

LITTLE S. MARY'S, CAMBRIDGE

January 2024: No. 619

NEWSLETTER



The Vicar's Letter

Epiphany of the Lord 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the old days, when one wrote cheques, it always took me most of January to get into the habit of writing the correct date on them! Now I write the year fairly infrequently and, oddly, I feel the transition to a new year less than I used to. I can't believe that's just down to the decline in cheque-writing. I like to think that over the years my mind has become more liturgical and I mark the year by its feasts and fasts and not so much by the secular calendar (although maybe I'm just less excited these days by staying up late on New Year's Eve!) The new calendar year comes in between two other big novelties: the birth of the Son of God (Christmas) and the revelation that He is for all peoples (Epiphany). It is a wisdom both natural and supernatural that at the darkest and least alive time of the year we should have our hearts lifted by attending to what is new and light- and life-giving.

I hope your Christmases were peaceful and joyful and I pray our keeping of these Sundays of Epiphany may also give peace and joy to our hearts amid the encircling gloom (to quote an Epiphany hymn) of both the weather and the world. Just as focusing on Bethlehem over Christmas kept bringing to the forefront of our minds the plight of the people of Gaza (and the victims of Hamas before that) so the visit of the wise men from the east ought to remind us that what happens in the Holy Land has repercussions and consequences for leaders and nations well beyond Israel and Palestine. I think it is a good thing to make peace the focus of our prayers this month.

Epiphany has some glorious hymns and one of my favourites is Dix's *As with gladness men of old*. The last two verses go:

Holy Jesus, every day
keep us in the narrow way
and, when earthly things are past,
bring our ransomed souls at last
where they need no star to guide,
where no clouds Thy glory hide.

In the heavenly country bright
need they no created light;
Thou its light, its joy, its crown,
Thou its sun which goes not down.
There for ever may we sing
Alleluias to our King.

For two people these verses seem especially apposite: **Renata Sayers** and **Tim Wheatley**, both longstanding members of our congregation who died at the end of last year. Truly they need no star to guide them now, nor does anything hide from them God's glory.

Renata, a former member of our choir, was someone who survived more cancers than anyone I have ever known. She was remarkable. Her bravery in facing cancer reflects the bravery she showed in coming as a young woman to make a life in this country where she knew no-one. We commend her soul to God and pray for her husband John, for her daughter Cristina, son in law Philip, and grandsons William and Ben.

Tim's funeral will be here on Tuesday 30th January at 12 noon. All are welcome. Tim, with his wife Elaine (who died not long before I arrived as Vicar), was a wonderfully kind, generous, thoughtful person who contributed to the life of LSM in so many ways over many years. After a dreadful accident a few years ago (which left him wheelchair-bound) I worried that would be the end, but Tim, by God's grace, showed great fortitude and rebuilt his life, and his presence in church week by week was an inspiring example to me and many others. May he rest in peace, reunited with Elaine, and may God grant comfort to his family, especially his children Martin and Katie.

Just four further things to draw to your attention: the first is simply my thanks to all who responded generously to our financial giving appeal. The future looks a lot less grim now. If you've not yet got round to it, please do! The second thing is the Feast of the Conversion of S. Paul on Thursday 25th January. The 7pm Sung Mass will be our Healing Mass for this month. The third thing is the Parish Quiz Night on Tuesday 30th January, presided over by quizmaster *extraordinaire* Frank Paul. I hope we will have a lot of fun and raise a lot of money for the Food Bank. Fourthly, the beautiful Feast that marks the end of Christmas and Epiphany, completing our 40 days' observance: Candlemas or the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple on Friday 2nd February. Don't miss any of these three events!

With my prayers and love, I am,
yours in the One revealed as the desire of every nation,
Fr Robert.

YouTube Church: I need the Body of Christ

Rob Francis writes:

I am just about old enough for the internet not to have figured in most of my childhood. I wasn't required to reply to an email until university and so, like many millennials, I had a strongly analog education but sufficient exposure to the digital world too in my later formative years. As a consequence I have been able to combine, if you like, the best of both worlds. I am a fairly slow and inaccurate typist, but as a linguist, I can find a word in a printed dictionary almost as fast as Google can find it on the web. For me as a teacher IT and AI seem set to revolutionise learning – or so I keep being told – and adopting new technologies is a constant feature. Having had the benefit of human interaction and printed works, handwriting rather than typing and having to wait to find something out, I remain very sceptical as to whether IT and AI will make us kinder, humbler, more generous, more grateful, more patient and more loving. So much is lost in gaining shortcuts and failing to take the long way round. This said, my experience of how IT has brought church closer to our home has been a highly enriching one, as I hope to explain.

When the lockdown arrived during Lent 2020, there was much prompt adaption to the circumstances as many will remember. We will be eternally grateful to Fr Robert for broadcasting Easter services from his makeshift study chapel using his iPhone, as well as to others who played their part in maintaining the life of the Church in this way over the greatest feast of the year. As it happened, we had literally just moved back into our house after having our kitchen floor retiled following a water leak. Most of the contents of our kitchen were in our lounge and on our return, the kitchen was bare and echoey and strangely reminiscent of a small chapel. We took to following services online from our kitchen table with a crucifix and the image of Our Lady of Walsingham on the shelf above, facing east by dint of its position. You may recall that we were encouraged that Easter to fashion our own paschal candle if possible and we did so, with felt-tip markers and five drawing pins. As the weeks went on, I removed the bread bin from the shelf and replaced it with candles either side and put up a prayer suitable to a kitchen-based prayer space: *O sacrum convivium!* ("O sacred feast!) Once Fr Robert was allowed to return to the church building, the PCC installed two cameras at the back

and reworked the sound system so that we were now able to participate in services in our church building, though with no congregation physically present. Note that I do say we participated in rather than followed the service. Very soon after the outset of lockdown the congregation were sent orders of service to span the Easter period. These included, importantly, the prayers for Spiritual Communion from the Diocese of Malaita of the Anglican Church of Melanesia. You can find them on Wikipedia along with several other versions. Having read the different versions, I have to say that I am very glad these ones were chosen. Above all, they serve to connect the remote worshipper both with the universal church and with the physical congregation with whom they are unable to worship in person.

Two phrases from the prayers stand out in this regard and have shaped my understanding of “remote” worship. The first line reads: “In union, O Dear Lord, with the faithful at every Altar of Thy Church, where Thy blessed Body and Blood are being offered to the Father ...” That vision of the sacrifice of the Mass “at every Altar of Thy Church” is for me enormously powerful. It immediately reminds me that I do not worship alone. The second line that has spoken most powerfully to me is in the second section and reads: “that as the hem of Thy garment, touched in faith, healed the woman who could not touch Thy Body, so the soul of Thy servant may be healed by like faith in Thee” This is of course, not a substitute for receiving the Body of Christ, but it is a reaching out to God, a yearning to be united with His Body, the Church, and thus to Life in Christ.

I have had various conversations about the impact and potential for “remote” participation. Some churches, very often smaller congregations, opted for services on Zoom where all or at least more of those online could speak and contribute, perhaps with prayers or with music. The “broadcast model”, first on Facebook and then YouTube from LSM may seem really to be akin to Evensong on Radio 3, but I have never taken it to be so. Whilst some churches, particularly those of the High Anglican tradition, have introduced multiple cameras and live switching between them, the purpose of broadcasting services is not that of creating a television production; it is to allow those who cannot be present to participate in the life of the Church. Many artists now make their music

directly available on YouTube and accept that many will never buy their album. They do of course gain some revenue from people watching or listening to their music on their YouTube channel and I am quite sure they gain sales of their CDs and the devotion of fans who will go to their concerts as a result. Whilst the Church is not seeking to sell or even to entertain, the presence of services online does, in a sense, reach out in the same way.

I imagine a great deal has been written on this subject which I have not had occasion to read and much might be said about the missionary potential of services online. I am writing however from the perspective of a parishioner who knows and loves his “home church”. The real impetus for writing this piece is that I find myself far too often unable to be physically at church. There are others in a similar position for a variety of reasons and I will not pretend to speak for them, but I have so benefited by being able to see and hear my brothers and sisters in Christ and pray, sing and worship along with them when I cannot leave the house.

We are often reminded that Heaven is our true home and in that sense, our Church, even St Mary the Less, Cambridge, is our “home from home” during our earthly pilgrimage. In, by necessity, having made a permanent place for worship at home in our own house, I have learned to think more of how we are united as Christians, though separated by distance, by division and even by death. In that way, I make a plea to remember and pray for those, even if they are small in number, who worship with us from their homes. I myself do not count on the world becoming ever more dependent upon and transformed by Information Technology.

I wonder about the consequences of humans giving away their agency and their rootedness in material reality and the cost to the planet of exponential growth in the consumption of energy. This said, for now at least, we are able to include those dear to us who cannot be with us in person with an electronic “hem of a garment” which I hope can bring God’s Grace by uniting them to Christ’s Body, His Church. For me, when I have to participate online, it only serves to remind of the great gift of worshipping together in person and the miraculous sacrifice and gift of the Holy Sacrament at the Altar. It makes me say with greater urgency, “I need the Body of Christ”.



Calendar and Intentions

for

January 2024

*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 January

MON	1st	The Naming & Circumcision of Jesus
TUE	2 nd	Ss Basil the Great & Gregory of Nazianzus, bishops
WED	3 rd	
THU	4 th	
FRI	5 th	
SAT	6th	EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD
SUN	7th	1ST SUNDAY of EPIPHANY - Baptism of Our Lord
MON	8 th	
TUE	9 th	
WED	10 th	<i>William Laud, archbishop</i>
THU	11 th	
FRI	12 th	S. Aelred of Hexham, abbot
SAT	13 th	S. Hilary, bishop
SUN	14th	2ND SUNDAY of EPIPHANY
MON	15 th	of Requiem
TUE	16 th	
WED	17 th	S. Antony of Egypt, hermit & abbot
THU	18 th	
FRI	19 th	S. Wulfstan, bishop
SAT	20 th	
SUN	21st	3RD SUNDAY of EPIPHANY
MON	22 nd	
TUE	23 rd	
WED	24 th	S. Francis de Sales, bishop & doctor
THU	25th	The Conversion of S. Paul
FRI	26 th	Ss Timothy & Titus, bishops
SAT	27 th	
SUN	28th	4TH SUNDAY of EPIPHANY
MON	29 th	
TUE	30 th	S. Charles, king & martyr
WED	31 st	<i>S. John Bosco, priest</i>

Daily Intentions & Anniversaries of death

Married Couples	<i>Dorothy Ogden, Derek Williams, John Ibbotson</i>	1 st
S. Cyprian's, Sharpeville	<i>Daphne Peck, Janet Crozier</i>	2 nd
PNGCP	<i>Edward Maycock, Lena Wheatley, Arthur Clough, Cecilia Scott-Townsend</i>	3 rd
All returning to school and work	<i>Sheila Duffy</i>	4 th
The dying	<i>Jennifer Williams, Joyce Day, Peter Dicken</i>	5 th
Thanksgiving	<i>Margaret Hulyer, Kathleen Holland, Harry Stratton pr., Daphne Foreman</i>	6 th

Our Parish & People	<i>Sarah Richardson</i>	7 th
Renewed zeal for our Faith		8 th
The people of Palestine & Israel	<i>Peter Gore, John Rickard Barker</i>	9 th
++Justin	<i>Silvia Skeil, Keith Chittenden, Erland Copeley Williams</i>	10 th
Vocations to the Priesthood	<i>Geoffrey Baines, John James Hopwood</i>	11 th
Vocations to the Religious Life	<i>John Willis Clark, Violet Wing</i>	12 th
Teaching and Catechesis	<i>Elizabeth Gardner, John George, William James</i>	13 th

Our Parish & People	<i>Aline Norman, Marjorie Shepherd, Elaine Wheatley, Tim Cowell</i>	14 th
The Faithful Departed	<i>Isabel Nourse</i>	15 th
Peace	<i>Marjorie Galletly</i>	16 th
Christians with a solitary vocation	<i>Margaret Rowett</i>	17 th
Christian Unity		18 th
The Roman Catholic Church	<i>Daphne Clavey</i>	19 th
Orthodox Churches	<i>Pauline Martindale, Donald Harris pr., John Abraham</i>	20 th

Our Parish & People	<i>Athelstane Furley</i>	21 st
Unity within the Church of England		22 nd
Baptist, Methodist & United Reformed Churches	<i>James Rigney pr.</i>	23 rd
Pentecostal Churches	<i>Robert Garrett pr., Peggy Hall, Marie Thomas</i>	24 th
Christian Unity		25 th
Bishops	<i>Maurice Rayner, James Rone pr.</i>	26 th
CamTrust	<i>Sebastian Hawkes, Elsie Perrin, Peter Barnard</i>	27 th

Our Parish & People	<i>Julia Wheatcroft, Andrew Howard Dolan</i>	28 th
Theologians	<i>Eric Furley, Beryl Goonetilleke</i>	29 th
HM The King	<i>Mary Hammond, Nigel Hancock, pr.</i>	30 th
Church Schools	<i>David Theobald</i>	31 st

Stuck for a New Year's Resolution?

Fr Ed writes:

Many people like to make New Year's resolutions in order to better themselves in some way. Perhaps it's something to do with their health, such as taking up a sport or exercise activity. Perhaps it's an improvement to the social life, by resolving to say yes to more opportunities (or indeed, to say *no* to more opportunities, depending on the person). And, perhaps, for some of us, it is an attempt to improve ourselves spiritually.

That has certainly been the case for me. Many years ago, when I had already decided that I believed in God, but not quite plucked up the courage to do anything about it, it was a New Year's resolution that saw me become a regular churchgoer. Perhaps, to some people's minds, it is a sign of spiritual weakness that I felt the need to make it a "resolution" in the first place. And, well, yes — I was indeed spiritually weak. But the resolution was a means to an end; it helped me to overcome the psychological barriers which were making it hard for me to get stronger. And it worked.

It may be that somebody reading this has started attending Little Saint Mary's as their New Year's resolution for 2024. To that reader I say "Welcome!" But I suspect that the majority of readers will have been attending LSM or another church for a little (or a lot) longer. If you have yet to make a New Year's resolution, or would like to make a last-minute spiritual addition to the one you already have, I have a recommendation: join in with the Daily Office.

"Daily Office" refers to the programme of Morning and Evening Prayer, services prayed daily by the whole Church. It always follows the same pattern: we pray the *Angelus* and some introductory prayers, we pray psalms and hear readings from the Bible, and then there is a time of intercessory prayer. There are many good reasons for regular attendance at the Daily Office, but for the sake of brevity, I shall just address two of them.

The first, and perhaps most obvious reason is that God is worth the effort!

We are not supposed to reserve praise and worship for Sunday mornings and keep the rest of the week separate. Whether we pray privately at home or together in the church building, time spent in prayer is always time well spent. For many of us, life is very busy and prayer can often be the thing which gets squeezed out of our schedule. Committing to a specific time of day in a specific location is an excellent way to defend against this.

This brings me neatly to my second reason: when we commit to a fixed common schedule of daily prayer, with a consistent order of service, it helps us to establish and maintain a *spiritual rhythm*. Owing to the limited, mortal nature of our minds, it's quite difficult for us to hear understand what God is saying to us a lot of the time, but when we have got ourselves into a rhythm of regular praise, listening and intercession, we begin to be more attuned to the rhythm of God's voice, and not only when we're sitting in church, but throughout the whole of our daily life.

At LSM, we have public Evening Prayer seven days a week, always at 6pm, and Morning Prayer is prayed publicly on weekdays at 8:20am. If you've never been before, it does not take long to pick up (but feel free to ask a member of the clergy or the pastoral assistant if you have any questions). And if you're still not convinced, don't just take my word for it; consider the wise words of George Herbert:

Sev'n whole days, not one in sev'n,
I will praise Thee;
in my heart, though not in heav'n,
I can raise Thee.
Small it is, in this poor sort
to enroll Thee:
e'en eternity's too short
to extol Thee.

[For those who can attend neither at 8:20am nor at 6pm, LSM has Mass every day, at various times throughout the week. See the calendar on the website home page www.lsm.org.uk for details.]