

Fr Hoyal Writes

The Passion of the Christ

A tonic for some, a trial for others – and a total non-event for most of our fellow citizens - Lent is already half done.

If you haven't done much for Lent, nor Lent for you, there is still time to make a bit more of the second half. Do have a go!

For myself, it is Passiontide – the final two weeks of Lent, Passion Week and Holy Week – that are most special.

Yet there are Christians of Catholic tradition well used to making the sign of the Cross in worship, and happy to talk about the 'sacrifice of the Mass', who can often be remarkably non-Cross-centred in their faith.

Sadly, even thoroughly sincere reverence for the Body and Blood of Christ in the Sacrament is sometimes found with little regard to the relation of the sacred elements to the physical and spiritual cost of the Lord's Passion – the very event from which they derive their existence and their status.

All Saints boasts some fine treasures, among them the arresting baldacchino/ciborium over the high altar, a number of wonderful old vestments and banners, and some splendid silver and indeed gold altar vessels.

To my mind, though, the most beautiful, most moving, artefact to be found in the building is the half life-size rood or crucifix in the Calvary area to the right of the organ.

I am so grateful to the churchwardens in office when I arrived for acting on my suggestion that the area should be relieved of clutter and relit and that provision for a votive light to burn alongside the rood should be restored.

As an event the Crucifixion was, inevitably, a particularly grim sight. One knows that, and yet the sheer physical beauty of our All Saints Calvary nonetheless eloquently draws attention to the intrinsic beauty and holiness of Our Lord's sacrifice as perhaps the supreme spiritual instance of God's love for us.

At one moment I turn to the Calvary, at another to the tabernacle nearby where Christ in his Sacrament lies silently enthroned. In either case I can pray the words to be found on the card before the rood:

O Saviour of the world, who by thy Cross and precious Blood hast redeemed us, save us and help us, we humbly beseech thee, O Lord.

And, equally, whether looking to the Calvary or the tabernacle, I again and again find myself wanting to pray the Anima Christi:

Soul of Christ, sanctify me; Body of Christ, save me; Blood of Christ, invigorate me; Water from the side of Christ, wash me; Passion of Christ, strengthen me. O good Jesu, hear me; within thy wounds hide me; suffer me not to be separated from thee. In the hour of my death, call me; and bid me come to thee, that with thy saints I may praise thee for ever and ever. Amen.

But if this isn't 'you', what about praying the Stations of the Cross around the atrium, either privately or when we have 'Stations' as a public devotion (6.45 pm on Friday currently, and 1.30 pm on Good Friday with Fr Paul)?

Or if that's not 'you' either, at least take time to read quietly through one or two of the great Passiontide hymns, like *When I survey the wondrous cross* or *My song is love unknown* or *There is a green hill*.

But all these precious things, all these valuable prayers and devotions, and above all the Mass itself, we have because the sacrifice of Calvary is ultimately of a piece with the Resurrection

victory we shall celebrate so joyfully at Easter. The one is but the necessary reflection and completion of the other.

Please accept my prayers and very best wishes for a holy and happy Easter.

That this may be so, may I ask you to take this Passiontide to heart, and to make very much your own the words we pray so often in our church: *that by his Cross and Passion we may come to the glory of his Resurrection?* In fact, there is no other way that it can happen.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Richard Henry".

IN THIS MONTH MARCH 1894

A Word as to our Ways

We desire to call attention to a matter connected with the approaches to the Church, which we feel confident will be put right now that it is pointed out. We refer to the rapidly increasing use made of the pathway which leads from Alma Vale Road to the Tower Door. This pathway is intended for the convenience of the Clergy and others who have frequent duties to discharge within the Church. It was never meant to serve as a public thoroughfare, nor is it desirable that it should become such. The present condition of the grass borders bears melancholy witness to ill-treatment at the feet of passers-by.

Nor is this all; for the younger children of our Congregation, who are apt, as all children are, to imitate their elders, are beginning to make use of this "short cut", and in their case use rapidly degenerates into abuse. It is not an edifying spectacle to see

children who have just come out from the Sunday Catechising engaged in a tussle at the gate-way in Alma Vale Road, some trying to force their way out whilst others are endeavouring to prevent them.

We appeal to all who love our Church for their assistance in putting a stop to this state of things, and upholding the spirit of reverence for the Church and all that is connected with it. The few moments gained by making use of a pathway not intended for general use is a poor recompense for the loss of respect towards holy things to which this may lead. Others, whose duties give them the right to use the pathway, can assist in furthering the object we have in view by seeing that the gates are fastened.

Warden's Witty Words

What a contrast: Candlemass was cold and chilly; Ash Wednesday was hot, and not only that, to the inappropriate amusement of My Colleague and the Warden Emeritus, the fans were so enthusiastic that My Pew was vibrating.

Then the nice men put the new boiler in the upstairs kitchen. Flood and fire followed. They had to move the dishwasher; the dishwasher's lead fell out of its standpipe, and the dishwasher developed gammy joints. The water found its natural level and the easy way out. Through the smoke alarm. The fire alarm went off. I killed it. It went off again. Fr Boss got men in who killed it dead and left it to dry out. The Head Server is running riot with the incense.

Naughty people tried to break into the wall safe. They failed. But I didn't. One dark night I took my car keys to the slit and lifted a gift aid envelope. Wouldn't it have been fun if I'd been caught?

The Peru Party should be back from the marmalade mines this weekend, bearing marmalade sanies and showing off the new bear. I hope they introduce Master Paddinton to Mr & Mrs Bear on the carpet.

Please enter my latest competition. I love the ambiguity of 'gathering for Christ' – see what you can do with the Warden's Worthy Words; fourteen of them at any rate.

And read where we are to with the Groath Planne. You will notice that however much we plead for Ways and Means, the Ideas flow faster. I need a paragraph or three that begins in the time honoured way, 'Take the insides of nine loo rolls and a washing machine liquid dispenser.' And speaking of loo roll innards, if you need to work off any frustrations, join me and our PA in a wrestling match with the New Mega Rolls.

We now have synchronised red bandanas. It's Lent!! Colour coordination!!

And finally, my word for this month is taken from a Christmas poster that Fr Boss environmentally reduced to sheets of scrap paper and I took one and wrote an important note to myself on it and put it on the pew next to me with my keys and when I next looked at it, it had folded itself into a sort of placard and glaring at me from a bright yellow background was the strident accusation ASS

Keep smiling. Laetare Sunday any day now.

Growth Plan update

Mission Statement Words

At the first two Lent Groups, we asked those present to put forward words and phrases which they felt said something about All Saints, what we are and what we stand for. Mark Pilgrim has asked us to come up with a mission statement, fourteen substantive words, not separated by Classic FM's Big Fat 'And', but saying something coherent.

Here are the words and phrases. Over to you. The best mission statement wins a prize. Answers to the Editor for the next issue of the Parish Magazine.

Ritual

Welcoming

Christian

Disciples of Christ

Missions overseas support

Parochial and eclectic care

Gathering for Christ

Offering the wholeness of Christ

Reconciliation

Happy

Continuity

Eccentric

Open Door

Tradition

Conviction
Celebrating
Example
Catholic Tradition/Faith
Welcoming
Inclusive
Family
Ministering
Bible
Caring
Compassion
Serving
Being there
Peaceful
Exciting
Prayerful
Flagship
Fellowship
Powerful
Scripture
Gospel
Discipleship
Mission
Liturgy
Meaningful

Letting God's Love be seen to be not just for the desolate, but also for the ordinary person.

2008 Lent Groups: Growth Plan Stage 2: What we do next

19 February 2007: Partnership

1) Links with Individual Churches

- United service, say prayers together
- Christian Aid week United Service
- Invitations to come and share music and prayer
- Soup run links
- Uganda
- United action for charity fundraising
- Children: rainbow clubs, Halloween practices
- Julian Trust

2) Carol Service at Clifton Down (weren't sure about the idea, so other ideas 😊)

- Easter public event
- Involve other churches
- Walk of Witness
- Share with Clifton Cathedral, large cross procession from CC to ASC, placed on

green. Or from Clifton Cathedral to Christ Church.

- 3 choirs, worth the organisation

3) Old Vic and Whiteladies

- Christian Aid fundraiser/retail at Clifton Down Shopping Centre
- 11;11 remembrance Tuesday memorial St Johns
- Christmas time collection
- Get Old Vic to work with ASC
- Nativity, give them outlet for performance/venue
- Invite them by July
- Could link with music as well.
- (visitors came from America, University N. Carolina?)
- Theatre School without venue for foreseeable future so looking for venues in schools etc.

4) Explore beyond comfort zones

- Summer camp for youngsters
- Church has ideal facilities
- Talent in congregation
- Link with St Johns
- Resources/ restricted fund for such an enterprise?
- A week/less at first in school hols

- Kids at church, activities, swimming, zoo
- Links with school and members of parish and kids from other churches

5) Magazine

- Adverts in mag?
- £200 per page, could give out mag for free?
- Need time to go and flog it
- Music events find adverts, so mag could too
- Start local, hairdressers, restaurants etc
- Alma Vale businesses
- Frances offered to go and ask
- People should still contribute to mag

6) Carleton Mansions and Glen Avon

- Partnership
- Norman takes communion there
- More involvement, keen potential partner as have requested visitors
- ASC contact to ask what they need/want
- More people could go with Norman, sing hymns, animals, visits, regular occasion, 3 or 4 people per visit
- Services and visits and events

7) Whiteladies Rd

- Easter walk of witness
- Chaplaincy for Whiteladies Health Centre

- Write to them, put out cards, posters offering a listening service.

26 February 2007: Numbers

1) Process Evangelism

- The 9 30 is the best service for evangelising; the mix of Eucharist and non Eucharist means that those trying out faith can do so in a gentle way
- Courses only work in Lent, because there is a residual feeling that one does something like that in Lent but not at other times
- The Lent Breakfasts of a year or two ago were fun, but led to little growth
- Feedback from one visitor was that they didn't get comfort and reassurance from All Saints so they would not be returning
- Summary: the 9 30 is great; sceptical about courses

2) Practical matters

- What would happen if one phoned the Vicarage? People would always feel welcomed, and if they came to a service they would feel welcomed too
- Unwelcoming things about us: our tradition would seem strange; teenagers especially would be hypercritical; people attending

Requiem Masses might well feel lost and turned off

- We're doing better at publicity – need more and better use of the website – services are well advertised, but extend the PR work – the 9 30 comes across strongly as an opportunity to welcome newcomers, and the 11 am worshippers who attend enjoy themselves because the 9 30 people enjoy being there and it's infectious
- Summary: be at ease with what we are and what we do: if we are relaxed then visitors will be
- Requiems (ouch!) are big mission services; even if few receive communion, they are there because this is how the deceased wished to show the Faith
- Let's have more explanations: Fr Richard explains Requiem Masses as he goes along
- A flyer for Benediction would be useful, a flyer in popular vein, because that's the service that would boggle visitors most
- Another guided Mass

3) Getting the Arty visitors on board

- Special services, using the music as a transition; and the art sermons at Evensong this Lent are transitional too
- Talk about All Saints and our services in the intervals (or at the start of) concerts
- Leaflets in pews for special events
- Academic lectures on the Christian Faith, and linked to current issues
- The open Church is a resonance and a sign
- Point people beyond the entertainment
- Passiontide concert as an act of worship
- Are we exclusive? Socially? Culturally? Both?
- Capture the names of concert attendees and issue personal invitations
- More introduction cards at the back of the Church
- We are a family: remember that different members of a family can like different things

4) Youth and Music

- We are perceived to have a shortage of children and young people because there are few families in the parish
- There are of course lots of young people – students; offer All Saints as a folk venue – not a folk Mass, but a folk evening, a folk singing concert; with food

- We might also attract lonely people with such an evening, immigrants, the emotionally vulnerable, addicts
- Why not hold such a folk evening at All Hallows?
- Try a slimmer version of Messiah from Scratch, excerpts from works like the Messiah, and invite choirs from local schools
- Involve the Old Vic Theatre School by offering them a venue
- Summer camps
- What about the youngsters already in the congregation?
- What about a workshop day, ending with Mass, like one from some years ago, singing and making vestments at St Stephen's House

General summary

- 'The 9 30 is infectious' – an attractive community and unselfconscious
- More 11 am people should drop in and enjoy the 9 30

Jesus and The Women

Sermon preached by Fr Hoyal at the Solemn Mass on 24 February, based on John 4's account of the Lord's meeting with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well.

To-day the third in our Lent series *Encounters of Life and Growth* based on the Sunday gospel readings. This morning: Jesus and The Woman.

As you know, I always like a text, and to-day it is this: “Jesus was tired out by his journey” (John 4.6). Please hold this in reserve for later.

“How can you ask me for a drink?” says the unnamed woman when Jesus makes his request for water.

She is surprised at his question, and it is surprising on several counts.

First, by talking to a woman, an unaccompanied woman in particular and unknown to him, Jesus is breaching social convention. “Is this man trying to pick me up?” she may well wonder.

Second, of course, the woman is a Samaritan, and there is no love lost between Jews and Samaritans. Samaritans were despised as outlandish heretics by the Jews. But this clearly doesn’t detain Jesus.

Thirdly, as we discover in the course of the Lord’s conversation with the Samaritan woman, she is of questionable moral character. She’s already managed to get through five husbands of one sort or another, we’re told, and she’s currently living with a man she’s not married to. Even in 21st century Clifton five ex-husbands and a live-in lover might be considered a bit much. It was certainly well over the top in 1st century Samaria. Not a lot of relationship stability there. She sounds a bit messed up.

But none of this hinders Jesus. By initiating the conversation at all, Jesus is crossing many boundaries – social boundaries, religious boundaries, boundaries of conventional decency. He doesn’t seem

at all concerned, though, does he? No, and he isn't, for his only concern at this moment is about reaching out to a soul with needs.

The woman, like him, has come for water. But he can give her not merely water to quench and refresh the body, but living water for the spirit, the soul. Not surprisingly, she doesn't understand at first. She'd just be glad to avoid the hard daily chore of fetching water for essential household needs.

This is a woman that any other religious Jew would have shunned. But Jesus shows his respect for her not only by talking to her in the first place, but by graciously continuing his conversation with her.

To him she is not a woman to be ignored, a Samaritan to be disdained, a reprobate to be avoided. She is an individual before God, with particular weaknesses, no doubt, but with strengths too and, certainly, needs. And far from limiting his words to friendly small-talk, he honours the woman by talking to her about the things of God, about true worship and the life of the Spirit. Her understanding is limited at first, but through his generous perseverance she grows perceptibly in awareness. So much so that she wonders if he is the Messiah.

The Lord's graciousness and his respect for a sinner as a person produce wonderful results. The woman is soon off to tell the others, and she is such a good natural missionary that many are themselves soon converted and coming out to find Jesus for themselves.

What might surprise us most of all, though, is that Jesus is asking for water at all. Is he not the Messiah, the Son of God? How can he need anything from us? How on earth can he really be tired and thirsty and in need, like an ordinary human being? How can God make himself dependent on mortals? How can God put himself at our mercy, as it were?

Well, we know that this is precisely what he did in sending his Son to be our Saviour. Christ's total identification with humanity means that he is as vulnerable as any human being.

In his journey of love from the Father, the Lord becomes one who thirsts and gets tired. In his thirst to save our souls, he is willing to accept the terrible thirst that climaxes on the cross. His thirst at Jacob's well prefigures that unbearable thirst of his on the cross. And there, above all, in his Passion his journey of salvation brings him a terrifying weariness that culminates in his cruel death. Truly, Jesus was tired by his journey. Yet he gladly made it, for that woman, for you, for me. He gladly made it so that we might all taste of the living water that springs up to eternal life.

Perhaps, reflecting on their strange well-side encounter in later years, the woman may eventually have come to see this. And it is an amazing and humbling truth. God loves us so much that he lets himself need us.

Though he was the only man who could truly give her everything, he let himself need something from the woman – a little conversation and a cup of water. Normally she was a woman that people - men usually - wanted something from. In Jesus, sinner as she was, she found one who would willingly accept a simple good gift from her without strings.

How gracious the Lord is. How life renewing for us to know that, small and sinful as we are – and we are, the Lord is glad to need us and is delighted to accept the little generousities we can sometimes be capable of. That can be so life-changing, as it was for the Samaritan women. May the Lord's dealings with her give us great encouragement.

He needs us!

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General summary

- 'The 9 30 is infectious' – an attractive community and unselfconscious
- More 11 am people should drop in and enjoy the 9 30
- People find the 11 am friendly, but it's complicated and there is new music and must seem odd to mainstream Anglicans
- Some feel that actually visitors like it
- We mustn't rush to modernize; we must be careful not to undermine what is good and well loved

- We should remember we are not unique – other Bristol churches do Anglo-Catholicism – must avoid sounding patronising
- Still feel that we are a bit special