

THE VOICE OF CATHOLIC ANGLICANS

CHRISTMAS 2023

'The Word became flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that he has from the Father, full of grace and truth.'

Even for Christians who deplore that fact that Christmas begins in October and ends on Boxing Day it is all too easy to be suborned by the tinsel and the baubles and everything that seems to constitute The Nativity of the Lord Jesus Christ today and miss the essential point of the Christmas Story; that the GLORY of God came to live among humankind!

What is the GLORY of God? Of all the books of the Old Testament the book of the prophet Isaiah is the most quoted by Jesus. In the 6th chapter we can read the vision that Isaiah received of God. The whole point of this vision is to impress upon those who read the prophet's words this single point: the absolute holiness of the true and living God. God in this vision is so far above humanity in His Holiness that Isaiah cried out, 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh Sabaoth.' Yet the Lord God is merciful and sent a seraph with a live coal in a pair of tongs with which the seraph touched the lips of Isaiah and so cleansed him. For that is what God in His Holiness is: the One who cleanses the people from their sin that they may approach the throne of God Most High. Other prophets were granted their own vision of God Most High, and each in their turn described the Infinite using finite words, and so their descriptions read strange to modern ears not used to the language of earlier times. However, all the prophets agree that God is a loving and forgiving God who lives in unapproachable light and wants nothing more than that His creation should know Him and so live His life of holiness; should become His Glory in the world. Yet the first Israel constantly ignored and rejected the message of the prophets; they became a people who served with their lips yet rejected in their hearts. And yet God Most High loves them.

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So it was that at the favourable time God sent His archangel to a virgin named Mary and announced that she above all other women had been chosen to be the birth-giver of the Glory of God into the world. Mary accepted her vocation so that the Holy Spirit overshadowed her and she conceived a son in her womb, and carried the Glory of God in her body as the child developed and grew to the time that he should be born. The familiar story of the Nativity is a truly remarkable telling of the entry of the Glory of God into the created world; the uncreated Son of God chooses out of love for the Father in the Holy Spirit to become as we are in all except sin, and further chooses to be born as each of us is, a helpless child who needs loving hands to care for him. And so was the Glory of God Most High brought forth into our world.

Artists throughout the centuries have depicted the great event of the Nativity of Our Lord, including the glass artist Christopher Webb in the Nativity window in the north aisle of the Church of St. Martin, Salisbury. Each has included the familiar players in this drama, the Angels, the Shepherds, the Holy Family. And each artist has tried to express something of the Glory of God as God has given them the means to do so. Each artist, rather like the prophets, has been able to express a part of what happened at the Lord's Nativity, never the whole, for the whole is of God and is beyond even the talents of the greatest of artists. And therefore we return to the vision of Isaiah who tried to express in finite terms the Infinite. Standing in the Temple the prophet was granted a vision of the Lord in His absolute holiness and in so seeing the prophet knew immediately and without demur his sinfulness, so that he cried out, 'Woe is me!' In his poem 'The Dream of Gerontius' St. John Henry Newman writes of the journey of the soul to heaven where, 'Quickened, by the glance of God' the soul too cries out, 'Take me away .... Take me away, That sooner I may rise, and go above, And see Him in truth of everlasting day.' To see God is to see His Glory and to know our sinfulness and need of forgiveness. And it is in the Child of Mary brought to birth in a stable in Bethlehem that the absolute holiness of God is made present

in our world that we may see the Glory of God and so seeing may want to become His glory in the world. And the world makes of this event and occasion what?

As we approach the Christmas season let us resolve to see in the manger the Glory of God made incarnate, the absolute holiness of God come to the world and as we gaze let us all cry out our need of forgiveness. Jesus said, 'Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.' He is the Kingdom of God come to earth, the kingdom where the absolute holiness of God shines out in unapproachable light, as depicted in the top of the nativity window, and now our way to that unapproachable light is given us, Jesus Christ, the Glory of God now come to earth and seen amongst all. This same Jesus needs loving hands to care for Him even today. As we, his baptised sisters and brothers use loving hands to care for those who need help so is the Glory of God seen to be alive and active, undiminished and shining brightly as when first the angels broke forth from heaven to proclaim His Birth and as shepherds came to worship.



#### together contact details

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## A Different Family Christmas

It's safe to say that all families have their own Christmas traditions. The way that Christmas day is celebrated will vary from house to house, and each family's Christmas celebrations, while different will have many similaries about them. There will be meetings of parents, siblings, children, grandchildren, friends and neighbours as we celebrate once more the birth of the Saviour. At some point in the day this celebration will lead us to our parish church. There we will hear one of the joyful Christmas gospels telling us of "how Jesus Christ came to be born" (Vigil Mass), of a census, a journey and a manger (Midnight Mass), of the shepherds (Dawn Mass) or John's marvellous theological prose, declaring that "The Word was made flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory" (Mass during the day).



While we all enjoy a surfeit of food and drink and the usual diet of repeats on the television, how many of us consider what Christmas day is like for those who have left worldly things behind? Each Community of monks, nuns and friars, all have their own Christmas celebrations. Do they differ to what my family does each year?

For the Sisters of the Community of the Holy Cross at Costock, the first hint of the coming celebration occurs a few days before December 25th, when the Crib scene and a Christmas tree appears in the entrance hall of the Convent. The figures of Mary and Joseph arrive, but the manger is empty for the moment (unless one of the convent's cats decides that it looks like a nice place for a nap).

On Christmas eve, at Vespers (Evening Prayer) the liturgical season of Christmas begins. The antiphons to the Psalms, which throughout Advent have been speaking of our hope of redemption, now speak of the coming of the King of kings and Prince of Peace. At the end of Vespers, the Sisters gather at the Crib and the Sisters sing a carol. Later that evening, the Sisters anticipate Matins of Christmas Day, before saying Compline and going to

Christmas Day dawns and the regular timetable of the convent begins unchanged. The Sisters rise at 5am and spend time in quiet prayer and reading before saying Lauds. Mother Superior then places the Christ-child in the manger (once any cats have been evicted). Breakfast is taken at 8.00am and, as this is a special feast day, there is toast (only on Solemnities and Feast days in the convent).

After the Sisters have said the Office of Terce (The Third Hour), the Mass of Christmas Day is celebrated by the Community's Warden or, if he is not able to be there, by another of the regular celebrants. The Eucharist having been celebrated, the business of preparing the Christmas dinner begins. This is where the convent's kitchen begins to look like many others: a turkey is in the oven, vegetables and all the trimmings are prepared. Sprouts are compulsory – too few sprouts on the convent's Christmas dinner table would go down in the Community's history. Not even COVID could prevent there being enough sprouts for Christmas dinner! One Sister will make her annual lament that she is the only one in Community who likes Christmas pudding. In the convent, Christmas Day's pudding is warm homemade mince pies!

When dinner is almost ready to serve, it is time to pray the next Hour of the Divine Office. The Sisters make their way to chapel to pray Sext (Office of the Sixth Hour), then they all gather in the refectory for dinner. With Christmas Day being a liturgical Solemnity, the usual silence of the refectory during meals is broken and the Sisters are allowed to talk during their meal. There are Christmas crackers, with the customary bad jokes and party hats, though paper crowns don't always sit very easily on top of a veil! On this most special feast, there is usually a glass of wine for those who would like a glass or two (but not more - Saint Benedict is very strict about this in his Rule, written around 530AD:

"The superior must take great care lest excess or drunkenness creep in. We read that monks should not drink wine at all, but since the monks of our day cannot be convinced of this, let

us at least agree to drink moderately, and not to the point of excess, for wine makes even wise men go astray." (cf RB 40:5-6)

At the end of dinner, it's back to chapel to pray the Office of None (The Ninth Hour) after which is the practical task of clearing the dinner things away and washing up. Perhaps then there is time for a little rest before gathering in the Common Room by 3pm in order to watch the King's annual broadcast.

Vespers is said a little earlier than usual on Christmas Day, at around 4pm, so that the Sisters (and cats) have a longer me to spend together in recreation. This is when Rev'd Mother and her Sisters take the opportunity to open any Christmas gifts which have been given to the Community. These are gifts which have been received from the Sisters' families and friends. The Sisters do not send cards to one another, nor do they exchange gifts with one another. Saint Benedict is, again, very

"In no circumstances is a monk allowed, unless the abbot says he may, to exchange letters, blessed tokens or small gifts of any kind, with his parents or anyone else, or with a fellow monk. He must not presume to accept gifts sent him even by his parents without previously telling the abbot. If the abbot orders acceptance, he still has the power to give the gift to whom he will; and the brother for whom it was originally sent must not be distressed, lest occasion be given to the devil." (RB 54: 1-4)

Always keen to care for God's creation, the Sisters are careful to unwrap gift's in such a way that the wrapping paper might be reused. Gifts are unwrapped very carefully and the wrapping paper folded before being put to one side. It is usual, though, that however carefully the Sisters may be in order to save this wrapping paper, little paws may decide otherwise. If a cat decides that she is going to play with that nice wrapping paper, there's nothing more that can be done about it, as it will be in shreds in seconds: a good practical example of what Saint Benedict tries to teach us about monks and personal possessions!

After a full day of liturgy and celebration for the Nativity of the Lord, the day comes to an end, as usual, in chapel. A corporate me of silent prayer is followed by Compline, the final Office of the day. "Save us, O Lord, while waking, and guard us while sleeping; that awake we may watch with Christ, and asleep may rest in peace." The Sisters retire to their cells, to sleep before waking again the following morning at 5am to celebrate Saint Stephen's Day.











# (Doing) Time with God

I am now into my 11th year as the Anglican Chaplain of a Category B prison, and no one is more surprised than me that I have been here for that long. Longer in fact than some of the prisoners.

I remember my reaction on my first day of having accepted and started the role and the sound of the prison gates slamming behind me as I made my way to the Chaplaincy department "O my God I thought what have I let myself in for" and the answer to that I now know is that my role here is the most profound, humbling, and fulfilling experience of my life. Daily I say to myself "There but for the grace of God go I.

Like most people my impressions of prison, prison life and criminals were formed by the media and TV dramas and films and whilst in all these things there is an element of truth, the reality is very much more complex.

Yes, sadly, there are people who have done terrible things and some who should be and are locked away for a long time because they are a danger both to themselves and to society.

But for the most part I deal with people who are broken, who have lost their way and who despite all the help and advice that they have been given by the various agencies and the help and advice they receive whilst "doing time" still struggle to pull themselves up out of the lives and situations that they have gotten themselves involved in.

There are many reasons for people being in custody, but a very high proportion is due to addiction to drugs or alcohol which they initially began to use to escape from the reality of their lives, their problems or whatever the reason was that drove them to turn to drink and or drugs in the first place and which they then developed a serious addiction to.

Addiction is costly, and not only in monetary terms from a financial point of view they eventually are unable to continue to afford, their habit and invariably their addiction leads to the loss of jobs which in turn leads to loss of income, resulting in nonpayment of rent or mortgage which leads to loss of their homes, lifestyle, friends and family and then they turn to a life of crime in order to finance their habit and there begins the downward spiral.

Crime brings them to prison and into contact with the Chaplaincy team. A Chaplain will see them within 24 hours of their arrival. This may not be a Chaplain of their own faith group if the have one because the first encounter is mainly a welfare check and is not specifically from a religious point of view and as a matter of interest most of the prison population claim to have no religious belief or religious affiliation.



It may surprise you to know that I would estimate about 10% of the work that I do as a priest is faith based. For the most part I like my colleagues 90% of the time I am a social worker, a counsellor, a family liaison worker, and everything else in between. The proclamation of the Gospel apart from on Sundays and in Bible study lessons is done as part of my daily interaction with the prisoners and through showing them that someone is not judging them but is genuinely interested in them and the reasons behind them being here. It is in being someone who will listen and understand and offer where possible practical help and solutions to their problems in their navigating the prison system.

From this hopefully they see a positive role model, a better way of life and that through celebrating the goodness of life that there is a better way for everyone and that everyone can cultivate within themselves a sense of responsibility which in turn contributes to the common good of society.

It is a daunting and uphill struggle at times and the successes can be few and far between but when they do happen, and we never see that person again in prison or when months and years later they get in touch and tell us how well they are doing then we know that we do truly make a difference albeit one step at a time.

I was tempted to entitle this piece as "Faith on a Shoestring" because that's how certainly our Chaplaincy runs in terms of resources. I am reminded of a dear priest friend of mine who was in a poorish parish, and he used to say to everyone "we are the poorest parish in the country if not in the world" He was clearly never a prison chaplain let me tell you that's poverty.

Within the prison service we get the basics, hosts wine candles as for anything else then you have to learn to be a great Begger and borrower (but not thief).

It is only though the generosity of charitable organizations that we are able to provide Bibles, prayer books and all of the things that most churches would take for granted as part of their worship and their Christian life and we have to say a huge thanks to all of those charities and people who unstintingly support us without them we and the prisoners would be lost and certainly their Christian experience would be less rich.

On that note I really must mention and say a huge thank you for the recent and amazing generosity of CBS. They have donated a full set of chasubles in the full range of liturgical colours to us, which both myself and my Roman Catholic colleague have the great privilege of benefitted from. Certainly, a great pleasure to wear, compared to the moth-eaten ones we had before which after wearing we had to take a shower. I shouldn't really be so disparaging, because at some point in the distant past some generous soul donated those in love, but now they can be laid to rest.

So please keep us in your prayers over this Christmas period and count your blessings and every day remind yourself "There but for the grace of God go I.

Father Patrick Gillon Anglican Chaplain



## "HE WHO SINGS PRAYS TWICE"

St Augustine of Hippo is reputed to have said, "He who sings prays twice", although some scholars dispute he ever said that. What is certain is that singing is a method of worship appointed by God, for since the beginning of creation that ability to sing was in our hearts. A late medieval German Benedictine Abbot, Johannesburg Trithemius portrayed Raphael – traditionally the Archangel in charge of healing – presiding over the popularisation of music. In our own day and in our own land dozens of organisations are harnessing the healing power of music: charities like Music in Hospital, which employs professional musicians to sing and play for people who are sick; Tenovus, the cancer



charity, which has formed choirs for people who have suffered or are still suffering from cancer; the Forget-Me-Not Choir, for people living with dementia; and professional Music Therapists, who use music in one-to-one sessions to treat a wide range of mental as well as physical illness. The music psychologist, Dr Nigel Marshall says, "Music is becoming an increasingly important part of healthcare and there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that taking part in, or experiencing music can have significant benefits on our overall level of wellbeing".

It is not surprising that music has this healing effect it is in many ways a window into heaven. May I suggest it brings us closer to God. How appropriate then in this season when we celebrate God becoming incarnate, we turn to music to mark it.

#### **CHOIR CHURCH**

Music can also be a source of outreach and mission for the church, as well as being a way of sharing about teamwork and citizenship.

This Christmas we at Holy Trinity, Tarleton will mark the 1st Anniversary of our Choir Church.

We have been one of the pilots for the launch of this church plant in Blackburn Diocese. The Rt Revd Phillip North CMP, Bishop of Blackburn has been a real driver behind this initiative, "This is a passion project for me as it's no secret that I came to faith through the choral tradition myself. Music can lift the soul and inspire people in so many ways".

Choir Church is a new model of worshipping based around a children's choir and the Mass. It offers worship, musical excellence, and spiritual formation designed to build and grow congregation. The Choir sing high quality music at a regular Mass to which the choristers invite their families, teachers and friends. Another aspect of Choir Church is Social Justice. The Choristers choose a campaign to enable them to fulfil Jesus' command to challenge injustice. The Choristers are collecting monies to purchase music and instruments for a school in Uganda. We average 15 in the after-school club on Friday evenings and our Masses are attended by around 40 people.

One Sunday a term the Choristers join the Parish Church Choir to sing in the main Sunday Morning Mass. They joined us for Palm Sunday, after leading the donkey on a walk around the outside of church.



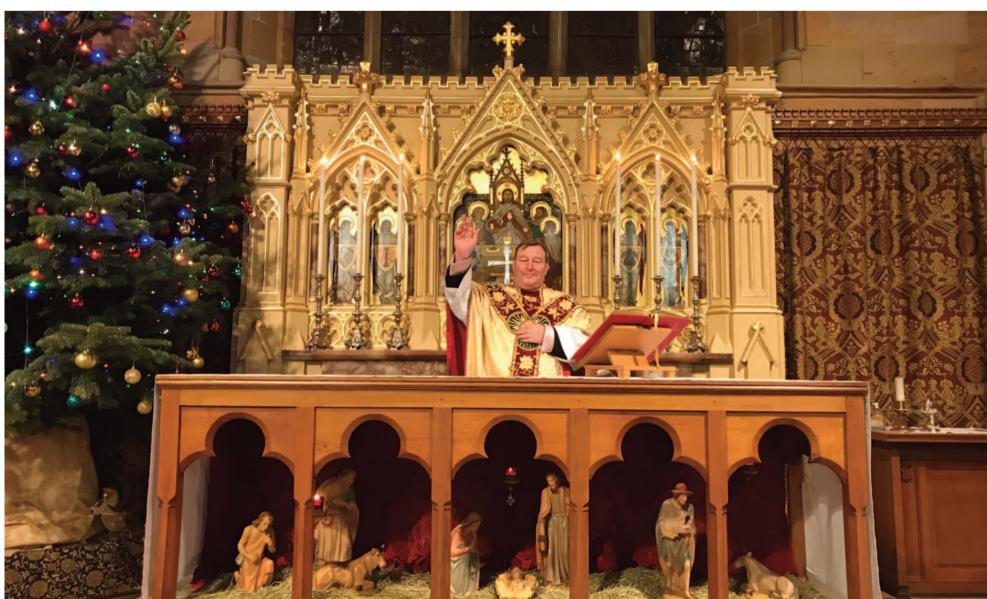
In addition to the Choristers, all 200 pupils in Holy Trinity CE School have (30 minutes) 1 lesson a week learning music and the theology behind the words of the anthems/songs learnt. All the strands of Choir Church have a resonance with the Anglo-Catholic practices of the Priests who founded this movement around a century ago. The revival of the Church of England in the nineteenth century was led by parishes inspired by the Oxford movement who used choral music as a tool of mission. Its beauty moved hearts to heaven and its words taught the faith and this approach was used with success in working class parishes.

"Praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals."

Our Carol Services at Holy Trinity will not only be led by the enhanced music skills of all the pupils at Holy Trinity CE School, but we will draw on the local tradition of having Carols played by our local Silver Band.

#### Fr Mark Soady

If you would like to learn more about Choir Church visit their website: www.choirchurch.com





# Glory in the highest



The beginning of June this year marked an important next stage in our lives. Change was in the air as I approached the ten-year mark as the parish priest of two once rural parishes in Lancashire. The pandemic had taken its toll on patterns of church attendance and numbers dedicating their Sunday mornings to worship despite our active attempts at engagement from July 2020. In the autumn of 2022 I was able to take a sabbatical, first of all walking the Camino Ingles and then spending three weeks with the Dean of Bloemfontein Cathedral in the Diocese of the Free State, South Africa. Returning refreshed in December I was only too aware that so many priests move on after a period of reflection.

Seven months later we relocated to a threestorey town house within the Cathedral Close in Liverpool: this was true city living with the parish church of St Agnes & St Pancras just less than two miles away on the edge of a large municipal park in the densely packed urban neighbourhood of Toxteth Park. The church is known in architectural circles as Liverpool's noblest Victorian church but the glory days appear to be a distant memory: the listed edifice with an impressive but semi derelict vicarage and parish hall dominate the history of the parish but limit its potential for future growth; our wonderful choir once boasted the

likes of Richard Stilgoe amongst its members but sadly has dwindled to half a dozen very faithful and talented people. The fabric condition of the church needs some immediate attention. A long three year interregnum has left one Sunday mass and very limited community engagement outside the church walls.

Entering the church for the first time it is not difficult to behold his glory in the history and grandeur of man-made things but has God left us to beat an orderly retreat and lock the door when I eventually leave? The structural reorganisation at Deanery and Parish level proposed in the Liverpool Diocese poses challenges for catholic identity and the right to make representation for alternative episcopal oversight; this will require careful handling in order to maintain good relations with key personnel as I join a new Diocese. After all, for traditional catholics in particular we have to work harder to engage and be understood in the wider church as we make known Jesus Christ to the community within our tradition and context.

Christmas seemed a long time away as we moved to Toxteth Park but I also knew that to reveal God's Glory would need considerable amount of effort and time sent in prayer - so six months was a good bedding in period. This Christmastide will be wonderful but would not have been possible in the way we anticipate had I arrived in November. At my institution it was clear the sound system would only be tolerated by the existing committed congregation and first time visitors would not come back if they could not hear what was being said or sung. An immediate generous grant from Church Union Trusts and St John's Guild enabled us to make a £14k upgrade to our existing system. This will allow us to eventually stream masses so that those outside the church can 'taste and see' the glory of God

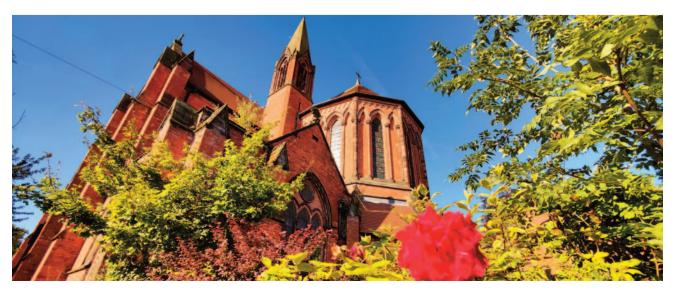
The first statement to the community was to combine our ancient practices with a touch of 21st century reality: as I opened the church door, actually physically swinging open the huge, heavy Victorian oak door, and rang the Angelus bell before the daily office each morning and evening I was careful to join the WhatsApp Group for the adjoining road and posted a 'Hello, I'm here' message explaining

this is why the bell is heard ringing twice each day. People have wondered in to church during the office as a result. As the refuse bins are put out, the collectors have commented in typical Liverpool fashion 'Good to see the church open again mate - when's the services?'.

At the other side of the main road, opposite the church a Church of England High School has had no contact with the parish for over a decade; indeed I was told the stance by Society priests would prevent any engagement with this once girls-only High School. I had to be persistent in my calls for all of two weeks, but then found the Senior Leadership Team desperately wanted to make contact with their local church. Before the end of the school year I had rewritten their leaver's eucharist, celebrated twice, and set up a plans for the autumn term involving the RE and music departments.

In the lead up to Christmas it has been clear that our church musicians would be hard stretched to deliver an Advent Carol Service along with all the other events. As a result, this important day will be led by the High School with many parents and staff having the opportunity to see the inside of our marvellous building for the first time during the season of the incarnation. The RE department will be bringing Year 10 students to church this month, whilst I am already 'booked' to spend some time with that year group to discuss eucharistic theology. Indeed the Head of RE told me that during registration the class heard the morning Angelus bell from church and this led to a discussion about the Christian commitment to prayer.

Communication and identity need never to be a barrier for traditionalists as long as we focus on the positive benefits to the whole church of our spirituality; it is so easy to alienate and break down but the welcome that I have received in Liverpool from the most unexpected quarters, across all traditions in the Church of England has shown me that the desire to support and encourage is stronger than anything else. We are looking forward to 2024, the St Agnes Patronal Festival in January and a renewed music department which will be the springboard for our outreach and mission with Father Andrew Brown schools.



# Father Aidan Bartlett reflects on Christmas in the parish and at home with his family

As I get older, I realise that I am getting sick of the idea that "Christmas is a time for family", as if the rest of the year is devoted to avoiding relatives at all costs. That's not to take anything away from what a special time the festivities around the Lord's Nativity can be, especially for those families who have young children. But more than anything, Christmas is a time for us to give thanks to God for all that he has done for us, for that we are, and all that we have. And yes, that's a reminder for me that we should include our families - especially those relatives we are separated from at this special time of year. The Holy Family were rather alone at the beginning of their time together - that precious, glorious family unit without the support that Mary had rushed to give to Elizabeth.

One of the things a northern hemisphere Christmas can prove to us is that even the best laid plans are helpless in the face of weather, old heating systems or boiler breakdowns. No matter how much people want to celebrate Christmas, it's hard to contemplate the glory of the newborn King when you're sat in a church so cold that you can see your breath. Growing up, I remember being relieved that we could walk very quickly to church rather than driving on roads covered in ice and snow. Last year, the walk was much longer, but the joy of the gathered community for carols, Midnight Mass and Christmas Day was just as strong, even in the face of a church building showing a bit of wear and tear around the edges. Inner London is such a strange place to be around Christmas, but we remember that not everyone has escaped to the country to see family and friends. Hoxton was quieter than normal, but those who had stayed in town enjoyed a proper East End Christmas.

I suppose that some priests might go through similar thoughts to me when it comes to preaching over Christmas. Pitching a sermon that can nourish the faithful parishioner who's been in your parish for longer than you've been alive is what we face week to week. But at the big festivals, we also have to think about the casual

churchgoer, trying to rekindle some sense of faith by coming once more to hear the Christian story. Even some of my hardened parishioners struggle when I remind them that the child is born with the shadow of the cross already over his manger. How on earth does that land with those who are only just coming back to church? Or those who know little about the faith, aside from the Sunday School stories they were brought up with? Or those who know what Christmas is, but have no idea about Easter? But we also can't dumb down what we're called to preach – Christ crucified as St Paul reminds us. Holy Trinity is surrounded by houses and the chances of us getting occasional visitors at Christmas is very high. I hope that we

can offer something for them as well as for the usual congregation.

Last Christmas we were thrilled to be able to welcome our family from Australia, so our daughter was able to spend time with her cousin, who's just 6 weeks older than her. It was amazing to be at Heathrow to pick them up a few days before Christmas and to consider the other passengers who were arriving home for Christmas, or who were on their way to see loved ones elsewhere. It was a bit like those scenes in Love Actually. And yet it's hard not to consider those two very different journeys taken by the Holy Family - first of all to Bethlehem, full of hope and anticipation, and then the flight to Egypt, with the joy of a new baby bound up in the terror of fleeing the persecution ordered by Herod. Being a relatively new Dad, I was really looking forward to our daughter playing in the snow for the first time - she was too small the year before. And yet you find yourself keeping a closer eye on her with trick underfoot conditions, and making sure she keeps her hat and gloves on in the cold weather. All babies are immensely precious, but you do wonder how Our Lady coped with the pressure of raising a child who was even more special. What great strength she had; what great grace.



Going back to the best laid plans being wrecked, I bet most parents understand what it is to prepare great gifts and thoughtfully considered presents for a young child, only to realise that they're only interested in the wrapping paper and the numerous boxes that toys and books come in. Godparents are especially keen to ask what children might want for Christmas, and it's hard to tell them that literally anything will do, as the child is more likely to be much more interested in tomorrow's colourful recycling. As a priest, I wonder sometimes if the message the church is trying to get across isn't getting across because of the extra window dressing. Not that the liturgy shouldn't be as beautiful as possible; God deserves nothing but the best when it comes to

Our daughter has already visited some Christmas shops (it's October, after all) and is fascinated by the lights and baubles. Whenever we get cynical about Christmas, it's often the wonder and sheer joy of children at this time of year that pulls us back to the Manger. And that in turn pulls us further into the mystery of the Incarnation, and everything that flows from that pivotal moment in our salvation history. And in Hoxton this year, we'll be remembering those we've lost this year, and giving thanks for the hope that newborns and newly baptised members of the church give us. It's a joy to serve there at any time of year – but especially this season!



#### The Parish of Swinton & **Pendlebury, Manchester**

**Christmas Eve** 

**Sunday Worship at usual times until:** 4pm Christingle Vigil Mass at Saint Peter's (M27 OWA). 7.30pm Sung Mass of the Vigil & Blessing of the Crib at Saint Augustine's (M27 8UX). 11.30pm Midnight Mass & Blessing of the Crib at All Saints' (M27 9UG) & at Saint Peter's

**Christmas Day** 

8am Mass of the Dawn at Saint Peter's Sung Mass of Christmas Day with Carols at All Saints' at 9.30am, Saint Augustine's at 10am,

& Saint Peter's at 10.30am.

**December 26th** 

11am Solemn Mass for Saint Stephen's Day, followed by refreshments at Saint Peter's.

For details of carol services, other services, etc.

Fr Jeremy Sheehy 0161 794 1578 Parish Office 0161 727 8175 paroffsandp@btconnect.com **Further information at our** entries on achurchnearyou.

#### ST GEORGE'S **PRESTON**

#### **CHRISTMAS**

A church of The Society www.sgp.org.uk or www.facebook/stgeorgethemartyrpreston **Wednesday 21st DECEMBER** 6.30pm Carols by Candlelight

**Christmas Eve** 

11.00pm Midnight Mass **Christmas Day** 

10.30am Mass of the Day

**Parish Priest:** 

Fr David Craven SSC 01772 755125

dacraven@hotmail.com

#### **The Parish Church of** St Aidan Ryhope Road, Grangetown

#### **Sunderland SR2 9RS Christmas Eve**

10:00am Parish Mass (4th Advent) 6.00pm Christmas Carol Service 11.30pm Midnight Mass **Christmas Day** 

10.00am Parish Mass

6.00pm Benediction by candlelight 26th December St. Stephen 9.30am Parish Mass

27th December St John the **Evangelist** 

9.30am Parish Mass Sunday 31st - The Holy Family 10.00am Parish Mass **New Years Day - Mary Mother of God** 

> 12.00pm Parish Mass Fr David Raine SSC Tel: 0191 5143485 farvad@sky.com

#### **CHRISTMAS AT** ST. HELEN'S PARISH CHURCH **West Auckland and** St. Helen Auckland

#### Saturday 16th December

6.00pm Christmas Concert Music Sacred and Secular with Ferryhill Town Brass Band

Sunday 24th December (Advent 4) 10.00 am Parish Mass

Christmas Eve 4.00 pm Family Service and Christingle 11.30 pm Midnight Mass by Candlelight

**Christmas Day** 9.30am Family Mass Daily Mass during the Octave of Christmas at 10am

Sunday 31st December ( Holy Family) 10.00 am The Parish Mass

Monday 1st January 2024 (Mary Mother of God) 10.00am Holy Mass

**Sunday 7th January 2024** (Epiphany of the Lord) 10.00am Procession of the King and Solemn Mass

followed by the Parish Epiphany Lunch

The Revd. Canon Robert McTeer SSC 01388 604152

www.sthelenschurch.co.uk

#### St Gabriel's, **Warwick Square**

www.stgabrielspimlico.com

**CHRISTMAS SERVICES Tuesday, 12th December** 7 p.m. Service of Nine Lessons &

**Carols by candlelight** with members of the Pimlico Musical Foundation Choirs & local schools

Thursday, 14th December 7 p.m. Service of Nine Lessons & Carols by candlelight

with Brass Quintet **Christmas Eve** 

4 p.m.Crib Service for all the family with members of the Pimlico Musical **Foundation Choirs** 

11.30 p.m. Midnight Mass & blessing of the crib **Christmas Day** 

8 a.m. Holy Communion 10.30 a.m. Sung Mass All services are livestreamed except the crib service.

For further details please contact Fr Owen Higgs: 020 7834 7520 or via the website

#### St Peter and St Leonard, **Horbury (WF4 6AS)**

3rd December: 10.30am Sung Mass with Confirmations: 5pm Advent Procession

8th December: 7pm Sung Mass for the Immaculate Conception - Guest Preacher: Fr Ian McCormack SSC

17th December: 10.30am Sung Mass with Blessing of Bambinelli; 6pm Big Christmas Sing-along followed by sherry and nibbles

23rd December: 7am Rorate Mass followed by Breakfast

24th December, Christmas Eve: 5pm Christingle; 11.30pm Midnight Mass with Blessing of Crib

25th December, Christmas Day: 8am Said Mass; 10.30am Sung Mass with Blessing of Presents

31st December, Holy Family: 10.30am

Sung Mass 1st January, Mary, Mother of God:

#### 12noon Sung Mass St John, Horbury Bridge (WF4 5NU)

17th December: 9am Sung Mass with Blessing of Bambinelli; 2pm Toddler Nativity Service

**25th December, Christmas Day:** 9am Sung Mass with Blessing of Crib

27th December, St John, Patron: 12noon Sung Mass followed by lunch -

Guest Preacher: Fr Adam Gaunt SSC

31st December, Holy Family: 9am Sung Mass

Follow us on Facebook or Twitter @horburychurch or find us at horburychurch.com

#### S. CHAD, **TOLLER LANE.** BRADFORD

24th December

10.45 am Mass of Advent 4

**Christmass Eve** 

11.30 pm Midnight Mass

**Christmass Day** 

10.45 am Mattins with carols followed by mince pies and sherry 4 pm Evening Prayer at the Crib

#### **SEAHAM COUNTY DURHAM**

Parish of the Society in the Episcopal Care of the Bishop of Beverley S John Seaham Harbour (SJ) SR7 7SA with All Saints Deneside (AS) & S Mary's Seaham (SM):

**CHRISTMAS 2023** 

24th December: Advent 4:

9.30am Solemn Mass (AS) 11.00

am Solemn Mass (SJ)

Christmas Eve: 7.00pm Vigil Mass

by candlelight (SM) & 11.30 pm Solemn Mass of Midnight (SJ)

**Christmas Day: 9.30am** 

Solemn Mass of the Dawn (AS) 11.00am Solemn Mass of the Day (SJ)

Confessions by arrangement Priests: Fr Paul Kennedy SSC: 0191-3665496 Fr Chris Collins: 0191-5817186 http://www.stjohns-seaham.org.uk

#### St.Dunstan. Cranford, West London.

The nearest Parish of The Society to Heathrow Airport.

Christmas Eve 11.30pm First Mass of Christmas

**Christmas Day 10.30am** Mass of the Day

St Dunstan's is famous for its Martin Travers furnishings

Rector: Fr.Michael Gill SSC 020 8897 8836 www.saintdunstan.org.uk

#### **Church of The Annunciation.** Chislehurst

**Christmas Eve** 

4.00pm Family Crib Service, 11.30pm Solemn Mass of Midnight.

#### **Christmas Day**

8.00am Low Mass of the Dawn, 10.00am Sung Mass of the Day.

Contact: 020 8467 3606 unciation.chislehurst@gmail.com and on Facebook

#### St Luke the **Evangelist Virginia** Rd GILLINGHAM Kent **ME7 1JA.**

#### **Christmass Eve**

Crib Service for the excited of ALL AGES! - 5pm MIDNIGHT MASS

& Blessing of the Crib - 11pm

#### **CHRISTMASS DAY**

Parish Mass & visit to the Crib - 10.30am. Evening Prayer & Benediction at the Crib - 5pm

#### **Daily Mass during the Octave of** Christmass- 10am each day

Sunday, December 31st Parish Mass & Visit to the Crib - 10.30am Evening Prayer & Benediction at the

#### Crib - 5pm **EPIPHANY SUNDAY, Jan 7th**

Procession of Kings & Parish Mass - 10.30am Evening Prayer & Benediction at the

Crib - 5pm For further information Fr Garry Jenkins tel 01634-580433 **Church website- St Luke's** 

#### St.Ambrose, Westbourne, **Bournemouth**

Gillingham www.achurchnearyou

**Christmas Eve** 11.30pm Midnight Mass. **Christmas Day** 

10am Sung Mass 5:30pm Evening Prayer from the Breviary

#### 26th-30th December 8:45am Said Mass

5:30pm Evening Prayer

Sunday 31st December 8:00am Said Mass

5:30pm Evening Prayer Fr.Adrian Pearce. 01 202 911569.

e-mail - afpear2@gmail.com Parish Office 01 202 766772.

#### St Luke's, Jersey

#### Sun 17 Dec

1600 Nine Lessons and Carols by Candlelight

#### **Christmas Eve**

1000 Parish Mass 1600 Christingle Service 2330 Midnight Mass

**Christmas Day** 1000 Family Mass

Fr Nick Barry SSC 01534 851445 www.stlukesjersey.com

#### **College of Readers**

Patron Bishop Norman of Richborough

Is your role in your church one of these?



- + Hold a Bishop's licence as a Licensed (Lay) Reader
- ◆ A Reader with PTO
- ♠ A Reader in training

If it is, we would love to hear from you.

#### Who are we?

We also have one of those roles in our own church.

We are to be found throughout England, in the parishes that uphold the traditional understanding of the apostolic succession of the order of Bishop, Priest and Deacon.

If you want to find out more detail, head to our website:

www.college-of-readers.org.uk

Or contact

Mary Snape (Registrar) mary@college-of-readers.org.uk

Robin Whitehouse (Chairman) robin.wh@college-of-readers.org.uk

Annual membership costs £15.00 per person

#### St Anselm's, Hatch End, Pinner HA5 4JL

#### **Christmas Eve**

Vigil Mass of Christmas - 6.00pm

#### **Christmas Day**

Midnight Mass (said) - 11.30pm Said Mass - 8.00am Parish Mass (sung with carols) - 10.00am

For more details and all other services and events see: stanselmshatchend.org.uk

#### S. Augustine Kilburn

The Cathedral of North London

NW6 5XD **Advent Sunday (3rd** 

**December**)

6pm Advent Carol Service **Advent III (18th December)** 6.00pm Festival of Lessons & Carols

**Christmas Eve** 

5.00 pm Crib Service 8pm Vigil (Midnight) Mass of Christmas **Christmas Day** 

For Octave masses and further details: www.staugustine.london

10.30am Solemn Mass of the Nativity

### **St.Augustine** of **Hippo** Grimsby

**Christmas Eve** 10am Parish Mass 11.30pm Midnight Mass.

Contact telephone number

07941894822

#### St George, **Bickley BR1 2BE**

(Close to both Bickley and Chislehurst stations)

#### **Thursday 21st December** 8pm Nine Lessons & Carols

**Christmas Eve** 3.30pm Crib Service 11.30pm Midnight Mass

**Christmas Dav** 10.30 Sung Mass

Parish Priest: **Fr Henry Everett** 020-8295 6411

#### St Thomas of Canterbury, **Brentwood**

A large vibrant congregation with an excellent musical tradition welcomes you to share our Advent and Christmas

#### **Advent Carol Service**

18.00 Sunday 3rd December **Nine Lessons and Carols** 

18.00 Sunday 17th December **Christmas Eve** 

16.00 Christingle Service 18.00 Christingle Service with the

Orchestra of St Thomas 23.30 Midnight Mass **Christmas Day** 08.00 Said Mass of the Dawn

Much of our worship is live streamed via our Facebook page

10.00 Sung Mass of the Day

For more information visit our website

www.st-thomas.org.uk **Contact us via email** brentwood.st.thomas.martyr@gmail.com

or phone 01277 201094

#### **Christmas in Walsingham**

4.30pm Crib Service 6.30pm Solemn Vigil Mass 11.30pm Solemn Mass of Midnight &

Parish Church Shrine Church Parish Church

Shrine Church

#### **Christmas Day**

8.30am Low Mass of the Dawn Solemn Mass of the Day 11.00am

> Fr Harri Williams SSC Fr Kevin Smith SSC

#### **Christmas Eve**

Blessing of the Crib

Parish Church

www.walsinghamparishes.org.uk www.walsinghamanglican.org.uk

## And we beheld his glory

The bags were packed and the cars ready. It was a bright sunny October morning, not like it had been just a day or so before where cloudy wet weather had set in. Just 24 hours ago we had all packed jumpers and raincoats. But today was a blue sky and a warm breeze. But what do we expect, this is England!

After a short Pilgrim's Prayer, we left the Midlands with joyful anticipation. We took the A14 and A47 route to England's Nazareth, the Shrine of our Lady of Walsingham and arrived safely in mid-afternoon. Almost as soon as we walked through the Brandie Gate arches, we all felt a change in our step. So many commented to me how, when they are at the Shrine, they immediately feel the peace of God flowing over them. For some reason it had become so obvious that we were in a holy place; a special place; a place of divine accord and tranquillity. I suppose it was just then, that our group first beheld His glory.



For me and for many hundreds of thousands of others, the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham is quite a unique site. It is clearly a sacred place in the ancient county of Norfolk, situated at the centre of the tiny and sleepy village of Little Walsingham. This community has an extraordinary feel about it. While there, its radiating peace dominates over all other thoughts and emotions. Everyone speaks as they pass, and they seem to do so in a loving context and with a generous smile. How different this is to the crowded environment of the busy towns of Nuneaton and Coventry from which we came. Just about everyone is smiling and showing contentedness, even those coming with huge problems of health and sickness, disability, and the need for inner change. I'm sure it ranks as one of the happiest places in the UK.

As the pilgrims made their way to their accommodation, there seemed an air of excitement, a little like going on holiday and your first entry into your room. But that's where the similarity ends. The pilgrimage rooms are simply furnished; there is little to distract you and, thank the Lord, there is no television! The fresh air outside my accommodation window is accompanied by the deep aroma of newly fallen autumn leaves. The sound of the angelus bell gently tolling at 6pm carefully breaks the serenity of the silence.

This is a place of peaceful retreat. This feeling of calm amongst the hustle and bustle of our busy urban lives and its constant media contact, is so refreshing and truly calming. Would you believe it, the restaurant is the noisiest place after 6pm

but we find that's because the whole place was filled with happy pilgrims filling their stomachs with deliciously good food.

Our group of pilgrims assembled in the shrine as we took part in the 'First visit to the Holy House' and the inaugural mass. During our four-day stay, we all enjoyed exploring not just the chapels in the venue, but the Holy Scriptures too. We did this via tranquil meditations, which it seemed everyone loved. Some said afterwards that they were so relaxed that they were virtually dreaming their way through the Gospel story. This technique revealed so much more to them than they had first heard this piece of scripture. I led the group through a series of physical muscle relaxing techniques that I pinched from Zen Buddhism. They did all this while seated and with closed eyes. Then I read the gospel passage. I read it through twice, very slowly, pausing for long times at the end of relevant sentences or phrases. They were then asked to imagine themselves as a living character in the story. They were asked to choose their individual and if necessary, invent someone in the crowd. Then in almost a stressless voice I read the Gospel story once more. At the end, I left them in total silence and slipped out from the chapel. It took almost a full 15 minutes for the first pilgrim to emerge after me. Many were so chilled out. There is a lot to be said for Ignatius Style meditation.

The following day, led by the spirit we all prayerful followed the Via Delarosa steps as we visited the large outdoor Stations of the Cross, using the paths to weave through the shrine garden and praying for the deceased at the station of the Resurrection.

All of us experienced the wonderfully therapeutic Healing Service of Benediction and Anointing, on the Tuesday evening. Our group were mystified at the numbers attending that 8.15pm service. I noticed how some after settling in the nave before the service, cautiously turned their head and in amazement saw 350 people surrounding them. (Where on earth did all those people come from?).

The Procession of the Image of Our Lady on Wednesday evening was also a delightful experience as we walked the Walsingham paths singing 'Ave, Ave, Ave Maria'. It's the hymn recounting the fascinating tale of how a Saxon Nobel woman, Lady Richeldis, founded this Shrine in the year 1061. When I consider that this event happened just before the Norman



#### St John's Guild



**Christians Supporting Blind People** 

Invasion of England, almost 1000 years ago, I gasp with incredible excitement. I thank God that I can see it all restored and rebuilt today.

This medieval pilgrimage centre has been such a precious gift to princes and peasants, priests, and prelates for so many years. It was a place where the Virgin Mary spoke to Lady Richeldis in a vision, instructing her to restore and rebuild this wonderful place. The shrine was visited by at-least seven kings of England including the notorious King Henry VIII. Sadly, even after his strong catholic leanings and honourable citation from the pope, making him a 'Defender of the Faith, he turned! It was after his jousting accident that his personality changed. In 1538, the now disturbed king had become a tyrant who was persuaded by others, who had another agenda, to destroy the shrine which had become a Priory, cared for by Augustinian friars.



It was not until after nearly four hundred years later, in 1921, that the Anglican priest, Father Hope Patten was appointed as Vicar of Walsingham and beholding God's glory, reignited Anglican interest in the pre-Reformation pilgrimage. He secured its ancient remains and rebuilt the Shrine house. Since that time, hundreds of thousands of pilgrims have poured into the village to worshipped at the shrine. It was Fr Hope Patten's idea to base a new statue of Our Lady of Walsingham on the image that had been depicted on the medieval Priory Seal, one of the few things left intact.

We all had a wonderful time during our visit to the beach at Wells Next the Sea. Breathing that sea air and stretching our legs, all helped to make these days away very special. Be it buying presents at the Shrine shop, drinking coffee at the Norton Café, or strolling through the Priory grounds, Walsingham is such wonderful place. Our St John's Pilgrimage for partially sighted and blind Christians was a huge success this year, but one doesn't have to be sight deficient to visit Walsingham, nor do have you need to be looking for a cure from an illness or disability. Walsingham is for everyone. It's where many have beheld God's Glory. If you haven't tried it yet, or would like to know more about it, speak to your parish priest and book a visit for a few days. You won't regret it.

Fr Brian Regan ssc

10 Together ★ CHRISTMAS 2023 THE VOICE OF CATHOLIC ANGLICANS





Walsingham Youth

The Walsingham Youth Pilgrimage 2023 ran from the 31st of July to the 4th of August. In all, 293 people attended (194 young pilgrims and 99 adults). This included some day visitors who are being encouraged to apply to join next year's pilgrimage but who were a bit nervous of coming and wanted a taster day. They had 24 groups from:

- London
- Manchester
- Chichester
- Essex
- Northern Ireland
- Blackburn
- Wakefield

...to name a few places

Overall, the event ran smoothly. Adaptations had to be made to some activities due to safety reasons – this included the Holy Mile, in which we walked along the old railway line (a permissive, off-road pathway) rather than along the road.

Daily Mass was held in the big top for all pilgrims and staff. These were joyous occasions, with lively music provided by CJM. They sang together, worshipped together and laughed and cried together. They also held a service of healing and renewal where the young people accessed anointing, sprinkling, confession and the laying on of hands. This was very moving, and we had to quickly provide more priests to hear confessions, such was the demand for this sacrament. Offsite, there was a first visit to the Holy House at the Shrine, opportunities to light a candle for personal intentions and to leave this in the Shrine, and also Benediction following the Holy Mile walk.

Daily Bible studies reinforced the teaching at the Masses, and these were extremely well attended. Walsingham provide 2 different levels of Bible Study, one for those starting out on their faith journey, and one for those digging deeper. The young people interacted brilliantly and came up with some fantastic questions and answers.

Other activities included a football tournament and skills, parkour workshops, inflatables and a bungee trampoline, an Ultimate Frisbee competition and various crafts and games in The Hub. There was also a tuck shop in the Hub which proved very popular.

This year, it couldn't have been easier to bring groups. Walsingham provided support for group leaders via a leaders' meeting and regular emails. Catering could be booked on a full or half-board basis and tents could also be provided by partners for an additional fee.

Finally, at https://youtu.be/NBOHsTXK3fg you will find a short video clip with the young people voicing what the pilgrimage meant to them.

With the cost-of-living crisis, and many of our pilgrims coming from deprived areas, The Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament (CBS) provided no less than £20,000 in grants to make sure this premier Catholic youth event took place. Here are a few of the many pictures that we received in from some of the groups who attended. If you are thinking of attending next year's event which runs from Monday 5th to Friday 9th August 2024, then we would encourage you to consider applying to CBS for a grant. Application forms will be available in January on our website confraternity.org.uk or by telephoning Mary on 0121 382 5533. It is never too early to plan, all applications will need to be in by the end of April in order to be considered at the beginning of May.



















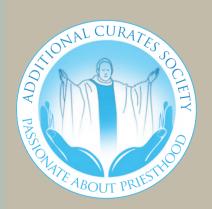








## **ACS Charity Christmas Cards**



The cards are 150mm x150mm and come in packs of 10 with envelopes.

£8 per pack or purchase 3 packs and receive a bonus pack (size may vary) free of charge.

The greeting inside each card "The Joy of Jessus is Love, the comfort of His presence, and the strength of His faith be with you this Christmas and always".



Order your cards on-line at www.additionalcurates.co.uk or phone Robert Jordan on 0121 382 5533 but be quick because stock is limited. All funds raised will support our work in paying for priests.



## "Oh hush the noise, ye men of strife, and hear the angels sing!"

When, in the year 1849, Edmund Sears wrote the hymn "It came upon the midnight clear" he did not intend it as a popular Christmas Carol. An American Unitarian Minister, he wrote a series of works of theology which he hoped would influence the thinking of people of his nation and times. He wrote the song as a sad reflection on the times and circumstances in

which he lived and worked; which were far from peaceful and settled and were far from reflecting the message of the Gospel of Jesus, the Prince of Peace

There is a certain irony in that Edmund Sears is now remembered, not for his works of theology, but for writing a Christmas Carol hardly ever thought about outside the **Christmas Season** 

It is a powerful and emotive hymn, reflecting on the message of the angels delivered to shepherds on that Bethlehem hillside

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold. 'Peace on the earth, good will to men from heav'n's allgracious King'

Beyond this reference in the opening verse of the song, there is no further specific reference to the Birth of our Blessed Lord at Bethlehem that first Christmas. Sears speaks of a weary world and of its sad and lowly plains; of war and the Babel-sound of noise and confusion. Clearly describing a community, a nation and world

that he knew personally and only too well. A situation that we, ourselves, can recognise in a year of political and social turmoil in our own land, of war in Europe and the Middle East, of faction and disagreement in the Church

A visit to Preston was a reminder that the Civic Arms of the City make reference to the same title of our Blessed Lord. The Arms depict the Paschal Lamb and Flag associated with Saint Wilfrid; patron saint not only of that city but also a co-patron of The Society. The Arms also show the letters "PP" which are usually taken to mean "Princeps Pacis" or Prince of Peace

The desire and hope for peace is universal, yet as individuals, communities and nations we seem ever to fail to achieve it. Are we then ever to have our hope unfulfilled and our desire for mutual tolerance and harmony frustrated?

Edmund Sears' poetry is certainly realistic in recalling human history and the reality of the world of sin and strife. But it is also positive and full of Christian Hope and Faith in the outworking of the Will and Purposes of God

While is it the sad reality that with the woes of sin and strife the world has suffered long;



beneath the angel-strains have rolled two thousand years of wrong the blessed angels continue to sing the love-song which they bring if only we might hush the noise and hear the angels sing

And this call, though so appropriate to hear and reflect on at Christmas as we give God especial thanks for the Birth of His divine Son, the Prince of Peace, it is also a call to be heard and acted on at all times

To "hear the angels sing" is to learn of Jesus. And we "hear" of Jesus when we worship in sincerity and truth; "hear" of Him in the lives and faces of those we serve in His name

On that same visit to Preston there were other reminders of the way that so many of our churches and communities are working for

peace and for the wellbeing of those who are particularly burdened beneath life's crushing load ... who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow

What can seem beyond our capability in terms of the wider reaches of wars, want and poverty can be made real and achievable within the local

> and immediate community. Community kitchens, Parish Nursing provisions, food banks, facilities for those lacking homes. Actions that have benefit for both those who give and those who receive can result in renewal of a church community's sense of Calling, purpose, growth in Faith and renewed engagement in worship and prayer

It is at Christmas that many of us experience a greater relevance and reality in worship and prayer; a revival in our spirituality and a renewal of commitment to putting Faith into action. Indeed, exactly those things which are the foundation upon which is built the Kingdom of God. Most surely things not for Christmas only

Edmund Sears' hymn is powerful because it is realistic in describing the realities of the world and of our human condition. It is full of Hope and of Faith because it holds true in proclaiming what is God's desire for us and for the world He has created for all to enjoy. Hope and Faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, God made man among us, Christ the Prince of Peace

For lo! The days are hastening on by prophet bards foretold, when with the ever circling years come round the age of gold; when Peace shall over all the earth its ancient

splendours fling, and the whole world give back the song which now the angels sing

The angels sing that song at Christmas. They sing their song always, ever and eternally. They sing it because it is the Song of Praise they are created to sing. For they sing to the everlasting Glory of Jesus, the Lord of Lords, and King of Kings, the Prince of Peace

As Edmund Sears intended, back in 1849, might the theme of his poetry be for our reflection, our prayers and action at all time as well as a particularly powerful and compelling Carol as we celebrate Christmas

+Robert Ladds Guild of All Souls Chantry Priest Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham