

LITTLE S. MARY'S, CAMBRIDGE

February 2024: No. 620

NEWSLETTER

Ash Wednesday



*Remember that you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.*

E C C L E S I A S T E S 3 : 2 0

Notable dates in February

Friday 2nd February

The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas)

12.30pm Low Mass; 7pm High Mass

Preacher: The Rev'd Dr Arabella Milbank, Dean of Selwyn

Tuesdays 6th & 20th February

Food and Faith

Our young adults group meets from 7pm to share a meal together and to discuss the faith.

Saturday 10th February

Bible Study

After the 10am Mass we meet to discuss Mark 8.1-10
(The Feeding of the Four Thousand).

Wednesday 14th February

Ash Wednesday (*Day of Obligation for Anglicans*)

10am and 12.30am Low Mass with imposition of Ashes

7pm High Mass with imposition of Ashes

Preacher: The Assistant Curate

Lent at LSM

Lent Group

In person Wednesday mornings after the 10am Mass

On Zoom Thursday evenings at 8pm

Eucharistic Adoration and Evening Prayer

Thursday evenings 5.30pm-6.30pm

Lent Book

Lent with the Beloved Disciple, Michael Marshall

Lent is an excellent time to make your sacramental Confession for the first time. The Clergy are very happy to provide help and guidance.

Vicar's Letter

Presentation of the Lord 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is a treat of the calendar that occasionally Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day coincide. This year is one such occasion. Or, as one witty person put it:

Roses are red, violets are blue,
Jesus died on the Cross for you.

At first sight the feast of romantic love and the beginning of a season of fasting, prayer and almsgiving do not seem natural bedfellows. Yet true love is purgative and when Jesus says "I thirst" on the Cross He speaks of something of the desire of God for us, the Lord's longing for union with humanity, even though He doesn't need us and we have rebelled against Him.

We might think Lent is about suppressing our desires. In fact the business of fasting, prayer and almsgiving is about the reverse: bringing our desires to the surface so that we can see them, know them and no longer be overwhelmed and controlled by them. In the same way, one of the reasons the church blesses relationships is that they bring us closer to God. As one priest observed both wryly and seriously: we are made holy by our spouse's faults! S. John writes that we love because we were first loved, and to know the love of another human being – romantic or otherwise – is to be brought closer to God and His love.

There are various ways we can keep the beautiful and clarifying season of Lent. Traditionally there are three strings to our weapon: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Each is vital.

PRAYER.: Morning Prayer lasts 20 minutes and is prayed here Monday to Friday at 8.20am; Evening Prayer lasts 20 minutes and is prayed here Monday to Saturday at 6pm. There is Evensong & Benediction, lasting just under the hour, every Sunday at 6pm. There are Masses daily in the parish, lasting just under 30 minutes (Mon 12.30pm, Tue 7.45am, Wed 10am & 7pm, Thu 7.45am, Fri 12.30pm, Sat 10am). We will also read *Lent with the Beloved Disciple* by Bishop Michael Marshall at our two Lent Groups (one on line Thursdays 8pm; one in person Wednesdays 10.30am). Each of these sessions will be followed by praying the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary together. Finally, never forget silence. Each Thursday we will have some time of silence before Jesus in the Eucharist from

5.30-6.30pm and we will have a day before His Eucharistic Presence on Thursday 7th March, a mid-Lent day of renewal.

FASTING & ALMSGIVING: Intermittent fasting is all the rage these days for those trying to lose weight and indeed our own Prime Minister, I discovered a few days ago, fasts every week. Giving up something for Lent is part of fasting. This should be something good and not bad Giving up lying for Lent is not good because we should give it up permanently! Alternatively, or in addition, we're given Friday as a day to eat no meat and to eat less, both as a discipline of the body but also in honour of Our Lord's death on Good Friday Giving is a form of fasting, fasting from money. The parish has a number of charities we support and I commend them to you. Each of them can be given to directly. The meat we omit on Friday, or the takeaway coffee we cut back on, can provide some extra cash to support these good causes. The lack we will feel will reveal our desires, which we can then bring in prayer before God.

Finally, three things as I close. The first is that we wave a sad goodbye to one of our Ridley ordinands, Matt Regan. Matt lives out by Ely and has no access to a car and so can never make our evening and midweek events; Ridley have decided that he ought to go to a local parish where he can be sufficiently involved for the placement to be properly worthwhile. We will miss him and Adele and hope to see them again in the future. Secondly, my thanks to Ann Auger who is standing down as Treasurer owing to work commitments. Might you be being called to this role? If it is any incentive, we are hiring a bookkeeper to make it more manageable. Thirdly, many, many thanks to those who took part in the Parish Quiz Night on 30th January. We raised well over £600 for the Foodbank and much fun was had by all. Thank you to those who organised it and to Frank Paul who was a splendiferous quiz master!

Here's to a good and holy Lent and a joyful Ash Valentine's Day!

With my prayers and love, I am,
yours in the Lord who loves us,

Fr Robert.

Impressions of the Anglican Church in PNG

(Sampela tingting i kam long Anglikan Sios bilong Papua Niu Gini)

William Spooner, Trustee, Papua New Guinea Church Partnership (PNGCP), writes:

My knowledge of the Anglican Church in Papua New Guinea (officially, the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea, one of the Anglican Communion's 42 provinces) had been gathered piecemeal from my membership of the PNGCP committee. I knew of its history, leaders and organisation. What I learnt from visiting in September 2023 for the "Partners' Meeting" (the grouping of partner churches and dioceses from Australia, England and New Zealand) was about its people and what we hold in common.



There are many distinctive Anglican features: of service to the Crown and nation, the Book of Common Prayer, and parishes as the primary organisational unit. These are treasured and form part of the everyday for the Church in PNG. Coming from the UK, we were the "King's people",

and books of commemoration for the death of the late Queen were entrusted to our safekeeping for onward transmission. But it was not solely respect for our late shared head of state (PNG is a Commonwealth realm), but the meaning of service. To serve a whole geographical area through health centres and schools, not for the benefit of a single denomination or congregation, is a distinctively Anglican commitment. The cadence and the rhythm that marks corporate worship follows a pattern we would recognise, drawn from the BCP and suited for the PNG context. It is true that as we pray for them, so they pray for us. Parishes matter. Clergy live among, are visible and are known to the communities they serve. People identify with their parish as “their” unit. The Church’s desire for participation in the Anglican Communion and allegiance to Canterbury is in recognition of the ties of friendship and identity, freely chosen, that binds us together.

The joy of the Church is in her people: the ordinands preparing for a life of service, the “clergy wives” who will take up leadership roles in the Mothers’ Union, and the work of the MU as a community promoting adult literacy and maternal healthcare. In this is the making real of love of and care for neighbour. That is not to neglect the challenges. Crime and safety are a concern; a country blessed with natural resources, yet with a state unable to meet basic needs. It is against this context that the Church matters: as a Papua New Guinean institution, as an organisation embedded within communities and as a calling to a way of life. It has lessons for us in England, so making the Anglican Communion a living, two-way relationship.

The support PNGCP provides, itself only through the generosity of parishes in Britain, has allowed a revitalisation of the Church’s theological college. This has real hope for the future with the Gospel in actions and words made anew, as it must be every generation.



Calendar and Intentions

for

February 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 February

THU 1st S. Brigid, abbess

FRI 2nd THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

SAT 3rd S. Anskar, bishop

SUN 4th SECOND SUNDAY before LENT – Sexagesima

MON 5th St Agatha, Virgin & Martyr

TUE 6th *The Martyrs of Japan*

WED 7th

THU 8th of Requiem

FRI 9th

SAT 10th *S. Scholastica, virgin*

SUN 11th SUNDAY next before LENT – Quinquagesima

MON 12th

TUE 13th Shrove Tuesday

WED 14th ASH WEDNESDAY

THU 15th *Thomas Bray, priest*

FRI 16th

SAT 17th *Janani Luwum, bishop & martyr*

SUN 18th FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

MON 19th

TUE 20th

WED 21st Ember Day

THU 22nd

FRI 23rd S. Polycarp, bishop & martyr; Ember Day

SAT 24th Ember Day

SUN 25th SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

MON 26th

TUE 27th *George Herbert, priest*

WED 28th

THU 29th

February Daily Intentions & Anniversaries of death

Renewal of Religious Life in England		1 st
That we may let the light of Christ into our lives		2 nd
Christian renewal in Northern Europe	<i>Dennis Barnard, Hazel Dunn</i>	3 rd
Our Parish & People		4th
Persecuted Christians	<i>Joyce Bishop, Elizabeth Law</i>	5 th
The Church in Japan		6 th
Papua New Guinea Church Partnership		7 th
The Faithful Departed		8 th
Our Preparation for Lent	<i>Dorothy Antrobus Comings</i>	9 th
Benedictine Nuns	<i>Ronald Mourhouse, Bill Thomas</i>	10 th
Our Parish & People		11th
Our Parish Standing Committee	<i>Margaret Webber, Enid Maycock,</i>	12 th
Increased Use of Confession		
	<i>Alich Nilsson, Brian Poulter, Edmund Law</i>	13 th
Our keeping of Lent		14th
SPCK & USPG		15 th
Camtrust		16 th
Courage among Christians	<i>, Richard Pearson</i>	17 th
Our Parish & People		18th
The People of India	<i>John Lydon, pr., Audrey Sparrow</i>	19 th
Cambridge South Deanery	<i>Mary Stubbs</i>	20 th
Interpreters and Translators		21 st
Scouts and Guides		22 nd
Gardeners	<i>Mary Dawson</i>	23 rd
The Unemployed	<i>Frank Joanes, Percy Hays, Roger Benton</i>	24 th
Our Parish & People		25th
<i>Arthur Peck, James Townley</i>		26 th
Our parish musicians		27 th
The world's response to climate change		28 th
Reconciliation and lasting peace in Nagorno-Karabakh		29 th

Ruminations on Ash Wednesday

Charles Moseley writes:

One of my oldest friends, now no longer with us, grew up in a substantial Norfolk vicarage, at a time when clergy could still afford staff. Their housemaid was somewhat deaf and had difficulty reading, but was very devout. She joined in loudly with “Amen” at morning prayers, and was always to be seen in church, dressed in her best, on Sundays. But not, ever, in Lent. After she had been with them some time, Henry’s father gently asked her why. “I don’t hold with what they says there,” she replied. “What is that?” “It’s that prayer what you says after Ash Wednesday.” More mystified still, he pressed her, and finally the truth came out: she was convinced the Almighty hated her, personally, for she had misheard the words of Cranmer’s Collect as “Almighty and Everlasting God, which hatest nothing but the housemaid ...”

“Which hatest nothing that thou hast made...” Even the most evil of creatures, from angels downwards – for angels are free to choose the dark too – are held in that sustaining Love which gave them being and which moves the sun and other stars. There is no escape from that importunate Love even in the heart of hell. As Coverdale’s translation of Ps. 139 has it:

Whither shall I go then from Thy Spirit: or whither shall I go then from Thy presence?
If I climb up into heaven Thou art there: if I go down to hell Thou art there also.

C.S. Lewis remarked (*The Problem of Pain*, 1940), “£... the damned are, in one sense, successful, rebels to the end; ... the doors of Hell are locked on the inside ... they enjoy for ever the horrible freedom they have demanded, and are therefore self-enlaved: just as the blessed, forever submitting to obedience, become through all eternity more and more free.”

Earlier, pre-Reformation, Collects for Ash Wednesday had stressed the action of fasting in Lent. Because that might seem to imply the earning of forgiveness – get so many percent and you pass your exam – Cranmer replaced that to stress God’s unconditional love of for all His creation whatever and whoever and however it may be, and the free gift of forgiveness to those who contritely acknowledge their faults. The Absolution at Morning and Evening Prayer reminds us that God “desireth

not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness, and live”, and then asks for the grace of “true repentance, and His Holy Spirit ... that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy; so that at the last we may come to His eternal joy.” For it is the Holy Spirit working in us which makes us yearn for the Joy of self-forgetful relationship to the Father and the Son, to join a dance ever still, ever in motion, in which we become most fully ourselves, where our past and our present and our future are gathered: at the still point of the turning world.

Past and present and future are gathered... “We”... “us”: we do not exist purely as individuals, but in relationship, in a community of the living and the dead and the unborn. “We” are colleagues, all of us, in inherited guilt as well as in what glory humanity has managed. For evolution has not stopped: we evolve all the time by natural selection – which I think one of the most beautiful ideas we have stumbled upon in this mysterious Universe – and now it is accepted that someone’s experience might alter the cells, the DNA (or the way the code is read), and behaviour of their children and grandchildren. Indeed, isn’t this exactly what we would expect if we add a little Lamarck to the Darwinian mix? Exposing lab animals to stress, cold, even high-fat diets has been shown to trigger metabolic changes in later generations. Small studies of humans exposed to trauma – like the children of people who survived the Holocaust – suggest subtle biological and mental changes in their children. The converse must be true: that joy, love, humility, compassion also have epigenetic effects.

The implications are sobering. If what we experience or do, in body, mind or estate, has consequences that reverberate in our descendants unto the n^{th} generation, that powerfully argues against everything from smoking to guzzling fast food to the obscenity of bombing people. We are the first generation actually to know that literally, genetically, we carry within us the effects of the lives of our parents, grandparents, ancestors as far back as DNA can trace them. We also inherit, in the world around us, the physical consequences of their myriad choices. I can’t (as if I wanted to!) go hunting dodos: humans removed them from our world. The ecosystem of which they were a part has a gap for ever it did not have before. We may be individual selves, but we exist in relationship: I am because you are, we are because they were, they will be because we are. Neither our goodness nor our badness is just our own. Each of us is a node in a past, present and

future: “[We are] the heir[s] of all the ages”, to misquote Tennyson. What a responsibility!

So when on Ash Wednesday we say goodbye to all sorts of things till Easter and welcome old clothes and porridge, we also take on the hard work of reflection and self-examination. It is not easy seriously to face yourself, to face what you have done wittingly or unwittingly, what you have made of yourself (there is truth in the old joke of the man who entered a crowded room shouting, “Fly at once, all is discovered!”, and everyone ran for the exit). But when we ask humbly for our little selves, we ought also to ask it for our species – an issue sharply topical when contemplating what humans over the ages have done not just to each other but also to other species, and to the very planet entrusted to us.

But alertness is needed: there is a difference between true repentance and simple remorse. Remorse is pretty easy, and can even generate self-congratulation that you feel it. Repentance, much sterner, is a decision to change, a commitment that things shall not be as they were before. So, echoing the Collect for Advent, in this springtime fast let us cast away the works of darkness, and pray for grace to know them for what they are. For Evil so often masquerades to us as good. If it does not, it is powerless. The devil can indeed appear as an angel of light, and “walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

I do not know whether the housemaid ever revised her views. I hope so. I know the family will have tried to help.