

## **November thoughts, from Father Charles:**

### ***Remember, Remember.....***

November can become a time for looking back and remembering; yet also a time to reflect in a positive and affirming way, with the promise and hope of new beginnings.

There are, of course, the Remembrance Day Services that take place on and around the 11<sup>th</sup> throughout the Commonwealth. During, and around, these events we recall all who sacrificed their lives for others in armed conflicts across the world during the First World War, and, of course, subsequent conflicts.

Guy Fawkes Day, the 5<sup>th</sup>, an event on which to remind ourselves that, despite the entertainment of the fireworks and bonfires and despite the fact that Fawkes has become a publically accepted rogue, the day itself is concerned with democratic process over individual acts of terrorism.

All Saints and All Souls (the first and second) are significant Christian Festivals that provide us with opportunity to reflect on the lives of others; giving thanks for their existence and the impact they have had on our lives.

And for me, all this happens during autumn, a season when around us creation seems to be slowing down, preparing for winter, Yet at the same time, it holds the promise of new birth as we enter the coming spring. The sure promise of a re-creation.

### **Remembering the last year**

This year, I am reminded that we, at All Saints, have been in a period of interregnum. Two major actions took place at the start of this year. First, Fr Richard retired and second, we took the decision to rescind the Resolutions. And with these actions we embraced change, challenge, and discomfort. We did so, however, trusting in the Christian promise of new birth and re-creation.

I would like to spend a few moments reminding ourselves of a few (of the many) changes that have taken place and clearly show signs of growth and new beginning. To help identify these I asked a few people to name a couple of positive changes over the last year. Here they are:

***The Daily Office Team.*** This isn't a prioritised list, but, if it was, the Daily Office team would be right up there near the top. Every day, day in and day out, at the given time, one or more of the Office team are saying the morning or evening office, praising God, for the worshipping community that is All Saints, for all of us and for themselves. This is tremendous, thank you, and we hold you in our prayers. After the Deanery Mass, at All Saints in October, a few visitors talked to me about the real sense of prayer and worship they felt within our church, whilst they were waiting for the mass to start.

***Greater Involvement.*** This has shown itself in different ways – not only in visible ways, such as the reading of lessons and preparation of intercessions, but also in less visible and decision making ways. One comment was that we now have “a feeling that our views and ideas are important”. It was also mentioned in terms of the

selection process for the new incumbent, from the wide engagement in creating the Parish Profile to the strength in deciding not to make an appointment during the first round.

***The Clergy Team.*** We have been very fortunate to attract a clergy team of such calibre; with quite different backgrounds and abilities and yet maintaining our strong catholic tradition. One fellow priest within the Diocese has mentioned that the 'preaching strength' of All Saints is so strong he would prefer not to be invited (true or false, this is quite complimentary!). Another great comment is that the "opening up of the ministry team has brought a breath of fresh air".

***Strength of our Catholic Tradition.*** Needless to say, a fundamental feature for All Saints. An extended period of interregnum, with various visiting priests, would normally be a time in which some of our tradition becomes accidentally eroded or is allowed to slip. This has not been the case. Through the work of a number of our people the preparation for our liturgy has been maintained, the quality of the ritual remains high, the music tradition continues to be superb. And, within all this, one of the comments I liked was that "all our catholic ways are there, but it's also a bit more relaxed".

### **And Forward, Building on Sure Foundations**

Looking back over this year and recognizing these changes, let's not forget the strength of the foundation on which this is happening. A foundation built upon the prayer and effort of others, over the years, as well as us, now. Back in December 2012, as we went into vacancy, Fr Richard wrote his final article for this magazine saying why All Saints had become so important to him. The features he recognised continue to be true and sit at the heart of what we do.

So, it's a great thing to take the time to remember and reflect; to recognise what we have learned and the ways we have grown; as we continue to build our church on solid foundations.

With every blessing



## The Angel of Mons

*[This article is a reprint of an article written about ten years ago by Eugene Byrne. It describes how an earlier All Saints magazine was the first publication to carry an account of how retreating British troops in France were saved by angels one August day and about 90 years ago. The article is reproduced here with the kind permission of the author.]*

"We heard the German cavalry tearing after us and ran for a place where we thought a stand could be made; we turned and faced the enemy expecting instant death. When to our wonder we saw between us and the enemy a whole troop of Angels; the horses of the Germans turned round frightened out of their senses; they regularly stampeded, the men tugging at their bridles, while the horses tore away in every direction from our men. Evidently the horses saw the Angels as plainly as we did, and the delay gave us time to reach a place of safety."

Ninety years ago this month, the British army fought its first major engagement of the First World War. Some time afterwards, there grew up a legend that the British were assisted in their retreat by supernatural forces. There were several different accounts of the so-called Angels of Mons published during and after the war, but one of the most important, if not THE most important, first appeared in the parish magazine of a Bristol church.

The Battle of Mons took place on Sunday 23 August 1914, just a few weeks into the war. The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) of around 70,000 men, had moved into Belgium to protect the left flank of the Allied front, but found itself unexpectedly facing overwhelming numbers of Germans.

The BEF – the “contemptible little army”, as the Kaiser had called it – was small, but highly professional, its officers and men hardened by colonial wars and the Boer War. But professionalism was no match for numbers, and faced with the threat of being surrounded, the army had to withdraw. A bitter rearguard battle at Le Cateau three days later covered a desperate, gruelling retreat from Belgium to the outskirts of Paris in less than two weeks.

The First Battalion of the Glosters, for instance, marched 244 miles in 13 days, with only one day of rest. Surviving accounts of the retreat talk of worn-out boots, of confused marching and counter-marching, of raw and bloody feet and of never getting enough to eat. They endured both torrential rain and the heat of one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s hottest summers. Men later said the hardest thing to cope with was being so dog-tired that every step was agony. Given their state of mind, it’s perhaps not surprising that stories of angels and ghostly forms emerged later on.

Stories of supernatural appearances on the battlefields of Mons, Le Cateau or on the retreat have all the character of modern-day urban legends. The angels, or whatever

they were, were always seen by someone else. There are only a handful of accounts by people claiming to have seen the apparitions personally.

Arthur Machen, a popular author of ghost stories, later claimed that his short story, 'The Bowmen', was the origin of the legend. The story, published in the London Evening News in late September, tells of a group of British soldiers facing overwhelming numbers of Germans. One of them utters some Latin he remembers seeing on a plate in a vegetarian restaurant - "Adsit Anglis Sanctus Georgius" - May Saint George come to the help of the English. A horde of spectral longbowmen, straight out of Agincourt, appears and slaughters the Germans in gratifyingly huge numbers.

Machen fended off endless queries about where the story came from with the same answer: his own imagination. It was a work of fiction, he said, with no basis in fact or any soldiers' tales he'd heard.

But Machen's claim to be the originator of the legend has one very serious flaw. The ghostly archers in his story weren't angels. They were soldiers.

The most popular account of actual angels appeared in the parish magazine of All Saints Church Clifton in the spring of 1915. The vicar, the Reverend M.P. Gillson, wrote of how he had spoken with a "Miss M., daughter of the well-known Canon M." who knew two officers, both of whom had seen what he called "The Angelic Guard at Mons".

The angels of the Clifton account, it's also worth noting, didn't \*kill\* any Germans. They just scared them off. Gillson also told of another officer who had been put in charge of German prisoners; this man said that the German captives said they had seen the angels fighting for the British.

The Reverend Gillson's account caused a sensation. He later said he was mildly surprised that people were so astonished that miracles could still happen.

"It is precisely what we have been praying all along should take place," he wrote. "Why should it seem more strange that a regiment of Prussian cavalry should be held up by a company of angels, and their horses stampeded, and our infantry delivered from a hopeless position, than that an angel with flaming sword should have withstood Balaam, or that St. Peter should have been delivered from the hand of Herod by the intervention of an Angel? Do they really relegate all such miracles to 'Bible Days'?"

Ninety years on, we're no nearer to knowing whether St George, longbowmen or angels appeared to the exhausted British troops. To sceptics, a letter from Lance-Corporal A. Johnstone of the Royal Engineers to a newspaper in 1915 is quite telling. Johnstone is one of only a handful of people to have publicly claimed to have seen something.

"We had almost reached the end of the retreat," he wrote. "... and as the day broke we saw in front of us large bodies of cavalry, all formed up into squadrons - fine, big men, on massive chargers. I remember turning to my chums in the ranks and saying: 'Thank God! We are not far off Paris now. Look at the French cavalry.' They, too, saw them quite plainly, but on getting closer, to our surprise the horsemen vanished and gave place to banks of white mist ...

"When I tell you that hardened soldiers who had been through many a campaign were marching quite mechanically along the road and babbling all sorts of nonsense in sheer delirium, you can well believe we were in a fit state to take a row of beanstalks for all the saints in the calendar."

Perhaps the last word should go to Fr Richard Hoyal, the Rev. Gillson's present-day successor at All Saints.

"Having made no particular study of the subject and the extensive literature surrounding it, I have to remain agnostic about the Angel(s) of Mons," he says. "But in particular circumstances, and for particular reasons, God may well choose to act, either directly, or through chosen agents, in ways that would seem to us to be more markedly interventionist. In this sense, I have no difficulty in believing in miracles ... "

Referring to a recent controversy in some newspapers on account of a Christian school teaching that God defeated Germany in a later war, Fr Hoyal says, "Normally, of course, we keep God out of everything when we are doing science, history, anthropology or whatever these days. But you can logically believe that the defeat of Hitler was God's will and work, albeit achieved through the efforts of men (and angels too). Saying so will not get you good grades at GCSE but that kind of assumption is certainly everywhere in the Bible and has always been prevalent in classical Christian thinking. There is always a lot going on under the water - ask any swan. And above the surface, too, never mind what the fish say."

*Eugene Byrne*

## **REMEMBRANCE IN NOVEMBER**

*"This victory alone is not the change we seek - it is only the chance for us to make that change. And that cannot happen if we go back to the way things were. It cannot happen without you, without a new spirit of service, a new spirit of sacrifice."* Those words were spoken by Barak Obama in his acceptance speech on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2008. A night indeed for future remembrance.

Remembrance in November, however, has most often a quite different intention. The end of autumn, the end of the Fall when we remember the fallen, it's a fitting month for remembering the departed. The mood of nature is in tune with gravity and loss. Near the beginning, on All Souls' Day, we focus on those whom we specially want

and need to recall, those near and dear to us as individuals and in our parish community.

On Remembrance Sunday the focus is on those who lost their lives in the two world wars. There is not even a handful of first world war veterans now left, and the ending of WW1 is further away in time from us than was the ending of the Napoleonic wars during the last days of the reign of Queen Victoria. Yet if anything the call to remembrance is possibly stronger now than at any time in the last 50 years. One can't speculate on all the reasons for that, of course, but one of the main ones must be the number of opportunities now for researching the world wars, the sheer quantity of information available, the relative ease by which we can discover what happened; what it was like for the ordinary servicemen at arms. We have the Internet; we have films such as *Schindler's List* and *Saving Private Ryan*. We have access to documents and information which were held under wraps for so many years after the end of the WW2 and which have given rise to an unprecedented number of TV and Radio programmes disseminating it. With far less information to hand in the early 1960s, the threat of nuclear war was far more absorbing, especially to young people, than was the commemoration of those who gave their lives in defence of our freedom. The freedom was taken for granted, even exploited. Some churches at that time eschewed Remembrance Sunday services altogether.

When we are now able to read, watch, listen to, and inwardly digest what happened in such powerful ways, it brings home to us as never before, especially for the post war generation, the sheer awfulness of the sacrifice of young lives. It brings it into the present. One writer, investigating his great uncle's time in the WW1 as well as the fate of the very last British soldier to die just 90 minutes before it ended, wrote of how moved he was seeing his great uncle's name on a wall with 1200 others. He wanted, as he put it, to "drag great-uncle back from the brink of obscurity." The family of that last soldier killed stood with him before his grave, he wrote, their eyes filling with tears for someone they'd never met. "It was almost as if our emotion was letting itself, for the first time, and with powerful immediacy, take in the fact that our relatives had been killed in a war. For an instant, 90 years had rolled back, and it was like yesterday."

I myself had something of this experience when a few years ago I read more about the sinking by torpedo of the Royal Oak in Scapa Flow in October 1939. I had known since childhood that my mother's 17-year-old brother had perished along with 832 others, but the real horror of it didn't penetrate until I asked his younger sister, my aunt, to tell me more about him and about the loss they suffered, I was caught up in it quite unexpectedly, drawn in to the love and loss of her experience. As Fr Richard Hoyal once quoted in an All Souls Day sermon, "We understand death for the first time when he puts his hand upon one whom we love." And that counts in a mysterious way even for those we *haven't* known, especially relatives. The TV programme "*Who do you think you are?*" is an example of this in action. It's a very deep-seated and noble aspect of humanity.

Yet for us as Christians, the act of remembrance and making memorial has a yet deeper significance whereby we understand that this noble love and compassion we feel for our forebears long since gone lies not only deep within humanity but within the heart of God himself. Made in his image, it is an attribute of his nature he has bestowed upon us. When we recall, as we do on Remembrance Sunday morning, the fallen in war, we are at one with God in a most compelling way. "Not one sparrow will fall to the ground apart from your Father", Jesus assures us, "And even the hairs on your head are counted." You don't forget, Lord, and neither shall we. To make this Act of Remembrance within the context of a Eucharist makes it all the more

compelling, because we recall the greatest sacrifice of all time into the present when we “do this”, as Christ commanded, in remembrance of him, and thereto in remembrance of others whose lives were sacrificed for our life and freedom. Not remembering long ago and far away, but recalling into the present moment and in eternity. Benjamin Britten’s War Requiem gives a powerful way to experience this, juxtaposing as it does, the searing poetry of the great war poet, Wilfred Owen, with the Requiem Mass for the Departed.

We can and should give thanks that our young people will not be called to arms in the horrendous way of the young men of the world war generations. Those fighting today in Afghanistan and elsewhere are professional service men and women who have made the armed forces their chosen career. However, as we know only too well, they are sacrificing themselves. In this shrinking world, leaders can no longer refer, as did Neville Chamberlain in 1938, to “a quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing.” The present generation are called upon to fight in countries further off and in more alien cultures than did their forebears.

That new spirit of service, that new spirit of sacrifice, to which Obama referred in his speech 5 years ago – what is it? He is right that it is necessary, in this country as much as in America. Both countries are undoubtedly rueing the effects of its absence. Sacrifice must not only be honoured; it must be part of the life of every person, especially every Christian. “... *We offer you our souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice*” as the post Communion prayer has it. While we give thanks that the sacrifice of trench warfare is a thing of the past, we have also to realise that sacrifice and self-offering is integral to a life in Christ. Without it we risk our lives being self-seeking and without meaning. The ways in which we seek to do this are surely part of the way in which we might pay tribute to the fallen who, for our tomorrow, gave their today. In the words of the great Winston Churchill, “We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”

*Jessica Smith, Parish Lay Minister*

### **All Saints Parish Retreat 2014**

This year our Parish Retreat is the weekend of 7 – 9 February 2014 at Abbey House, Glastonbury.

Those of you who have been on our retreats before will be able to extol the virtues of Abbey House to others and encourage them to join us in February. Abbey House is a large, elegant early 19<sup>th</sup> century house set in beautiful gardens overlooking the Abbey ruins. It is peaceful, comfortable, warm, and the food is excellent and there is a bar – all to ensure 48 hours of spirituality and ‘winding down’ from the stresses of our everyday life. We gather together for Morning and Evening Prayer each day, but if you oversleep and don’t appear, that is OK. The delights of Glastonbury with its interesting High Street and the beauties of the countryside are an additional attraction. Many of us take advantage of a weekend in the country to intersperse our spiritual activities with fresh air – and there is always the Tor to climb.

Our Retreat Conductor this year is Revd Canon Wendy Wilby, whom some of you will have known as Precentor at Bristol Cathedral. Canon Wendy has now retired with her husband Philip to Yorkshire and they are living in a windmill. She is deeply spiritual leader and I feel assured that we will come away refreshed and renewed.

This year the cost of the Retreat will be £136 each. There have been changes at the Retreat House and the Trustees have put the cost up, but as a Church Group we still get a good discount. We also invite you to contribute between £2.50 and £3 towards a card and £50 book token for the Retreat Conductor.

**Please think hard about this opportunity** and sign up in the porch, soon as there is interest from other churches. You will not regret it. Where else would you find 48 hours full board in such glorious surroundings for such a low cost? Perhaps you could bring a friend along as well.

We will have to ask for a non-returnable deposit of £30 to book a place, the remainder to be paid on arrival at Abbey House. Please make deposit cheques out to All Saints with St John.

Please sign list in porch. .

For further details please contact Liz Badman at All Saints, Clifton on 0117-9741355 or [allsaintsclifton@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:allsaintsclifton@tiscali.co.uk)

*Liz Badman*  
*Parish Administrator*

## **ALL SOULS TIDE**

### **NOVEMBER - THE MONTH OF REMEMBRANCE**

On Saturday November 2<sup>nd</sup> there will be the customary All Souls Day Requiem at

11.00 am. At this service the names of family, friends and members of the congregation who have died in the past year will be remembered.

During the course of November there will be four weekday requiem masses.

Saturday November 9 <sup>th</sup>	12 noon
Friday November 15 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am
Wednesday November 20 <sup>th</sup>	9.30 am
Tuesday November 26 <sup>th</sup>	7.00 pm

If you wish for a loved one to be remembered at any of these masses please sign the appropriate lists in the atrium. It is hoped that many of the congregation are able to attend the mass at which their loved ones will be remembered.



## HARVEST CHARITY

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our Harvest Charity Appeal which year supported Christian Aid in their efforts to assist communities in Brazil and the Amazon rainforest and help protect their way of life for the future.

The total sum raised was £386.39. This being from the proceeds of Doors Open Day, Harvest Supper and Harvest Sunday Collection.

Also, following the visit of Br. Nicholas SSF on the feast of St Michael and all Angels, a retiring collection was taken for the work of Glasshampton priory and a cheque for £200.00 has been sent to them.

Thank you as always for you support and generosity.

Norman Drewett

### HYMN BOOK SEARCH No 11

Last month: "Bearing a Part."

There are three examples in the hymnal --  
373 Then shall I sing and bear a part with that celestial choir.

475 My soul, bear thou thy part.

And, famously, 394 But above all, the heart must bear the longest part.

Yes, but what does George Herbert mean? He can hardly mean Carry on singing when everybody else has stopped. Here's the answer. Herbert was an accomplished musician on lute and viol, and, says Izaak Walton, a composer. He delighted when young in the music at Westminster Abbey, and, much later, at Salisbury Cathedral. More than that, as a boy he was present when John Bull and William Byrd, no less, were guests at his mother's dinner-parties.

Now, Byrd, in his earlier compositions, adopted for a while what is known as cantus firmus or canto fermo technique, where an existing melody, a "fixed tune," was used as a unifying device. In l-o-n-g notes [paradoxically known as breves!] this melody, moving slowly from bar to bar, was held on to tenaciously by a voice accordingly known as the Tenor. It glued the whole structure together while the other voices wove their polyphony around it.

Now we can see what Herbert means. Yes, the Church with psalms must shout, and no door can keep them out. But the heart must sing the unifying canto fermo that binds it all together.

So now to the last of these explorations. (Seasonal, like the first? We'll know soon enough). Which poet uses the word SNOW five times in succession?