

NEWSLETTER



This newsletter contains reflections on our pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the continuation of a series of articles explaining the Eucharist in detail, plus the usual Vicar's letter, daily intentions for prayer and more.

Highlights of May

Tuesday 8th May

Forum Lunch *for dementia sufferers and their carers*

11.30am-3pm. *Cooks & helpers wanted (training given). See Bob DeWolf for info.*

Wednesday 9th May

Monthly Healing Mass

10am *preceded by prayers for the sick at 9.45am in the Lady Chapel. All welcome to this meditative service where personal prayer & anointing with oil are offered at Mass.*

Thursday 10th May

Ascension of the Lord

Low Mass 7.45am, High Mass 7pm *followed by refreshments. A day of obligation for Anglicans.*

Monday 14th May

Feast of S. Matthias, Apostle

Low Mass 12.30pm, Sung Mass 7pm

Thursday 17th May

May Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary

7pm Vespers, Sermon, Procession & Benediction

Preacher: The Venerable Gavin Kirk, Archdeacon of Lincoln.

Sunday 20th May

Pentecost

Preacher at 10.30am High Mass: The Rev'd Dr Andrew Bowyer, Chaplain of Trinity College

Thursday 31st May

Corpus Christi – the Day of Thanksgiving for Holy Communion

7pm Pontifical High Mass starting at S. Bene't's, procession through the streets, ending with Benediction at LSM.

Celebrant & Preacher: The Bishop of Ely

From the Vicar

S. Athanasius, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Our recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land (reflections on which you can read elsewhere in this newsletter) had a wonderful impact on us all. In this season of the Resurrection, however, its impact on me was to remind me once again of the very physical and material and almost practical side of both the Incarnation and Resurrection. To sail on the sea that Jesus was on, stand in the place where He died and rose again, the Garden in which He suffered and the house where S. Peter lived (for example) brought home very powerfully that our religion is not a mere set of ideas or principles but in and about a human being who lived, died and rose again in a place you can visit today.

Theologians often talk of this as ‘the scandal of particularity’: the idea that God who is beyond all imagining and comprehending should make Himself known in a particular time and at a particular place. How could God sully His hands in this way and how could someone/thing beyond all language and space and time be manifest to one person or one group or in one way?

The answer to all this is: love. We love particularly, not generally. God reaches out to each one of us as if there was no-one else in the universe; and being God not a creature, He can do this without being unable to reach out to anyone else. Furthermore, the choice of one person or place or race is not to the exclusion of others but for the purpose of drawing others in. The Jewish people were first chosen as a light for all nations, to draw (by their example and lives) all nations to worship God. It is indeed astonishing that individuals like Moses or Elijah, or Mary or John the Baptist in the Scriptures should be chosen and given unique vocations – but each one was given this for the sake of others.

Our Holy Land pilgrims saw all of this first hand and they each have been given the task of telling others of what they saw and of the gifts they received over that week in Israel/Palestine.

By the same token those recently Confirmed have been given fresh gifts of the Holy Spirit that they may witness to the world by their words and lives what glorious things God has done and does.

In the month of May we have the **May Devotion** to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Of all the particular gifts and vocations God has given to individual human beings, Mary received the most amazing: to bear the Son of God in her womb, and (what's more) teach the Word through whom all things were made to speak and read and write. It's why we honour her first among all Christians – because of her unique and breathtaking role and because of the grace of God to which she was open that at (probably) only 14 years old she was capable of doing all that she did. I hope therefore you can join me on **Thursday 17th May at 7pm** for our worship of God – Sung Evening Prayer, a sermon from the Archdeacon of Lincoln, a procession round the block, and then Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and refreshments.

The Blessed Sacrament is another example of particularity – Jesus Christ giving us Himself uniquely in bread and wine, not only that He might feed us with His eternally life-giving Sacrifice, but also that we might therefore see all things as sacraments, signs of God's presence. In the extraordinarily fecund month that is May this isn't too hard; take a different season of the year or of our life and it can be a great trial. This supreme Sacrament teaches us that God is to be found everywhere and in the most mundane contexts. So again I hope you can join me on **Thursday 31st May at 7pm at S. Bene't's** when the Bishop of Ely leads us in giving God thanks for this gift and taking this gift and our thankfulness to the streets afterwards as we process to LSM and Benediction and then a party.

With the promise of my love and prayer and delight in sharing the Gospel with you, I am,

yours in the risen Lord,

Fr Robert.

Explaining the Eucharist (II)

Fr Gregory writes:

The entrance procession and the Introit

When all are gathered (not running in at the last minute!), the clergy are vested, and hopefully everybody is prepared to celebrate “the sacred mysteries”, the ministers and servers enter in procession. Of course, there is a practical reason to the procession: the altar party must get to the altar somehow, preferably in an ordered and dignified way. But we know that as early as in the 4th century, both in the Western and the Oriental rites, there were already four processions. Or think about the so-called Sarum rite (Use of Salisbury), that unique liturgical and spiritual treasure, fruit of English medieval Christianity. It was rich in elaborated processions. All this makes us understand that processions are not merely practical things. They have a deeper meaning.

According to the great liturgical writer and French bishop, Guillaume Durand (+1296), this first procession symbolises how the human race was longing for the Messiah. The deacon and subdeacon are the Law and the Prophets, also the Levites and Priest of the old Temple; the thurible with the burning incense in it represents the burnt offerings, sacrifices and prayers of Old Testament; the candles are the column of fire that led Israel out from Egypt. We see entering the whole history of salvation, and its every element points to Christ. This is why the Priest, the second Christ, enters last: in him every expectation and promise, every desire and hope has been fulfilled.

In a devotion to S. Joseph, the Church prays: “O Blessed Joseph, happy man, to whom it was given not only to see and to hear that God whom many kings longed to see, and saw not, to hear, and heard not; but also to carry Him in your arms, to embrace Him, to clothe Him, and guard and defend Him.” Is not true of us too? When we see the procession entering the church, we must consider how blessed we are: great prophets, mighty kings, long generations of holy men and women were expecting Christ, but the grace to know and to love Him, to hear and to see Him, to receive and be united to Him under the appearances of bread and wine, was given to us, not to them. S. Thomas Aquinas applies the words of Deuteronomy to the Eucharist and Christians: “Neither is there any other nation so great, that hath gods so nigh them, as our God is present to us all.” (4.7)

Since our church is dedicated to Mary, I cannot not mention another spiritual explanation of the entrance procession. S. Bernard of Clairvaux talks about the womb of the Blessed Virgin as the sacred chamber where Christ clothes Himself in our human nature and body, where He is transformed into our likeness (Phil 2.7) to enter our world. And he cites the Psalm: “He hath set His tabernacle in the sun: and He as a bridegroom coming out of his bride-chamber, hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way.” (Ps 19.5) So the priest too, to imitate Christ, is clothed with the liturgical vestments and is “transformed” into Christ’s likeness in the sacristy, and enters the church in solemn procession to “accomplish in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, the work of our redemption.” (SC 2)

During the procession the choir sings the Introit. In all Western rites the Mass began with such a processional psalm (or biblical text) since the earliest times of which we have any record. This song is more than a little “travelling music.” It is usually the “key” to the Sunday or feast that is celebrated. When we are looking for appropriate prayers to use as preparation for the Mass, it is an excellent idea to use the Introit or other liturgical texts of the day.

The use of incense

Symbols in liturgy help to point our minds in the direction of invisible realities, and speak to us in a language often richer than words alone. As a symbol, incense is exceptionally rich in associations. The use of incense in the ancient world was common, especially in religious rites where it was used to keep demons away. Herodotus, the Greek historian, recorded that it was popular among the Assyrians, Babylonians and Egyptians.

Just as vestments, incense (made from various aromatic resins and gums taken from trees and other plants) too is still regarded by many as extravagance or Romish/Popery/pagan custom. But again, just as with vestments, the use of incense during worship has deep biblical roots. We do not know exactly when the use of incense was introduced into our Mass, but in the 4th century it was already widespread.

The Church of England used incense throughout its history, until the mid 1600s, when it fell out of general use. From that time, though, it continued to be used occasionally in worship, such as in York Minster or at Ely Cathedral, and since the mid-19th century, with the Catholic revival, its use has spread and increased.

Its use in the Old Testament:

- Incense was included in the thanksgiving offerings of oil, rain, fruits, wine (Numbers 7.13-17).
- The Lord instructed Moses to build a golden altar for the burning of incense (Exodus 30.1-10), which was placed in front of the veil to the entrance of the meeting tent where the ark of the covenant was kept. The office of daily renewal was entrusted to a special branch of the Levitical tribe (I Chr 9.29).
- Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, is in the temple at the time of the incense offering (Lk 1).
- The psalmist expresses the symbolism of incense and prayer: “Let my prayer rise like incense before You; the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.” (Psalm 141.1 or cf. Sirach 39.13-14).

Incense in the New Testament:

- The gifts the Magi offered to the Christ Child included gold, frankincense and myrrh (Mt 2.11).
- It is present in the description of the heavenly Liturgy (cf. Rev 5,8; 8,3-4).
- In II Cor the knowledge of Christ is compared to a fragrant odour (2.14).
- And most importantly, incense reminds us of Christ offering Himself on the cross: “And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 5.2). In addition to its biblical roots, incense has always been cherished by Christians for its symbolism as well. The already-mentioned Bishop Durand sees the thurible as representing the human heart, lit by the fervour of devotion, and its fuming clouds of incense as our prayers rising to God. Indeed, he reminds us how seeing the incense burning in the thurible should encourage us to reach higher and higher degrees of fervour, devotion, charity and love.

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Also, since we are creatures composed of soul and body, we should worship God with “all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength”. Liturgy is designed to stimulate just such a response in us, by exciting the senses and feeding our imagination. Worship involves all of our senses, showing the significance of our bodies and all of God’s creation. Thus the use of incense enables even fuller participation in the Liturgy by stimulating the sense of smell. It also provides colour, movement and sound as the thurible is swung and its chain ‘chinks’ and ‘tinkles’. The sweet smell of incense can be a doorway to the holy in the same way that beautiful music and the visual arts can lead us to ponder the mystery of God’s presence.

Finally, incense smoke symbolically purifies all that it touches. This is best illustrated by the richly symbolic practice in the Chaldean Christian Liturgy. Those preparing to receive Holy Communion first purify their hands by holding them in smoke just above a bowl of burning incense. Similarly in the Maronite Liturgy, as they are being purified prior to liturgical use, the liturgical vessels are all inverted over the burning incense to catch the fragrant smoke.

To recap what has been said, incense is a sacramental used to venerate, bless, purify and sanctify. Its smoke conveys a sense of mystery and awe. It is a reminder of the sweet-smelling presence of our Lord. Its use adds a feeling of solemnity to the Mass. The visual imagery of the smoke and the smell reinforce the transcendence of the Mass linking Heaven with Earth, allowing us to enter into the presence of God. The smoke symbolises the burning zeal of faith that should consume all Christians, while the fragrance symbolises Christian virtue.

Let me finish with the words of Romano Guardini (+1968). He wrote in his book *Sacred Signs*: “The offering of an incense is a generous and beautiful rite. The bright grains of incense are laid upon the red-hot charcoal, the censer is swung, and the fragrant smoke rises in clouds. In the rhythm and the sweetness there is a musical quality; and like music also is the entire lack of practical utility: it is a prodigal waste of precious material. It is a pouring out of unwithholding love.”



Calendar and Intentions
for
May 2018

*The list of Thanksgivings and Intercessions offers a focus
for our daily prayer, both at the Offices and Mass,
and in our personal times of prayer.*

*The Vicar would be glad of suggestions or
additions to the list of daily intentions.*

Calendar for May

TUE	1st	Ss Philip and James, Apostles
WED	2nd	S. Athanasius, bishop & doctor
THU	3rd	
FRI	4th	English saints and martyrs of the Reformation
SAT	5th	
SUN	6th	SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (Rogation Sunday)
MON	7th	Rogation day
TUE	8th	Julian of Norwich, mystic; Rogation day
WED	9th	Rogation day
THU	10th	THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD
FRI	11th	
SAT	12th	
SUN	13th	SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
MON	14th	S. Matthias, Apostle
TUE	15th	
WED	16th	of Requiem
THU	17th	
FRI	18th	
SAT	19th	S. Dunstan, bishop
SUN	20th	PENTECOST
MON	21st	<i>S. Helena, protectress of the Holy Places</i>
TUE	22nd	
WED	23rd	
THU	24th	John & Charles Wesley, priests
FRI	25th	The Venerable Bede, religious & doctor
SAT	26th	S. Augustine of Canterbury
SUN	27th	TRINITY SUNDAY
MON	28th	<i>Lanfranc, archbishop & religious</i>
TUE	29th	
WED	30th	Josephine Butler, social reformer
THU	31st	CORPUS CHRISTI

Daily Intentions and *Anniversaries of death for May*

Steadfastness in faith *Cicely Gibson* 1st
The Coptic Orthodox Church *Richard Masheder, pr.* 2nd
Increase in vocations to the priesthood 3rd
Martyrs of modern times 4th
Church architects and restorers *Barbara Chamier* 5th

Our Parish & People 6th

Schools in our parish 7th
Shops and businesses in our parish 8th
The sick *Lois Rayner, deaconess* 9th
Thanksgiving for the promise of eternal life 10th
Those suffering with loneliness *Arthur Mickle* 11th
Prison chaplains *Jeremy Bunting, pr.* 12th

Our Parish & People *Charles Perrin* 13th

Christian fellowship 14th
The people of Syria 15th
Greater devotion to Our Lady *Constance Rosedale, Gwendolen Plumley, Catherine Beesley* 17th
Doctors and health workers *Arthur Cuff, Laila Antoun* 18th
All those called to holy matrimony *Helen Paton* 19th

Our Parish & People 20th

The Anglican Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham *Ethel Gibbons* 21st
Those in despair *Herbert Burrell, pr.* 22nd
The newly baptized and confirmed 23rd
The Methodist Church 24th
Theologians and teachers of the Faith *Francis Hugh Maycock, pr.* 25th
Vocations to the religious life *Margaret Verney* 26th

Our Parish & People 27th

Diocese of Europe *Eileen Cope, Frank Hollick, John Bagley, pr.* 28th
Devotional artists *John William Dempsey, Roy Abraham* 29th
An end to human trafficking and slavery 30th
Greater devotion to the Eucharist *Liz Fretten* 31st

Saints of May – 21st May

S. Helena, protectress of the Holy Places

*Almighty Father,
who hast built up Thy
Church
through the love and
devotion of thy saints:
inspire us to follow the
example of Helena,
whom we commemorate
today,
that we in our generation
may rejoice with her in the
vision of Thy glory;
through Jesus Christ Thy
Son our Lord,
who liveth and reigneth
with Thee,
in the unity of the Holy
Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.*



Born at Drepanum in Bithynia, Helena rose from humble origins to become the concubine of Emperor Constantius Chlorus. Helena bore Constantius a son in 274, named Constantine. Helena was banished by Constantius in 292 when he ended their relationship so that he could marry Theodora, the stepdaughter of Augustus Maximian as part of his political ambitions. Helena returned to Rome in honour in 306 when her son Constantine became sole ruler of the Roman Empire. She was made ‘most noble woman’ and honoured throughout the Empire. Helena became a Christian in 312, and fully embraced the Christian life. She became renowned as one who lived modestly and gave charitably, a protector of religious buildings and as a woman who sought out relics of the Christian faith. Her most famous ‘achievement’ was the recovery of the cross of Christ, an event attested to by Ambrose, and recorded in fifth-century church histories. She

was held in special honour by the Church as the mother of the Emperor who legalised the Christian faith. Helena visited the Holy Land on a pilgrimage, where she worked amongst the orphans and the poor. She became known for her gifts to churches and convents, and for erecting shrines in significant places detailing the life of Christ. It is from this period of her life that the account of the discovery of the cross of Christ originated. Our recent parish pilgrimage visited two of the three churches built by S. Helena and saw at first hand the results of her faith and labours.

Reflections on the Holy Land

Fr Robert writes:

Rather than write you a description of what we did and what it was like, instead I've asked our pilgrims to write about the highlights and to offer a few thoughts on our pilgrimage. I hope they are of interest and use. We'll offer a presentation after a Sunday Mass later in the year. I just want to put on record my thanks to our pilgrims for being a joy to be with and for enriching my own experience immeasurably. Here's what they've said:

'It was a pilgrimage and not a set of tourist attractions; I really felt that I was walking in His footsteps. I felt closest to Jesus when I was in Galilee and at times I felt tears flooding down my face. Although some places were crowded (e.g. Mount Tabor), there were many moments for quiet reflection and prayer; perhaps most especially our first Mass at the Chapel on the Sea of Galilee and our boat ride on the lake when the engines were stopped: a powerful impact on both those occasions. Also, arriving in Nazareth at noon and saying the Angelus; the River Jordan and the chance to renew Baptismal vows; the moment of arrival in Jerusalem and praying Psalm 122; the "busyness" of Jerusalem and the contrasting calm of the chapel and the Mass at the *Ecce Homo* station; the wonderful Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the opportunity to pray there; the reality of the politics in Israel, so visible with the Separation Wall, and perhaps for the Palestinians not so far removed from the suffering of the Jews in the Roman occupation of the first century; the Mount of Olives, the walking of the Palm Sunday route, the quiet time in the Garden of Gethsemane; Abu Ghosh, which served as Emmaus and our last opportunity in the Holy Land to know Christ in the Breaking of the Bread.'

'It was both a blessing and tremendous privilege to walk in the footsteps of Our Lord and His Apostles in Israel this Eastertide; every village, even the

ones we merely passed on the motorway, seemed to have a biblical significance. We started our time together at Ginosar, on the shore of Lake Galilee; my abiding memory of Galilee is one of peace and tranquillity, especially when the boat's engine stopped for us to sing 'Dear Lord and Father of Mankind' in the middle of the lake – such a powerfully prayerful atmosphere. The Galilee region was a lot greener than I had anticipated, especially perhaps Mount Tabor, the site of Jesus' Transfiguration. We visited Nazareth, with the Basilica of the Annunciation, containing the remnants of the house in which the Angel appeared to Our Lady, which is a very special place. Then visiting Bethlehem and the orphanage there was a pertinent reminder that Our Lord was born in poor and lowly circumstances. Jerusalem was authentically bustling, especially in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Other memories of Jerusalem include joining worshippers at S. George's Anglican Cathedral in Jerusalem for a bilingual service, in English and Arabic – we were prompted by the sermon to consider what it means to belong to such a tiny minority of Anglicans in that part of the world. It is a Middle Eastern custom to add in 'and we are witnesses to this' to the Paschal response 'He is risen indeed!', and this phrase took on extra meaning throughout our time there. Also, I was very moved the first time I saw the view overlooking Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, following the path downhill which Our Lord would have taken on Palm Sunday. Also striking was the way we all came together as a family of pilgrims and grew together in our faith; there was a real sense of camaraderie which was a true blessing.'

'I felt we walked in the peace of Jesus Christ on the shores of Galilee, whilst I experienced something of the suffering and passion as we made the journey from Gethsemane to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. My outstanding experience was as I placed my head on the Western Wall and prayed. The wall seemed to sway rhythmically (about 3cm) from side to side. Does that say something about the power of prayer over thousands of years? Others felt the same.'

'The week went very quickly and it was good to spend time with people we didn't know well and those we did. We appreciated the rhythm of the day starting with prayer and interspersing appropriate passages of the Bible helped to focus our thoughts. Mass by the Sea of Galilee, at Capernaum, was moving and a wonderful opportunity to reflect, this being followed by a trip out onto the middle of the Galilee. The stillness when the engine was stopped was another time for quiet reflection. We were sad to leave Galilee but did not realise how many more wonderful experiences we would have as we drove down the Jordan Valley, visiting a possible baptismal site of Jesus, Jericho,

Qumran, and the Dead Sea, finally arriving at Jerusalem. Jerusalem and Bethlehem were very busy but there was so much to see and wonder at from the Mount of Olives to Gethsemane. On the last day Janet must have found some inner strength as she tackled the steps and cobbled pavements of the Via Dolorosa. We had so many people to be grateful to as they helped with an arm or carrying/pushing the wheelchair.'

'For me the pilgrimage was an unexpected experience; I found our stay in the Galilee the most spiritual part, especially the visit to Cana, the service by the lakeside and then the silence on the boat. There was time to be quiet and think and reflect and pray. Our journey down the Jordan Valley highlighted the political aspects of being in the country called Israel and then the seaside resort of the Dead Sea was an eye and ear opener and took me up short. In Jerusalem there were just a few places where I could be quiet and reflect: at the Stone of Unction I became very aware of its significance to the women of Jesus' time and also now. The mosaic of the laying out of Jesus and His anointing made it a very special place. The visit to Bethlehem brought with it the spiritual, the political and the social concerns of the inhabitants and visitors especially our visit to the orphanage, the graffiti, on the wall and the church of the Nativity all dominated my feelings.'

'A profoundly powerful trip - faith renewing and affirming. A blessed opportunity, which brought the Bible to life. A chance to be close to Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and also Mary. Not to be forgotten.'

'Highlights for me were that wonderfully light Church at Magdala which was so unexpected – I was just tiring of ruins and then that, the three Masses, the boat trip and that ancient path at the church of S. Peter in Gallicantu – also walking the Palm Sunday way. What an experience it all was, and all those steps!'

I hope these reflections give you some sustenance in your own faith. Do ask our pilgrims to tell you more. They were: Janet & Chris Nevitt, Tricia & Lizzie Davies, Dee Price, Margaret Waring, Clive Brown, Dan Parkinson, Ben O'Neill, Chessie Nour, Tim & Sue Thompson, Hazel & Alex Harris (in Canada now so less easy to ask!), Bill de Quick, Joanna Sanders, Jane Wynn and Sheila Bennett.