

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, TIMBERHILL with ST JULIAN, NORWICH

AUGUST 2020

*Mary is taken up into
heaven: the choirs of
angels are rejoicing!*



PARISH PEOPLE

Parish Priest

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Organist

Keith Buxton

Head Server

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Electoral Roll Secretary

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Deanery Synod representatives

Shirley Buxton, Andrew Gray, Liz Kilshaw

Parochial Church Council Mary Barnes-Clay, Fr Peter Barnes-Clay, Garret Cronin, Frank Feehan, John Hunt, Andrew Knights, Michael Rayner, Susan Snasdell, Elizabeth Sutherland, Brenda Taylor, Nigel Waller

Sidespeople Garret Cronin, Barbara Donnelly, Andrew Knights (*Senior Sidesman*), Michael Rayner, Wendy Rayner, Nichola Rose, Diane Sheen, Susan Snasdell, Dorothy Tinkler, Richard Tinkler, Stuart Tinkler, John Woodrow

The Julian Centre

Rouen Road, Norwich NR1 1QT

01603 767380 • www.julianofnorwich.org

The Centre is currently open on Mondays and Saturdays, 10.30am – 3.30pm

Going forward with courage and vision

Dear friends,

It's such a joy to be worshipping together once more, even with the various (and evolving) restrictions and modifications which our present circumstances require. I want to express my real pleasure in (and thankfulness for) the way the Church Family has gathered around the altar again. In the 27 days since we resumed public worship, at least 92 members and friends of our Church Family have worshipped at at least one Mass (and of course in most cases far more than one!), which is very encouraging.

Then, too, I want to put on record our deep thanks and appreciation for the volunteers who are undertaking the cleaning and sanitising of our two churches at the end of every day, which enables them both to be open (for at least six hours each day) in a safe way: this really is no small achievement in a parish such as ours where few of the Church Family live within walking distance of our churches, and I am proud of the way you have risen to the challenge put before you. It is a real sign of our growing sense of corporate responsibility, which we need to continue to nurture as an essential aspect of Christian maturity. More help, of course, is always welcome.

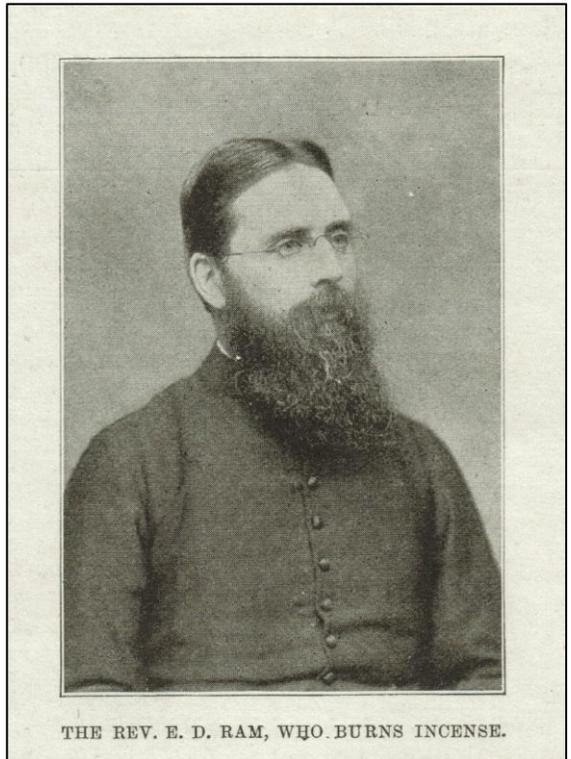
This year, albeit in a more restrained way than we'd hoped to, we're marking the **six hundredth anniversary** of the building of the present St John's Timberhill in 1420 and the fortieth anniversary of the renewed St John's becoming the Parish Church for the large modern parish in 1980. In this month's extract from a previous parish magazine (on page 15), Fr Brian Short, writing in *The Grapevine* in August 1990, describes a little of how this happened and the hopes and vision which animated our Church Family's move from St Peter Parmentergate to St John's Timberhill forty years ago.

Hanging in the porch at St John's is a notice, I suspect dating from the incumbency of Fr Michael McLean, which also sets out such hopes and vision. Have you ever stopped to read it? It says:

For over five hundred years this church of Saint John the Baptist, Timberhill, has stood as a sign of the presence of God and has tried to meet the pastoral and worshipping needs of successive generations.

At the end of the nineteenth century under the leadership of Father Ram, a major restoration and re-ordering was completed. During the incumbency of successive vicars, Father Roxby, Father Medhurst and Father Millett, further work of adornment took place.

In the year nineteen hundred and eighty, the church now being one of the buildings in the newly-established Parish of Parmentergate, another major re-ordering took place, in the hope that, following our forebears' spirit of courage and vision, we, in our day, could continue to serve God and his people in this part of the city.



Fr Ram, Vicar of Timberhill 1871 – 1918

I find those last words very powerful and an ongoing challenge to us all: **'the hope that, following our forebears' spirit of courage and vision, we, in our day, could continue to serve God and his people in this part of the city'**. How do we live a common life in our Church Family which offers a compelling witness to the world around us? How do we minister most effectively to the large parish for which we have responsibility? How can we follow in our forebears' spirit of courage and vision in a way which makes sense in our own day?

What do you think? I'd love to hear.

It seems to me there are some particular principles which we'd want to emphasise as we try to be an authentic Christian community in the heart of Norwich in 2020.

1. The foundation of all our work is **the round of praise and prayer**, the central point of which is **the daily celebration of the Eucharist**. As



George Herbert wrote: ‘Seven whole days, not one in seven, I will praise thee!’ In September I hope the daily offices of Morning and Evening Prayer (currently said privately in church) will also be said publicly once again. I can’t emphasise with enough force that it is our life around the altar and our faithfulness in corporate and personal prayer which brings our parish spiritually alive. It roots us in the life and freedom of Jesus Christ as branches of his vine. The Altar and the Confessional constitute our chief and most important work, and we should spare no effort in nurturing this central part of our Church Family’s life and witness so that our two churches

become spiritual powerhouses in the city. I hope that increasing numbers of you will find your way to the weekday Masses, and bring others with you. I want us to be known as a parish where people will find the sacraments regularly, reliably and faithfully celebrated, a priest to talk to every day, and a true warmth of welcome.

- 2. Ministry belongs to the whole People of God:** it is not the exclusive possession of an ordained caste. The Priesthood is a distinctive and particular ministry, given by God for the nurturing and flourishing of the Body of Christ, but it is not the only form of ministry. Each of us has a ministry to offer and to exercise. We try to represent this in a powerful way at the High Mass (under normal circumstances) on Sunday mornings, where many gifts, talents and forms of service offered by many individuals come together in a dynamic and energetic way. But your ministry (and mine) is not confined to the church building or the liturgy. You are a Christian “24/7” (as they say these days), and your living-out of the Christian life puts flesh on the hope that is in you.
- 3. We want to be a Church Family where ministry is shared among the People of God.** We still have some way to go towards fully realising this ideal: we always will, because every healthy parish is constantly welcoming new people, new ideas, new blood and responding to the

world around it. But we are conscious that this is the journey we are all on. **There is a role and a place for everyone** at St John's and St Julian's: come and talk to me and I will give you work in which to share.

4. The life of prayer always leads us to care. **We are called to be a caring community**, a true family in which we have concern for each other's needs and wellbeing. Pastoral care is not something dispensed by the Parish Priest, like dollops of ice cream into waiting cones; pastoral care is the way in which the members of Christ relate to each other, and it spills out beyond the visible borders of the Church to those who are not yet part of the family. We are all human and we all get things wrong, so disagreement and hurt will inevitably come along in the life of all churches, but it is not the way we are called to live and so we all need grace both to admit when we are wrong and to forgive others.
5. An authentic Catholicism always turns us in **two directions simultaneously – inward and outward**. The Catholic faith turns us *inward* because a Christian soul actually and really has Christ living within it, and we need to be attentive to the mystery of Christ in us, 'the hope of glory'. The Catholic faith turns us *outward* because in the mystery of the Incarnation Jesus reveals for us the Father's permanent attitude of love towards the world he created, and all who love Jesus find themselves compelled to give expression to this by concern for the world's problems and challenges, and by practical works of compassion for those in need, not least those who are on the margins of our society. This is the way of love to which we are called: **love of God and love of neighbour**.

You will perhaps think that all this seems to place demands upon us! You'd be right: it does! A full-blooded Catholic Christianity will always be demanding of the time, resources, energy and power of love in those whom the Lord calls to himself. It is not an occasional project, a temporary amusement or a Sunday trip to see a good show put on: it is a life, a life lived in the company of Jesus and with his Spirit animating us.

As we reflect on these things together, I'm glad that we're welcoming to our parish **Edwin Wilton-Morgan**, an ordinand from Westcott House in Cambridge who will be 'attached' to St John's and St Julian's for the coming academic year as he prepares, God willing, for Ordination next summer. Attachments are a vital part of ordinands' formation. Attachment to a parish or community helps ordinands to make connections between what they are

learning 'in the classroom' and how this relates to the mission and ministry of the Church 'on the ground'. These arrangements should always enrich both the individual and the parish to which he or she comes. For Christian disciples, 'learning' never takes place in only one direction, because we are all learning together in the school of the Lord's service. We will learn from Edwin, and he will learn from us.

Edwin has already worshipped with us on three Sundays in July and he's kindly written some words of greeting for this month's *Newsletter* (see page 9). He will be working under my supervision but the building-up of the Body of Christ is the work of all of us, and so you must play your part: I know you will make him very warmly welcome in our Church Family and that you will give him every encouragement with your kindness and your prayers.

The two great feasts of the month both point us towards the 'glory which shall be revealed' – the **Feast of the Transfiguration** on Thursday 6 August (Low Mass at 12 noon and 7pm, both at St John's) and the **Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary** on Saturday 15 August (Low Mass at 9am at St Julian's, Solemn Mass at 11am at St John's). The Assumption, the principal feast of Our Lady St Mary, is her 'homecoming day' and an expression of our hope and confidence in the Resurrection of the body and the life of the world to come. Not with our lips this year, alas, but in our hearts on Assumption Day, each of us can sing those magnificent words of the Anglican divine Bishop Thomas Ken:

*Heaven with transcendent joys her entrance graced:
Next to his throne her Son his Mother placed,
And here below, now she's of heaven possest,
All generations are to call her blest.*

She who by common agreement of the primitive Church bears the extraordinary title 'Mother of God' is our Mother also, given on the Cross to each of us in the person of the beloved disciple. As we celebrate her final homecoming this Assumptiontide, let us do what he did, and take her to our homes and hearts, and share in her joy.

Mary, Mother of Christians, pray for us, that 'following our forebears' spirit of courage and vision, we may continue to serve God and his people.'

Your friend and parish priest,

R. Richard

Some dates for August

The month of Our Lady in Heaven

Thursday 6 August • Feast of the Transfiguration

12 noon and 7pm Low Mass (*both at St John's*)

Sunday 9 August

11am Solemn Mass with the Baptism of Cairo Gomes

Wednesday 12 August

7pm Low Mass, 7.30pm PCC meeting (*at St John's*)

Saturday 15 August • Feast of the Assumption

9am Low Mass (*at St Julian's*), 11am Solemn Mass (*at St John's*)

Monday 24 August • Feast of St Bartholomew

10am Low Mass (*at St Julian's*) followed by the Rosary

Saturday 29 August • Beheading of St John the Baptist, our Patron

12 noon Low Mass



Tuesday 8 September

Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

7pm

Licensing of the Revd Richard Stanton

as Parish Priest of St John the Baptist, Timberhill

with St Julian, Norwich

and Priest Director of the Julian Campus

for the coming three years, 2020 to 2023

*The Bishop of Norwich, the Bishop of Richborough and
the Archdeacon of Norwich will all be with us for the service*

Owing to the current physical distancing regulations we greatly regret that it will not be possible to accommodate everyone who would like to be at the service. We will shortly announce how you can apply for a ticket, which will be allocated using a fair system to be decided by your PCC.

Edwin Wilton-Morgan says hello

My name is Edwin, and I'm thoroughly excited to be joining you at St John's and St Julian's during my final year of training for Orders at Westcott House. I grew up in rural Shropshire before reading Modern Languages at St Andrews University, where I met my partner, Taylor.

Despite having been raised in a church-going household, it was only at university that I began to take my faith more seriously, something which coincided with an increased feeling of belonging within a more Catholic tradition as well as a nascent sense of vocation. So it was that after graduating I spent a year working as a parish assistant in Westminster in order to discern whether I was being called to ordained ministry, during which time the Church of England recklessly recommended me for training, and in 2018 I joined Taylor at Westcott, who had started there the year before.



Whilst our little house in Cambridge was perfect for us and our blissfully contented cat — as well as providing a welcome refuge from the intensities of seminary — it gradually became a little too small for comfort as we became the owners of one, then two border collies (as well as a now increasingly resentful feline), so we were glad to move in April to Thorpe St Andrew, in order for Taylor to begin his curacy there.

When not doing churchy things I can usually be found reading, baking, gardening, cutting the crossword out of other people's newspapers, and chasing my inexhaustible dogs over hill, over dale...

I am greatly looking forward to meeting you all — do grab me to say 'hello'!

Edwin

August 2020

- 1 Sat St Peter's Chains: Lammas Day
- 2 Sun The Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Trinity VIII)**
3 Mon Feria
4 Tue St John Vianney (*Curé d'Ars*)
5 Wed Dedication of St Mary Major
6 Thu The Transfiguration of Our Lord 12 noon & 7pm LM
7 Fri St Sixtus II and his Companions
8 Sat St Dominic
- 9 Sun The Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Trinity IX)**
10 Mon St Lawrence
11 Tue St Clare
12 Wed St Jane Frances de Chantal
13 Thu of Requiem
14 Fri St Maximilian Kolbe
15 Sat THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
9am LM; 11am SM
- 16 Sun The Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Trinity X)**
17 Mon Feria
18 Tue Feria
19 Wed St John Eudes
20 Thu St Bernard of Clairvaux
21 Fri Feria
22 Sat The Queenship of Mary
- 23 Sun The Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time (Trinity XXI)**
24 Mon St Bartholomew the Apostle 10am LM
25 Tue St Louis of France
26 Wed Feria
27 Thu St Monica
28 Fri St Augustine of Hippo
29 Sat The Beheading of St John the Baptist 12 noon LM
- 30 Sun The Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (Trinity XXII)**
31 Mon St Aidan and the Saints of Lindisfarne

We pray for...

Prisoners	1
Our Parish and People	2
The integrity of our Christian faith	3
Parish priests	4
Thanksgiving for the prayers of our Lady	5
Thanksgiving for the gifts of God's Kingdom	6
Pope Francis	7
Preachers of the Gospel	8
Our Parish and People	9
Newly-ordained Deacons	10
The Order of Poor Clares	11
Vocations to the Religious Life	12
Year's Minds for August	13
Victims of war	14
Walsingham and all Shrines of our Lady	15
Our Parish and People	16
The Julian Shrine	17
The shops and businesses of our parish	18
Missionaries and carers of the sick	19
The Order of Cistercian Monks	20
The unemployed	21
Growth in love for our Lady	22
Our Parish and People	23
Our bishops Norman and Graham	24
The poor and needy	25
Peace and reconciliation	26
Our mothers, living and departed	27
Teachers of the Faith	28
Our Parish and People	29
Our Parish and People	30
We rejoice in the Saints of these Islands	31

From the Parish Registers

Communicants and collections

	Sunday	Weekday	Collection
Week beginning 5 July	47	29	£176.50
12 July	53	30	£167.90
19 July	51	27	£191.10
26 July	54	35	£301.00

The collection figure above does not include the amount given by standing order, which averages £2,850 a month.

From glory into glory

For a fortnight in July contractors were hard at work in St Julian's, and we're thrilled with the result! **The Lady Julian's Cell** has been completely redecorated with new plaster and fresh paint throughout, cracks have been repaired and other problems addressed. We're very grateful to the Friends of Julian of Norwich, who have funded this project at no cost to the parish, and to the contractors A & K Woodgate for their diligence and professionalism.

Workmen were also at St John's in July, replacing all the external **floodlights** with new energy-efficient LED lighting. This work has been paid for by the City Council, again at no cost to the parish.

At its meeting on 12 August the PCC will be considering several other fabric projects which need our attention. There is something of a backlog of deferred jobs and we're in real need of help from within the Church Family not just to do 'DIY' work (although that's very welcome!) but also to help with the oversight and management of projects. At the moment heating, lighting, drainage, redecorating, running water and several other challenges are all on the cards! Please speak to Fr Richard if you can give any help.



Parish notes

Face coverings mandatory from 8 August

As we 'go to press' the Government has just announced that face coverings, which are already 'strongly advised' by the Church of England, will be **mandatory in all places of worship from Saturday 8 August**, to help reduce the risks of virus transmission.

At Mass, please remove your face covering before coming up to receive Holy Communion, and then, before replacing it, sanitise your hands at the west end of the each as you return to your seat. We have some very stylish hand-washable face coverings available in church: help yourself to one in return (please!) for a donation to church funds. Many thanks to Bev Standing for this piece of hard work.



Assumption picnic

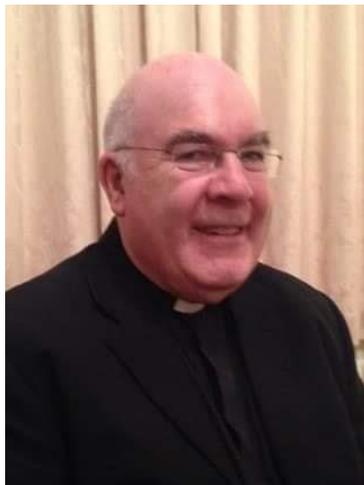
After the 11am Solemn Mass on the Feast of the Assumption, **Saturday 15 August**, there'll be an Assumption picnic in St John's churchyard for those who'd like to stay. It's not a bring-and-share, you'll have to **bring your own food and drink for lunch** and maintain physical distancing in groups of six, but it should be a nice way to keep the feast together.

Fr Frank and Shirley Nichols

It's three years since Fr Frank and Shirley Nichols left us to move to England's Nazareth, where they've since become part of village life, making many friendships and renewing old ones. They're now going slightly further afield and at the start of September will be moving to Australia, where they will live in or near Brisbane and thus be considerably nearer to their immediate family. They have a lot to do in the coming weeks to prepare for their move to the other side of the world (your Parish Priest, writing these lines, can't even begin to imagine where he'd start!) so sadly Fr Frank won't be able to come and preach at St John's before they go; however, we will keep them very much in our prayers with many happy memories and thanks for the ways in which they have enriched the life of this Church Family.

Fr Bill Scott RIP

Since Easter we have been praying daily for Fr Bill Scott, suffering from cancer, and on Friday 17 July came the sad news that he had died peacefully that morning, aged 74, as the dawn was breaking. Chaplain to nuns and royals alike, and known to many members of our Church Family, Prebendary William Sievwright Scott CVO – Fr Bill, that is – was Chaplain to the Community of All Hallows at Ditchingham from 1984 to 1991, and then Vicar of St Mary's Bourne Street. Latterly he was Domestic Chaplain to Her Majesty the Queen and Sub-Dean of the Chapel Royal. His funeral rites were celebrated at St Mary's Bourne Street on Tuesday 28 and Wednesday 29 July, and his committal took place at the West London Crematorium on Thursday 30 July at 10am. At the same time as the committal was taking place in London, Fr Richard celebrated a Requiem Mass for Fr Bill in St John's Timberhill, and a small congregation was able to come to assist at the Holy Sacrifice.



Writing in the *Church Times* the next day, Lord Chartres, former Bishop of London, described him as 'one of the most remarkable and beloved priests of his generation' and spoke of his 'extensive ministry of pastoral care and spiritual direction', 'a priest who earned the trust of everyone from the kitchen to the throne room'. As we give thanks for the life and ministry of this faithful priest, please pray for him, that he might enjoy light and peace with the Saints and the friendship of Jesus for eternity.

Envelopes for planned weekly giving

Our Church Family is committed to Christian Stewardship, which means we encourage all our members to be regular and systematic in their financial support of the life and work of our Church. Boxes of envelopes for systematic weekly giving are now available: one envelope for each Sunday in the year. Several of you asked for these in our recent Stewardship Campaign, so we're glad to provide them. If you'd like to use this envelope system for your regular support of our Church Family, a box may be obtained after any service. Please ensure we know which set of boxes you have taken (the number is shown on the front) for tax purposes! **Many thanks to all who are giving so generously in the present difficult times.**

Our parish thirty years ago

From *The Grapevine*: Magazine of St John the Baptist Timberhill & St Julian King Street in the Parish of Parmentergate, August 1990

It was in 1978 that I became Vicar of Parmentergate and to this day I often wonder why it was that Michael McLean [*then Rector*] invited me to join him in proclaiming the gospel to the good folk of this parish. He, after all, was out of the top drawer of Anglo-Catholicism, while I had been tucked away at the back of a lower drawer marked 'Evangelical'. Some people declared it to be a wise move on his part, while a few thought he was doing a spot of ecclesiastical slumming! Whatever the reason I am glad he asked me to be part of a team ministry in such an interesting parish...

I had never worn vestments, or had any experience of singing the Liturgy. Indeed, so unfamiliar was my family with 'bells and smells' when my son Matthew first saw Michael McLean using a thurible, he said, in a loud stage whisper, 'Fr Michael is on fire!'

I really need not have worried, for most people were very kind. Robert Llewelyn said it had taken me a matter of weeks to get to grips with Anglo-Catholic worship, whereas it had taken him years! I doubt if that was entirely true, but it was certainly most encouraging...

When I first arrived in the parish, Michael and I conducted

THE Grapevine

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Magazine of St John the Baptist Timberhill and St Julian King Street in the Parish of Parmentergate, Norwich

"A DECADE, A CENTURY, IN RETROSPECT"

Thoughts of a one time Team Vicar

IT WAS in 1978 that I became Vicar of Parmentergate and to this day I often wonder why it was that Michael McLean invited me to join him in proclaiming the gospel to the good folk of this parish. He, after all, was out of the top drawer of Anglo-Catholicism, while I had been tucked away at the back of a lower drawer marked 'Evangelical'. Some people declared it to be a wise move on his part, while a few thought he was doing a spot of ecclesiastical slumming! Whatever the reason I am glad he asked me to be part of a team ministry in such an interesting parish.

When working in Norwich before ordination I would often call into St Julian's Church on the way home, for a few moments of quiet contemplation. In those days, if anyone had told me that I would not only become a priest, but the Vicar of this very Church, I would have found it more than a little difficult to believe, but such are the ways of the Lord!

Coming to Parmentergate was a somewhat strange in my ministry. At the time of my move to Norwich I had been working in some rural parishes in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE THIRTY)



John Alanelli looking out his study window.
(Photo by courtesy of Rev Eastern Evening News)

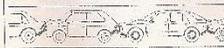


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services in four church buildings, but over the years we closed two of these. The most dramatic closure was that of St Peter's in King Street, for there we had the largest congregation and a greatly loved building. I believe Michael was absolutely right to suggest its closure, for he had a strong belief that St John's Timberhill was a more suitable and adaptable building for the needs of the future.

Much work was put in by the congregation itself before we could move from St Peter's to St John's. How many readers remember the nights we spent burning tar off the wood floor

15

blocks? We would return home like smoked kippers! Michael and myself had our photographs taken wielding spades, drills and wheelbarrows. I had some fine old blisters to prove it was not all stage managed.

On 5th June 1980, Corpus Christi, Bishop Maurice Wood came to rededicate the Church of St John's Timberhill and a new chapter in the history of the parish began. The following Sunday I had the honour of preaching the first staff sermon in the refurbished church, while Michael

officiated. Evensong was also held at Timberhill that day and Latham Bewley came to preach.

We all felt a little sad at leaving St Peter's, but we also felt that something good had been put in its place. Over the next few months and years many new faces came to share our worship and fellowship, with its delightful blend of earthy humour and deep spirituality, shared between young and old, priest and laity. Long may it continue.

FR BRIAN SHORT

The treasure we have found

A Sermon preached by Fr Richard Stanton, Parish Priest,
in St John the Baptist, Timberhill,
at the Solemn Mass on the Seventeenth Sunday of Ordinary Time:
26 July 2020

LECTIONS 1 Kings 3.5, 7-12: *Give your servant a heart to understand*
Romans 8.28-30: *True images of his Son*
St Matthew 13.44-52: *The kingdom of heaven is like treasure*

'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field.' (*St Matthew 13.44*)

Where were you twenty-one years ago today? Twenty-one years ago today I was in Brittany, and when we were taken along to the Parish Mass on Sunday we discovered an extraordinary *fiesta* underway. If today weren't a Sunday it would be the Feast of St Anne, the mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is the Patron Saint of Brittany and in traditional Breton culture a patron saint is honoured with a form of pilgrimage called a *pardon*.

The participants wore their best costumes, the town fraternities and corporate bodies congregated with banners, the parish guilds assembled as well and after the Mass had been sung in a mixture of French and Breton,

everyone piled into the churchyard for drink and a great festal meal served on long trestle tables (no questions asked of English strangers, everyone was just a friend of everyone), followed by dancing and wrestling. My predecessor-but-one was quite fond of continental customs, but I think even *he* never introduced post-Mass wrestling on the great feasts of the Church. It was all quite a heady mix for a nine year old and, on reflection, it probably has quite a lot to answer for!

This memory not only challenges us to think about whether we celebrate with authenticity and communal rejoicing the liturgical life of the Church in our own parishes – do we really try to make them vibrant and joyful celebrations for the whole community, a colourful synthesis of prayer and party, which some people tell us is what heaven might be like? But also, and more importantly, my memory of that St Anne's Day twenty-one years ago brings home some of the reality of what St Paul said in our epistle: the Lord was the 'eldest of many brothers' (*Romans 8.29*) or, as another translation puts it, 'firstborn within a large family.'

By this the Apostle doesn't mean Jesus had lots and lots of brothers and sisters, but that he, who was to be 'the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth' (*Revelation 1.5*), brought into being one family, a universal Church, and you and I who have been brought into that family through Holy Baptism are indeed his brothers and sisters, because we are adopted as children of his Father, whom he said is 'my Father and your Father, my God and your God' (*St John 20.17*). When Paul speaks of God having called, justified and glorified those in whom the image of his Son has been revealed, he is speaking not about lucky individuals, people plucked out from the fruit machine of life by the Almighty, but about a People, a redeemed family, his own possession and inheritance.

God's love for us wants only one thing: that we should be the image of his Son. That is the divine goal and purpose, and as over the last few Sundays we've been hearing in the epistle about the life and presence of the Holy Spirit in us, Paul now tells us why the Spirit should be dwelling, and active, and praying within us: to work out the transformation of ordinary men, women and children into a new humanity on whom the Father will look and see the image of his beloved Son. Because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives – a presence which comes as a gift, not something we can barter for or buy, but which we *can* cultivate and nurture – the Son is constantly and dynamically present within us. St Paul often expresses this divine indwelling

in powerful ways: 'It is not I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of Man who loved me and gave himself for me!' (*Galatians 2.20*). Or again, 'To me, to live is Christ' (*Philippians 1.21*).

The parables which the Lord tells in the Gospel today give models for all who wish to accept and embrace the Lord's call in its totality, for those who wish (in other words) to be Christians in more than name. They remind us that the kingdom of heaven is to be *desired* and *sought after* with the kind of urgency with which you might seek treasure, and *received* with the kind of joy with which you might find a pearl in a junk shop.



Television executives, wiser than the children of light, recognise this instinct in us when they make all those programmes like *Bargain Hunt* and *Cash in the Attic* and *Antiques Roadshow*: they know that we like a bargain, we want to be surprised and overjoyed at the discovery of the treasure which was in our midst all along.

But do we think like that about the faith and hope that is in us? Does it animate us and capture us in that way? People get excited on the TV (so I see, when I turn the lunchtime news on slightly early in time for the set to warm up...) when they find out that an ugly teapot someone gave them years ago was actually made by someone they've never heard of and might be worth a bit – but I suspect for many of us routine, and familiarity, and disappointment have dulled the joy with which we first received the Good News, have blunted the sharpness of our desire to (as Jesus put it) 'seek first the kingdom of God' (*St Matthew 6.33*). So we need to be alive and attentive to the true inner transformation which can be and is being worked out in us day by day.

To accept it and work with it is to say 'yes' to the radical demand which the Kingdom places on our lives. Jesus has emphasised to us again and

again over the past few weeks in the Sunday Gospels that seed does not always grow to a rich harvest if the ground is not receptive; not all the fish in the net when it's hauled ashore prove to be good and fresh. The Gospel invites us to a definitive renunciation of everything that is opposed to the work and purpose of the Kingdom and to a positive, active, conscious, willing, joyful, wholehearted acceptance. We cannot acquire it *accidentally*. The train will take us to the destination, but we must make the decision to get on it.

And so it is that we are encouraged to ask the Lord for the real treasure, as King Solomon did in the first lesson (*I Kings 3.5, 7-12*). I expect if you stretch your imaginations you can think of at least one or two of our modern politicians and leaders who would do well to imitate the prayer of Solomon as he comes to the throne in succession to David his father. He is almost touchingly conscious of his inadequacies and inexperience: 'I am a very young man, unskilled in leadership. Your servant finds himself in the midst of this people of yours that you have chosen' (*I Kings 3.7-8*). I know how he feels, every day! So Solomon does not ask for anything for his own advantage, but just for the skills he needs to rule his people well. And thus he gives us a model for the kind of desire we need to cultivate in order to 'seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness': not to ask for long life, or for riches, or even (sorry!) for the lives of our enemies, but for the gift of a discerning heart, a heart which is docile to the will and purpose of God, which patiently seeks him and desires to proclaim him.

For his first sermon as Rector of the great church of St Thomas, Fifth Avenue in the City of New York in 1972, the late Fr John Andrew took Solomon's request as his text: 'Give thy servant therefore an understanding heart' (*I Kings 3.9*). He reflected in that sermon on the need for a Christian priest (and, by extension, all of us) to ask the Lord for this gift above all else, because it opens the way to encouragement. He said – and I would echo these words for myself – 'I am a firm believer in encouragement. Because encouragement is the primary step in the way of reconciliation, which lies at the very heart of the Gospel of Christ: reconcile man with God his Creator: reconcile man with his brother, and so comes alive that magnificent truth written in deathless language by St Paul who personally knew the truth of it: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (*II Corinthians 5.19*).'

Ask, then, for the real treasure.

Amen.

WORSHIP WITH US

We warmly welcome you.

Services are at St John's unless otherwise stated.

Sundays 9am Low Mass (*St Julian's*)
 11am Solemn Mass and Sermon
 6pm Low Mass and Benediction

Weekdays

The Mass Monday 10am (*St Julian's*)
 Tuesday 12 noon
 Wednesday 10am (*St Julian's*)
 Thursday 12 noon
 Friday 5pm (*St Julian's*)
 Saturday 12 noon

The Rosary Monday 10.30am (*St Julian's*)

Morning and Evening Prayer

The Daily Office is currently said privately in church, before opening and after closing

The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession)

Physically-distanced Confessions may be heard at any time by arrangement with the Parish Priest

St John's and St Julian's are both **open daily** for prayer, quiet and visiting (except St John's which is currently closed on Mondays). The Blessed Sacrament is reserved on the High Altar in both churches for the Communion of the Sick and the devotion of the faithful.

We warmly welcome enquiries about **baptisms and weddings**.

We will be pleased to help you in any way we can.

www.stjohnstimberhill.org

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