works he wrote included a treatise on the Trinity and a commentary on St John's Gospel which borrowed and simplified works of St Augustine of Hippo.

Charlemagne had previously made a request to Pope Hadrian I for a copy of the Mass liturgy he used in Rome. In about 790 he was sent a copy which has been called *the Hadrianum* – a precious document from which a number of accurate copies were made. Alcuin had access to this and used it as a point of reference. In fact, it was not the common liturgical Mass used in Rome at that time but the Station Mass used by Pope Hadrian I coming from a tradition of Pope Gregory the Great, who visited the tombs of martyrs on their feast Day and celebrated Mass. Alcuin, like Charlemagne, felt driven to meld geographically developed liturgies into a universal rite.

Alcuin left his mark on liturgy with the introduction of votive Masses and the singing of the creed. He was enthusiastic about the observance of All Saints' Day. Not all the Votive Masses attributed to Alcuin were his work but opinion is in 23 of them he had a significant input. As Abbot of Tours, Alcuin contributed Propers for the Masses and Biblical readings. The Votive Mass for the Most Holy Trinity was even used on Sundays. Alcuin arranged Votive Masses according to the days of the week if there is no other overriding feast to be used.

Eventually this became: the Most Holy Trinity for Monday; the Angels for Tuesday; St Joseph also Saints Peter and Paul, also the Holy Apostles for Wednesday; the Holy Spirit, also the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist and also Our Lord Jesus Christ the Supreme Eternal Priest for Thursdays (this latter only being translated to a Feast on the Thursday after Pentecost in recent years); the Holy Cross or Passion of the Lord for Friday. Saturday is still a popular day for a Votive Mass of Our Lady with its variants through the seasons of the year. The New Roman Missal lists Votive Masses but does not assign them to specific days.

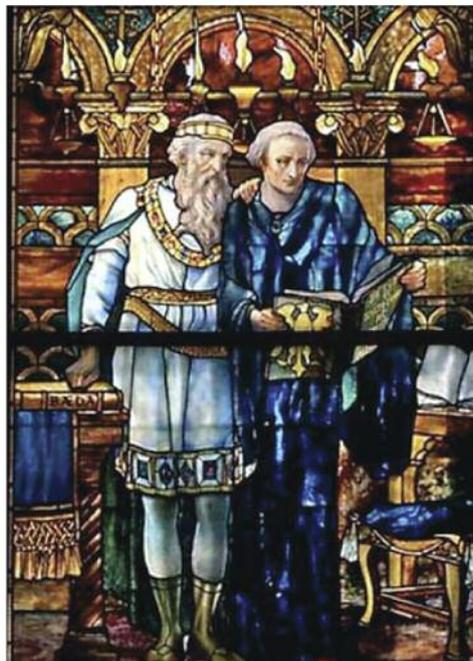
In 796, being in his sixties, Alcuin wished to be freed from court duties. Marmoutier of St Martin, Tours, was the foremost Abbey of the time and when Abbot Itherius died, Charlemagne supported Alcuin to the Abbacy, on the undertaking that he would be available to the King if his counsel were needed. Here Alcuin continued his scholarship in liturgy and also fostered the monks' development of the Carolingian *minuscule script*, the forerunner of the modern Roman typeface. A good communicator, especially to the young, Alcuin developed a web of friendships which gave his moral direction appeal to the laity, both men and women. His study of accurate simple Latin Biblical text combined with his way of expressing it added to his appeal to 9<sup>th</sup> century learning and theology. His homilies were deep, traditional and grammatical, with a poetic style. Alcuin was no mean mathematician and astronomer, scrutinising the movement of the stars. He was strict with Latin grammar. He worked hard at Greek and other languages, but his proficiency was in Latin, in which he could pray as fluently as in his mother tongue.

Alcuin interrupted his stay in France by returning to England on two occasions: in 786 he accompanied a papal legate mission and possibly helped in drafting reports. In his theology, Alcuin was deeply opposed to Adoptionism, which held that the Christ was only adopted as the Son of God rather than by being begotten. This Alcuin opposed vehemently at a colloquium in Rome. In 790 he was away for three years staying at Lindisfarne, negotiating between Charlemagne's unifying liturgical objectives and Offa's determination to reinvent Mercian kingship in the Carolingian mould. Offa was driven by a lust for power, not by a vision of English unity.

Alcuin had strong opinions on how best the liturgy should be sung as he expressed in a letter written to Archbishop Eanbald (archbishop of York 796-808). *Let the clergy chant with moderate voice, striving to please God rather than men. An immoderate exaltation of the voice is a sign of boastfulness.* At this time there was no musical notation so chant had to be taught orally, as when John the cantor came from Rome to teach Bede and his monks at Wearmouth and Jarrow, so he or the like could equally have gone to York. It seems that Gregorian chant

was known to Alcuin, but at an oral stage and largely dependent on the memory of the cantor. We also know that Alcuin was keen on incorporating liturgy from Rome into France which would include how liturgy was sung in Rome. Amalarius of Metz (c.775-c.850) who became a bishop was a pupil of Alcuin and continued with the course of incorporating Roman liturgy into France including the chant and devising a way of writing this down.

Alcuin was the author of many letters with explanation of scripture and liturgy. He liked to have good copies of Biblical text and when in France he was known to send to York where he knew there was a better text, having edited both the Old and New Testament while he was in residence at York. These were needed to correct what he called corrupt texts he found in France, and did this with the full approval of Charlemagne. He was especially fond of St John's Gospel, on which he wrote a commentary, and was regretful that he could not spend more time in studying the deep mysteries revealed by Our Lord that could lead to salvation.



Alcuin with Charlemagne

Alcuin does not appear in the Roman calendar, nor in the Book of Common Prayer nor in the English Missal, but has a commemoration in Common Worship for 20<sup>th</sup> May as *Alcuin, deacon, and Abbott of Tours 804*. There is some confusion about the date of his death with an account of him dying on the Feast of Pentecost in 804, as he wished. There is a claim that his tomb is inscribed 14<sup>th</sup> June. The now accepted accounts say he died on 19<sup>th</sup> May 804 but his commemoration was moved to the 20<sup>th</sup> so it as not to clash with St Dunstan. Part of his epitaph inscribed on his tomb reads: *Dust, worms and ashes now...Alcuin my name, wisdom I always loved, Pray, reader, for my soul.*

Alcuin, together with his legacy, has been embraced in the Church of England for passing on a rich tradition; a prayerful poet who has enhanced liturgy. Since its foundation in 1897 the Alcuin Club has promoted the study of liturgy. Currently it lists 119 publications with a focus on Anglican liturgy but has spread its scope of study considerably. Any serious student of liturgy will find that the selection of subjects explores the history and development of liturgy both in the East and Western Churches, tracing its development back to credible Jewish sources. There is also an Alcuin College, part of the University of York, founded in 1967. **ND**

#### Suggested Further Reading:-

- Dales, D. *Alcuin, Theology and Thought* James Clarke & Co. Cambridge 2014.
- Garrison, M. *Alcuin of York* in the Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England edited by Lapidge, M. et al. Blackwell Publishing Ltd. Oxford. 2001.
- Hiley, D. *Western Plainchant: A Handbook*. Clarendon Press Oxford 1995.

# Guild of All Souls' Requiem Mass

Thursday 4th November, St Stephen's, Gloucester Road

The Coronavirus pandemic has given rise to many tensions in our society. One which particularly impinged on church life and practice arose around the extent to which a concern to protect others by minimising the risk of infections and serious illness should override the freedom to worship in church and to maintain the ministry of Word and Sacrament. At times, it seemed to some as if a spirit of fear, a mindset of hopelessness, was squeezing out Christian witness to faith and trust in God. Even when the vaccination programme began to make a real difference, the danger of saying 'fear not' was revealed by the outraged response to the Health Secretary's statement that we should not 'cower' in the face of the virus. Naturally, the numbers of people who died in care homes and in hospitals, especially in the early stages of the pandemic, has caused great distress; even now, with the success of the vaccination programme, deep sensitivity is needed in our comments and judgments.

Yet it is appropriate for Christians to reflect on attitudes to death. St Paul wrestled with the question of whether it was better to die and be with the Lord than to remain in this life. Pastorally, the Church must respond both to the human *fear* of death (and the consequent desire to evade the reality of dying and death) and to the *hope* of life through, with and in Jesus Christ beyond the constraints and limits of our mortality. The daily publication of the numbers of deaths 'within 28 days of a positive Covid test' moves us to sympathy for the bereaved and to pray for them; but Christians should also be praying for those who have died, rejoicing in our resurrection hope and trusting in God's mercy.

The Guild of All Souls was founded by the Churchwardens of Fr Arthur Tooth's parish in 1873 to encourage the good conduct of funerals, but also to offer intercessory prayer for the departed, affirming belief in the credal doctrines of the Resurrection of the Dead and the Communion of Saints. November, month of the Holy Souls, is when we are particularly committed to fulfilling this obligation, and the Guild has arranged to hold a Solemn Requiem this November, at St Stephen's Gloucester Road, as it has done for many years on behalf of the Catholic Societies of the Church of England. Since 1904, St Stephen's has been the central London Church for the Guild's work. We were unable to have this service last year, and so it would be wonderful if this year, as we mourn so many who have died in the pandemic, we were able to gather in large numbers to fulfil our calling as Catholic Christians: to pray for the departed in union with the offering of the perfect Sacrifice of Our Lord Jesus Christ, crucified and risen from the dead.

**The Solemn Requiem will be on Thursday November 4<sup>th</sup>, at 7pm in St Stephen's Gloucester Road.** The Bishop of Richmond, President of the Guild of All Souls, will be the Principal Celebrant, and the preacher will be Fr Paul Cartwright

SSC, Parish Priest of All Saints, South Kirkby (a Guild living). All are welcome, and there will be refreshments afterwards for those who have attended the service. **ND**

*Fr Andrew Greany SSC: Guild of All Souls Chantry Priest at Walsingham*

Go forth, Christian soul, from this world,  
in the name of God the almighty Father, who created you,  
in the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the living God,  
who suffered for you,  
in the name of the Holy Spirit, who was poured out upon  
you,  
go forth, faithful Christian.  
May you live in peace this day; may your home be with  
God in Heaven,  
with Mary, the virgin Mother of God,  
with Joseph, and with all the angels and saints.

I commend you, my dear brother/sister, to almighty God,  
and entrust you to your Creator.  
May you return to Him who formed you from the dust of  
the earth.  
May holy Mary, the angels and all the saints  
come to meet you as you go forth from this life.  
May Christ who was crucified for you  
bring you freedom and peace.  
May Christ who died for you  
admit you into His garden of paradise.  
May Christ, the true Shepherd,  
acknowledge you as one of His flock.  
May He forgive all your sins,  
and set you among those He has chosen.  
May you see your Redeemer face to face,  
and enjoy the vision of God for ever. Amen.



# Harvest and Consecration

Elizabeth Jennings

After the heaped piles and the corn sheaves waiting  
To be collected, gathered into barns,  
After all fruits have burst their skins, the sating  
    Season cools and turns,  
And then I think of something that you said  
Of when you held the chalice and the bread.

I spoke of Mass and thought of it as close  
To how a season feels which stirs and brings  
Fire to the hearth, food to the hungry house  
    And strange, uncovered things –  
God in a garden then in sheaves of corn  
And the white bread a way to be reborn.

I thought of priest as midwife and as mother  
Feeling the pain, feeling the pleasure too,  
    All opposites together,  
Until you said no one could feel such passion  
And still preserve the power of consecration.

And it is true. How cool the gold sheaves lie,  
Rich without need to ask for more  
Richness. The seed, the simple thing must die  
    If only to restore  
Our faith in fruitful, hidden things. I see  
The wine and bread protect our ecstasy.

‘Harvest and Consecration’ from *The Collected Poems* by Elizabeth Jennings (Carcanet Press), reproduced by permission of David Higham Associates.

*Elizabeth Jennings CBE (1926-2001) was one of the finest British poets of her generation and considered the most influential poet writing about religion in English since Gerard Manley Hopkins. Her subjects were frequently life as experienced through human experience and its interaction with religious faith.*

I do hope readers have managed to enjoy celebrating a Harvest Festival. The chances are that many haven't. Even in rural parishes, Harvest is 'not what it was'. I notice that in place of Harvest, some parishes now keep 'Creation Sunday' sometime in September or October. Being a traditionalist in every aspect of life, I will continue to celebrate the Harvest! Harvest is about food on the table; in a sense every time grace is prayed and a blessing made at a meal, it is a Harvest Festival. COP26 and the very correct emphasis on the Climate Emergency involve huge issues of the human stewardship of creation and these connect with politics and economics in a global context. It will help our prayers for all this to give proper attention to the food on our plate.

Creation is so ordered that humanity feeds at the end of food chains: eating binds us to creation and to one another. It is not a coincidence that one of the Dominical Sacraments involves the 'fruit of the earth' and the 'fruit of the vine'; God feeds us both in body and soul. In this era of fast food and food on the move, processed food, of ready meals, the microwave and the take

## Ghostly Counsel

Andy Hawes

### God of the Harvest

away, as well as considering their implications on our physical health we should consider the damage they might be causing to our soul.

Being prayerful in our preparation and consumption of food is an essential element of a spiritual life. Being prayerful in this way: reflecting on the origin of the elements of our meal, being aware of the glorious intricacy of a tomato, or a runner bean, the colour of an apple, or the wonder that is bread enables every meal time to be Eucharistic. Giving a thought to those who work the land, or fish in the waters of the North Atlantic, the care and devotion of farmers in raising livestock; enriches and informs our prayer for the world and a thankfulness for others.

All this is a far cry for some expressions of 'creation spirituality'. We must guard against any romantic notions of the goodness of creation. Creation is fallen and the consequence of this is that humanity eats bread because of the 'sweat of the brow'. The earth is full of thorns and snakes of many kinds to test the resolve and skill of humanity (Genesis 3). Humanity is not in a dance with creation but a wrestling match. As things stand, creation is about to deliver a knock-out blow.

Harvest Thanksgiving recognises the precariousness of the provision of food. Used as we are to cheap and plentiful food, and thinking that not being able to buy strawberries in January is a disaster, Harvest provides a reality check. We need to be prayerful in the world as it is, not as we would like it to be. Every shopping trip, every recipe, every action in preparing and eating a meal is a cause for prayer; thanksgiving certainly, but also intercession and sometimes contemplation of the truth that the Lord 'opens wide his hand, and fills all things living with his bounteous gifts.'

**Bishop Paget, formerly of Oxford said:**

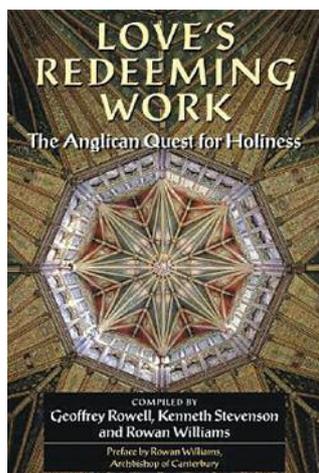
Surely, there is no power in the world so unerring or irrepresible as the power of personal holiness. All else goes wrong, blunders, loses proportion, falls disastrously short of its aim, grows stiff or one-sided, or out of date – “whether there be prophecies they shall fail; whether there be tongues they shall cease; whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away;” but nothing mars or misleads the influence that issues from a pure and humble and unselfish character.

A man’s gifts may lack opportunity, his efforts may be misunderstood; but the spiritual power of a consecrated will needs not opportunity, and can enter where the doors are shut. By no fault of a man’s own gifts, he may suggest to one the thoughts of criticism, comparison, competition; his self-consecration can do no harm in this way. Of gifts, some are best for long distances, some for objects close at hand or in direct contact; but personal holiness, determining, refining, characterising everything that a man says or does, will tell alike on those he may not know even by name, and on those who see him in the constant intimacy of his home. (Cited in *The Personal life of the clergy* p. 18)

In 2001 Bishops Rowell, Stevenson and Williams published *Love’s Redeeming Work*, a kind of Anglican *Philokalia*, comprising many of the ascetic and mystical writings of the Anglican tradition that nurture the life of prayer and the pursuit of holiness. The aim in compiling this anthology of Anglican writings on holiness was to make them more widely available. The writers recognised that there was more than enough material in confining themselves to the post-Reformation period and hoped they had included enough material from the world-wide Anglican Communion to be fully representative of Anglicanism. It was also decided not to include writings from those still alive.

After a General Introduction, the anthology is divided into three parts. Part One spans the years 1530-1650; part two 650-1830; and part three 1830-2001. Each part is edited by one of the three bishops.

The hope and prayer of the authors was for this anthology to continue to encourage Anglicans and other Christians on the journey into holiness, and that those who are stimulated and encouraged by the extracts chosen may go on to explore the man other writings of the authors included in this anthology and so contribute to the renewal of the rich heritage of the Anglican tradition.



**Bishop Paget by Sir Leslie Ward;  
Vanity Fair, 22 November 1894  
© National Portrait Gallery, London**

To quote:

As the Michaelmas Collect prays, it is God who has constituted the service of angels and mortals in a wonderful order, and it is God who enables men and women to do him service on earth as his angels do in heaven, by grace sharing with them his life that they may be transformed into his likeness some one degree of glory to another,

Dr David Hope quotes these words from St Augustine of Hippo in his *Afterword*:

May the Lord grant  
That you may observe all these things with love,  
As lovers of spiritual beauty,  
Radiating by your good life the sweet odour of Christ,  
Not like slaves under the law  
But as free persons  
Established in grace 

# touching place

## ALL SAINTS, ILE BREWERS, SOMERSET

**I**t is far from the Somerset norm; there is nothing else in Somerset like this church with a striking S porch tower and short octagonal spire. Given the clergyman who inspired it, that is no surprise. Joseph Woolf (1795-1862) was the son of a Bavarian rabbi. He decided to become embrace the Christian faith at the age of 7, and became a Catholic in Rome in 1812. Moving on, he reached England and came under the influence of men like Charles Simeon and Edward Irving, joining the Church of England at the age of 25 and being ordained in 1838. Undertaking missionary journeys through much of the world, his most famous expedition was in 1843 when he set out to Bokhara to seek the release of two Army of-



icers, Lt. Col. Charles Stoddart and Captain Arthur Connolly, who had been taken captive (and already executed) by the evil Emir of Bokhara, Nasrullah Khan. Woolf did not travel light, for the last 150 miles to Bokhara wearing full canonicals, including his red doctor's hat, a sight which reduced the Emir to uncontrolled laughter. Somehow Woolf managed his own release after three months' incarceration (the whole story is in Fitzroy Maclean's book *A Person from England* and Hugh Evans Hopkins' *Sublime Vagabond*). When he came here as Vicar in 1845, Woolf found that there was neither school nor clergy house, so built a vicarage (1847) and school room (1852). The small church comprised a plain Perpendicular west tower, a nave with a south porch and chancel. Sir Stephen Glynne (1807-1874) was an ecclesiologist before the ecclesiologists; in his lifetime he visited over 5000 churches, over 250 of these in Somerset. He visited Ile Brewers on February 13<sup>th</sup> 1857, on the same day that he recorded the wonders of Ile Abbots (ND Feb. 2006). He described the old building as 'A mean, small church, neglected and uninteresting', whose 'interior is poorly pewed and much needs improvement'; the 'churchyard is close to the river, damp and muddy'. So last of all Woolf rebuilt the church on a new site in 1861, the year before his death. Living by faith in God and by charity, every Christmas Woolf and his devoted wife Georgiana fed over thirty poor local families out of their own pockets. Joseph Woolf became an eccentric country vicar in a great and ancient English tradition.

Map Reference: *ST 369210*  
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# A Changing Scene of Life: Refinding Christian Values

William Allen sees secular chaplains as a call to Christian soldiers

Christian proselytism is by its nature a tricky business—and, it seems, is yet to grow trickier. Catholic Christians, indeed, may have cause of concern or anxiety, that the very tenets of faith they champion for their proselytes—community, family, and the tangible, sacramental life—are being met with indifference, or hostility. This year's elevation of Greg Epstein—author of *Good without God*—as head of Harvard University's chaplain group is a recent atheistic sting to drive home the point. The Western world and seat of Latin Christendom is decidedly turned off to the idea of organised religion, whilst mouth-wateringly expectant of a new, secular breed of spiritual practice.

That spiritual practice is, unlike some well-known and ideological atheists of years past, tracking much closer to a new paradigm of social, societal behaviour than the Church might first have inclined itself to recognise. The history of Christianity bursts with examples of heresies, schisms, crusades, and cracks in the armour of dogma and creed, and it would be, at the least, easier were the proselytic struggles of today being battled out within this dogmatic register. But alas, the issue is not quite of this kind, and any measure of tut-tutting, and stern wagging of the finger towards the Catechism is likely outdated in the Christian toolkit of evangelisation and profession of Faith. The concern, instead, is one of language and custom; especially it is the need for Catholics to admit that the corporate religion we believed human souls craved has become at odds with the popularity of today's individualistic, detached idea of human living—an idea utterly impossible in the Apostolic Age, but now woven into the stubborn fabric of modernity.

Put another way, this strange irreligious Harvardian event, amongst others, is emphasising the recent surges of an inward-looking spirituality which doesn't need organised religion, but is closer in operation to the mantras—"Make it up yourself", "Find your own way", "Don't listen to what they tell you!"—of which, not unimportantly, the Abrahamic faiths have never been very much swayed. The result is an immense difficulty for Catholic Christians who strive to be advocates of the community of the body of Christ, especially within the Academy culture where these views are most popular. Their mission, however unprejudiced, is likely to be spurned for its insistence on membership and union which are non-avoidable staples of the Christian tradition. What is preferred is an assortment of advice, a kind of 'secular chaplaincy' to which one can subscribe to fulfil their spiritual needs—those human needs which even the most truculent voices have admitted to.

With this state of play in mind, however, it is now incumbent on the Church to act and redress, and to cease its brooding, or at best perplexity, as to what is taking place. Part of that shall involve an important concession: that the excitable shift

away from dogmatic religion towards personalised spirituality is not necessarily authored by some unfriendly heresy, but from Church complacency. In the land of England, a vacuum of space has emerged in Christian education in recent years, implicated in the drop-off of many liturgies and practices, such as participation in the sacraments of Confirmation and Marriage, together with the whole epoch of Sunday school catechising in peril. When these kinds of societal black holes emerge, it is unsurprising that other ideas—ideas which Christians do not prefer—emerge to fill in the gaps. This process, if left unchecked, creates all number of unhappy chinks in secular-Christian dialogue. Where marks of Catholic witness are no longer taught from the outset, they are no longer to be understood later on, leading to the sort of indifference which many priests from a spectrum of pulpits worthily want to decry.

Some great and wonderful efforts have recently been made along such lines—and a reinvigoration of the Sacrament of Confirmation within the Church of England is something of which some of our bishops and their flocks should be proud. Yet there is much to be said for the combat with which all must still persevere, in prayer, and most of all in deed. In our time, terrific battles have been won in the secular sphere, allowing minorities of every colour and kind to enjoy the full rights and gifts given to them by their Lord and God. But let us not allow this kind of progress cast our Christian offerings into the shadow, or spin out of proportion. Committed to understanding, some admission of shortcoming, and zeal for the future, the Church Catholic can still spur itself to invest in society and the needs it has—those same tenets of community and sacramental life—instituted by God, and only needing to be revealed and re-awakened, in spite of this new trend or that.

**ND**

William Allen is a current student at St Stephen's House, Oxford.

## PARISH DIRECTORY

Please note that the parish directory will return for the November 2021 edition of *New Directions*. Mike Silver, Advertising Manager, has been contacting Society parishes regarding their inclusion in the directory. If you have not heard from Mike, then please feel free to contact him via

[silver43mike@gmail.com](mailto:silver43mike@gmail.com)

Thank you.

**An ecumenical procession for Assumptiontide was held at Walsingham on 14 August**



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