

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

The way of the cross and Our Lord's resurrection is central to our belief in God's love and hope for the future. It is in this faith that we move forward as a witnessing community to that love.

People understandably are asking what the future holds for us all at All Saints as we seek to maintain our place as a Catholic parish in the Diocese of Bristol.

We as Wardens firstly want to reassure you that the recent vote of the PCC to rescind resolutions A&B do not herald a huge immediate change. We all still value and care for the sacraments, the liturgy, the music, the family but most importantly faith in a loving God and the promise of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are assured by the Diocese that they wish to support our traditions and our particular need for priestly ministry.

We are aiming with the Diocese to 'speed things up' in the appointment process of our next Priest in Charge. But, most importantly we want to take every measure to ensure that it is the right person who is appointed to lead us to the next stage of All Saints Clifton as a prayerful, sacramental community striving towards the proclamation of the Gospel.

None of us want to feel anxious, but we must all recognise that we are in a time of uncertainty and we must hold to our faith in God. The Wardens, Clergy and PCC are all happy to speak to anyone about their concerns. As a community it has been a challenging and emotional time, but as difficult as it is this will lead us to a greater openness and understanding.

The Wardens can confirm that we will be getting another Priest-in Charge. We are told that there are already priests who are expressing an interest. We have been warmly welcomed back fully into the Diocese of Bristol by Bishop Mike. We have support from priests who have offered to help with our weekday Masses. These are all very positive signs.

We will of course keep you informed as the appointment process progresses.

We as a parish are hugely grateful to the priests who have continued to celebrate at our altars over the past 144 years but more recently to those we know and love particularly during this recent interregnum. It has, and will be a journey of love, growth, doubt, hope but most importantly faith in God.

With very best wishes to you at Eastertide and for the future of All Saints.

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.

May God bless us all.

Andrew Morgan *Philippa Drewett*

Churchwardens

Easter Monday walk

Hawkesbury Upton to Horton Court

A pub that was founded in 1602, a 12th century manor house, long barrows, a deer park, and a Medieval fishpond. This year's Easter Monday walk starts in Hawkesbury Upton, at the Village Hall car park. Let's meet at 10.30 a.m., and return to the Beaufort Arms by 1.30 for a warming lunch and beverage.

Full details are here:

<http://hosted.southglos.gov.uk/acrobat/Cotswold1.pdf>

Print off a copy if you like.

Please note: this walk is 7 km (4.5 miles), and takes 2-3 hours. Conditions are likely to be muddy, so please bring decent footwear. Perfectly suitable for children, but bring snacks so that little people (and older people) are able to bear out until a latish lunch.

Call Mike Benton on 0117-9745499 if you plan to go, want to share lifts, or are unsure about conditions. We'll be there at 10.30.

Below is an extract from the final page of The All Saints Clifton Guide Book written by Fr. John Norton.

OUR LIFE

A church building, however beautiful, is not a static object but the focal point of a living Church. If people did not care enough about worshipping God there would be no church building. All Saints' came into being because a group of people wanted a place of worship, open to everybody. From the start it became a centre of the proclamation and the celebration of the Catholic Faith in the Church of England. Its influence has been incalculable, and world-wide. Much of what had to be fought for in the first decades has now become common practice in a majority of Church of England Parishes.

The work continues, the Catholic Faith has still to be celebrated and proclaimed, but in the idiom of the present age. The Church must always strive for the best expression, in time, of that which is timeless and eternal. No generation has a monopoly of the truth. For example, the Church in the 1970's has insights into the doctrine of the Eucharist which were not apparent to the Church in the 1870's. The

basic truth remains the same: but its expression must be today's expression, for today's society.

All Saints' is a meeting place for people who know and love our Lord Jesus Christ and know they must share His love with the world. Please pray that we may be faithful to our calling.

'We will see a world transformed': the Archbishop of Canterbury's inaugural sermon

Thursday 21st March 2013

To each one of us, whoever and wherever we are, joining us from far away by television or radio, or here in the Cathedral, Jesus calls through the storms and darkness of life and says "Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid".

Our response to those words sets the pattern for our lives, for the church, for the whole of society. Fear imprisons us and stops us being fully human. Uniquely in all of human history Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the one who as living love liberates holy courage.

"If it is you tell me to come to you on the water" Peter says, and Jesus replies "come". History does not relate what the disciples thought about getting out of a perfectly serviceable boat, but Peter was right, and they were wrong. The utterly absurd is completely reasonable when Jesus is the one who is calling. Courage is liberated, and he gets out of the boat, walks a bit, and then fails. Love catches him, gently sets him right, and in a moment they are both in the boat and there is peace. Courage failed, but Jesus is stronger than failure.

The fear of the disciples was reasonable. People do not walk on water, but this person did. For us to trust and follow Christ is reasonable if He is what the disciples end up saying He is; "truly you are the Son of God". Each of us now needs to heed His voice calling to us, and to get out of the boat and go to Him. Because even when we fail, we find peace and hope and become more fully human than we can imagine: failure forgiven, courage liberated, hope persevering, love abounding.

For more than a thousand years this country has to one degree or another sought to recognise that Jesus is the Son of God; by the ordering of its society, by its laws, by its sense of community. Sometimes we have done better, sometimes worse. When we do better we make space for our own courage to flourish. Slaves were freed, Factory Acts passed, and the NHS and social care established through Christ-liberated courage. The present challenges of environment and economy, of human development and global poverty, can only be faced with extraordinary courage.

In humility and simplicity Pope Francis called us on Tuesday to be protectors of each other: of the natural world, of the poor and vulnerable. Courage is released in a society that is under the authority of God, so that we may become the fully human community of which we all dream. Let us hear Christ who calls to us and says "Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid".

The first reading we heard dates from the time of Israel before the Kings. It is the account of a Moabite refugee – utterly stigmatised, inescapably despised - taking the huge risk of choosing a God she does not know in a place she has not been, and finding security when she does so. The society Ruth went to was healthy because it was based on obedience to God, both in public care and private love.

Today we may properly differ on the degrees of state and private responsibility in a healthy society. But if we sever our roots in Christ we abandon the stability which enables good decision making. There can be no final justice, or security, or love, or hope in our society if it is not finally based on rootedness in Christ. Jesus calls to us over the wind and storms, heed his words and we will have the courage to build society in stability.

For nearly two thousand years the Church has sought, often failing, to recognise in its way of being that Jesus is the Son of God. The wind and waves divided Jesus from the disciples. Peter ventures out in fear and trembling (as you may imagine I relate to him at this point). Jesus reconciles Peter to Himself and makes the possibility for all the disciples to find peace. All the life of our diverse churches finds renewal and unity when we are reconciled afresh to God and so are able to reconcile others. A Christ-heeding life changes the church and a Christ to be liberated, for God to act among us and for human beings heeding church changes the world: St Benedict set out to create a school for prayer, and incidentally created a monastic order that saved European civilisation.

The more the Church is authentically heeding Jesus' call, leaving its securities, speaking and acting clearly and taking risks, the more the Church suffers. Thomas Cranmer faced death with Christ-given courage, leaving a legacy of worship, of holding to the truth of the gospel, on which we still draw. I look at the Anglican leaders here and remember that in many cases round the world their people are scattered to the four winds or driven underground: by persecution, by storms of all sorts, even by cultural change. Many Christians are martyred now as in the past.

Yet at the same time the church transforms society when it takes the risks of renewal in prayer, of reconciliation and of confident declaration of the good news of Jesus Christ. In England alone the churches together run innumerable food banks, shelter the homeless, educate a million children, offer debt counselling, comfort the bereaved, and far, far more. All this comes from heeding the call of Jesus Christ. Internationally, churches run refugee camps, mediate civil wars, organise elections, set up hospitals. All of it happens because of heeding the call to go to Jesus through the storms and across the waves.

There is every possible reason for optimism about the future of Christian faith in our world and in this country. Optimism does not come from us, but because to us and to all people Jesus comes and says "Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid". We are called to step out of the comfort of our own traditions and places, and go into the waves, reaching for the hand of Christ. Let us provoke each other to heed the call of Christ, to be clear in our declaration of Christ, committed in prayer to Christ, and we will see a world transformed.

From the Bishop

Recently I have heard a number of preachers refer to those periods of Jewish history outlined in the Old Testament and referred to as exile. The exile they have been talking about is the exile in Babylon and not the exile in Egypt, though this would have served their purpose equally well should they have chosen it.

Their theme will be familiar. If my memory serves me well I preached on an exilic psalm myself on the occasion of my inauguration service in the Cathedral almost ten years ago (time flies when you're enjoying yourself!). Preachers look around them and take in what they see.

What they saw in the community of God's people in exile in Babylon has some parallels with the Church in our nation today. The sense that the Church is a marginal and minority voice in a world of boundless unbelief and secularization. The 2011 Census results show that those who self define themselves as Christian has dropped by 11% in just ten years. Like those Jews of old in exile, we wonder where it will all end?

Living in a culture whose values and beliefs are not our own is not easy. Feeling we are a minority is not a bed of roses either, although it does at least help us better empathise with other minority groups. Of course it's easy to overdo this and not everything that the world regards as progressive is bad simply because we didn't think of it. We need the wisdom to be clear in our minds so we can see the difference between good progress and bad.

That said, I can see some parallels between the mindset of those Jews of old and where we Christians find ourselves here in the West in the 21st century.

They showed signs of flagging morale. The culture in which they found themselves was alien and not necessarily open to them practicing their religion. They constantly wondered where God was in all this. • They showed a sense of lost perspective. They stopped believing that 'things could only get better.' They had an inclination to behave and identify themselves as victims.

In Ezekiel we also see a people who blamed their present lot on the sin of their predecessors (Ezekiel 18). They almost became their own self-fulfilling prophecy. • They didn't know how best to live in that alien culture. Should they withdraw and keep themselves to themselves? Well such tactics really never work and tend to create a very inward looking community absorbed with issues that frankly no-one else remotely thinks of as even worthy discussion.

Should they simply accommodate the new culture. Just 'go with the flow'. To some extent we all find ourselves doing that and the fact that today, many of the people who attend our churches look like everybody else, is proof enough that none of us will escape the need and the tendency to accommodation, but only up to a point. The problem is that we can't agree on when we have passed the point of no return!

Or the other temptation is just to endlessly complain. I am of the age now where that is such a temptation to my friends and me. Supper parties where we all bang on about 'health and safety gone mad', politicians, the way the world is compared to the (sentimental) world in which we were brought up, 'those wonderful red telephone boxes and the sound of a steam train, yada, yada' It maybe good sport, but it doesn't really move anyone on!

Alienated people have a deep need to complain.

You can quickly begin to see that there are some parallels. It would be easy to let our morale sink in our present context. It would be easy to wonder where God is in all these depressing statistics. It's easy to blame others – General Synod, our forbears, the way we're trained, politicians, whatever, but we must never allow ourselves to sink in the mire of blame culture. Apart from anything else it's extremely disempowering. It means we shall never take responsibility for improvement and just get stuck.

The prophets told it how it was and how it might be. They pointed out some hard truths, but they were also bearers of hope. We are a people of hope. You will read this with Lent drawing to a close. I hope and pray that Lent has been a growing time for you this year. St Theresa thought of Lent as 'preparing for the joy of Easter.' Before that joy there was a cross, but that was not the end of the story, for the cross is today an empty cross.

We are people of hope because we are people of resurrection. As Tony Campolo put it, 'its Friday, but Sunday's a'comin'.

