

St. Teresa's Parish Magazine



Christmas 2021 and Winter



Sunday Mass Times
Charlbury 9.15am

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Reflections and more

This has been a peculiar year! We turned around the buoy in January determined to face down you know what, and here we all are 12 months later in exactly the same situation. Plus ça change...

Despite the general gloom, things have really picked up over this period. Social distancing and obsessive cleaning of surfaces gradually gave way to a more relaxed atmosphere and , glory of glories, we began to sing again! Again, many thanks to our Kappelmeister Alison with her army of organists and cantors who lift our spirits every Sunday . I know I speak for everyone when I say a big thank you!

Talking of the organ, we were gifted a wonderful instrument which our musicians are coming to terms with...it has some issues and at the current time we are waiting for the service to be completed to set all straight(if that is the correct term!). The improvement in range and quality of sound is noticeable and appreciated.

A big well done to our readers who have reappeared to make our worship truly communal, and to those who fix and clean behind the scenes to ensure that our lovely country church is ship-shape for the people of God. Perhaps the highlight of our parish community was the excellent ACN supper organised by Suze Mathews which raised £ 1,000to feed the hungry young men we are sponsoring in St Thérèse junior seminary, Haiti. How they need our support in that catastrophically damaged country. Thank you again to Suze and to all who cooked and baked and set up and cleared up on that Friday evening.

On a personal level, I should like to say how wonderful it has been to offer the Holy Sacrifice day by day and how encouraged I have felt as I have adjusted to a new life.

We are days away from the arrival of the Christ child and the great proclamation of St John: " In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God".

I hope and pray that all have a happy and holy Christmas and that we will emerge from the fog of the pandemic up into the bright light of Christ.

Father Clive.



The Synodal Pathway

Pope Francis has launched a world-wide initiative aimed at canvassing the opinions of all Catholics about the Church. The Holy Father is very keen on "Synodality", the gathering of views and feelings "from the pews", and this process begins at parish-level, before travelling up to the diocese, the national Bishops' Conferences and then on to Rome.

To this end, I have asked Peter Clifton to "enable" a meeting in the new year, where opinions/suggestions etc can be heard and collated before being sent to the Archbishop. Sharnalee Foster has kindly agreed to be the "recorder". I am very grateful to both Peter and Sharnalee for taking on these roles.

More details of the parish meeting will appear in the new year but it is envisaged that we will have one meeting sometime in January, time and place to be determined to enable as many people as possible to be involved.

In January we are also hosting the "Churches together in Charlbury" annual service, so it won't be quite the "dead" month of the year it can sometimes seem!

Father Clive.

The New Organ

We have been very fortunate to be given a new (second hand) organ. Now three manuals (instead of one) and pedals!



WHAT IS HAPPENING ABOUT THE PEACE GARDEN?

We have a small team of four planning the garden to match the parishioners' priorities. At our meeting at the start of autumn we agreed that the future shape of the garden is very dependent on our cherry tree remaining in good shape, and that starting any planning would be a waste of time if the tree threatens to topple onto the parish shed. Steven Westmore, chartered arboriculturist, was contacted by Hugh on our behalf. He surveyed the tree, delivering a full report in mid-November.

We learnt that the risk of the tree toppling is low, so it is now possible to determine our priorities, make a plan and get going. Hugh and Brek, the worker and the garden expert, are both very busy people, and Covid hit Chen, so we scheduled our meeting for January 8, after Christmas. Then Pope Francis spoke, the demands of the Synodal Pathway appeared, that date was stolen and our meeting has had to be postponed until the following week.

The great news is that a swing or a bench using our beautiful tree is now a possibility; that life goes on after Covid; and our thirst for peace may yet be slaked.

Peter for Brek, Hugh and Chen

A PRAYER OF THANKS

Thank you for the blessings a garden brings:
The bee that buzzes, the bird that sings,
The butterfly with its colourful wings,
The grasshopper that hops, the snail that clings,
The fragrances and rich colourings,
The refreshing rain – and many other things
That make up the wonderful garden blessings.

Andrea Bates
July 2021



Aid to the Church in Need

OUR PARISH 'TWIN' - MINOR SEMINARY SAINTE THÉRÈSE DE L'ENFANT JÉSUS, HAITI

Since we started our twinning project with the Minor Seminary Sainte Therese de l'Enfant Jesus in Haiti in June 2021, we have raised £2650. Thank you all so much for supporting the young seminarians; we all know that Haiti is a poor and devastated country that needs our practical help and spiritual support through our prayers. ACN does much to help and support where they can but the political situation is difficult (to say the least) and transport and access 'challenging' even at the best of times. Our contributions are supporting eight young seminarians in their journey towards ordination: feeding, clothing, housing and supporting their instructors in their intense spiritual journey as young 'servants of God'. The Rector has recently written his thanks to us with some photographs of their young seminarians.

PRESENTATION DU SEMINAIRE

La propédeutique Sainte Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus est plantée sur le morne du feu près du calvaire dominant la ville du Cap-Haïtien. Depuis l'année 2005, date marquant son existence, elle ne cesse de fournir des prêtres pour l'archidiocèse et pour l'Eglise Universelle.

Les séminaristes qui y résident viennent des paroisses de l'Archidiocèse du Cap-Haïtien. Ils reçoivent une formation à la vie spirituelle, intellectuelle, sociale, humaine et communautaire.

Voici de manière succincte le programme de la Propédeutique.

1.- Sur le plan spirituel

- a) Direction spirituelle
- b) Messes communautaires chaque jour
- c) Lectures spirituelles - lecture biblique
- d) Récitation du chapelet chaque samedi matin
- e) Exposition du saint Sacrement 2 fois par semaine. (Jeudi matin et dimanche soir)
- f) Recollection au début de l'année, au début des temps forts et à la fin de l'année.
- g) Participations aux grands événements spirituels du diocèse : Ordination, marche, pèlerinage etc.

2.- Sur le plan intellectuel

- a) Lecture régulière à la bibliothèque
- b) Français de mise à niveau
- c) Initiation à la recherche
- d) Cours de français, latin, anglais, introduction à la bible, music, chant, liturgie, méthodologie, la vie de Saint Paul et ses lettres, les 4 évangiles, l'Eglise, la communication, les conciles œcuméniques, la liturgie des heures.
- e) Génie des séminaristes (Concours question-réponse portant sur les cours, sur l'Eglise, etc.)

3.- Sur le plan humain et communautaire

- a) Savoir vivre
- b) Vie en équipe
- c) Partage des tâches et des responsabilités
- d) Rencontres communautaires chaque semaine
- e) Sortie en groupe

4.- Autres activités

- a) Concert de fin d'année
- b) Rencontre avec les groupes de la chapelle

Au nom de tous les séminaristes de l'Archidiocèse du Cap-Haïtien, je tiens à vous remercier pour le grand support que la paroisse de Sainte Thérèse en Angleterre a bien voulu nous accordé tant qu'au point de vie spirituel que financier. Nous leur disons Merci d'avoir pensé à prier pour nous. C'est le plus important et cela nous reconforte.

In the name of all the seminarians of the Archdiocese of Cap-Haitian, I would like to thank you all for the huge support that the parish of St Teresa in England has shown us both spiritually and financially. We thank them for remembering to pray for us. That is the most important thing and this comforts us. Thank you again for everything!

On the back page is a copy of the letter we have received from ACN, thanking us for our fund-raising efforts on 19 November. Let's hope and pray that the pandemic allows us to further support our twin in 2022 with other parish fund-raising activities.

With grateful thanks and prayers,
Suze Mathews
ACN Parish Representative

The New Couple at the Back (My Crazy Novel)

We started coming to Mass in Charlbury as the Lockdown eased in September. We live in Eynsham but since I was the Parish Priest there, from 2005 till I retired, it has become more appropriate for us to be at Mass elsewhere. I say "we" because, like Father Clive, I am a married priest. In July 2022 I will celebrate 25 years as a Catholic priest. My wife Frances is an expert on the Greco-Roman background to the Bible and her Reflections on the Sunday Readings appears each week on a Blog online and on our Facebook Pages. You can read one of them as her contribution to this Magazine.

I was Chaplain of Oxford Brookes University from 1997-2011 and began then to send out my weekly Homily by email. I still do this, sending it to ex-students all over the world as well as to others in the UK who have asked to receive it. This also appears on the Blog, and nowadays it also appears as an 8 minute Talk on Youtube! So you might call me an Internet Priest! However, I thought you might be interested in a rather different project that occupies me when I am not writing those Homilies. I am writing a Novel!

It all began about 2 years ago when I woke from a dream with the beginning of a story in my head. That quite often happens to me as I am a vivid dreamer, but I never before had written one down. However, on this occasion I happened to hear Ann Cleeves (The author of the Vera and Shetland whodunnits) on the Radio, who explained that when she writes her Novels she never knows the ending. I was fascinated, as I always thought you had to have it all planned out beforehand. Now I could write the story from my dream and just see where it might go. The weirdest thing happened next, and you may well laugh at this; because I had another dream and woke up realising that I had got my main character's name wrong. I had to go back and change the few chapters I had already written. Because his name is Colin!

I doubt the Novel will ever get published, but it is such fun gradually discovering who Colin is, who his family are, and the various hang-ups in his life. He is, of course, a lapsed Catholic with a failed marriage, so he has an ex-wife and two teenage children. He lives in the suburbs of Birmingham, in a place I know well from my childhood holidays when it was a village. The other character is Walter, a retired School Teacher from Oxford who with his wife visits his Sister-in-law who is one of Colin's neighbours. In a very devious manner (I won't spoil the story) Walter befriends Colin, and he and his Sister-in-law together help Colin get over some of his hang-ups and his tendency to deep depression. You can guess that two Catholic priests are also involved, and a wicked Stepfather who repents of his ways and becomes a Catholic as he is dying. What happens next I don't quite know, but I thought you might like to have a laugh at this old retired priest's obsession. The Severn Valley Railway appears in it too!

Email me if you want to know more: frmartinflatman@gmail.com

Fr.Martin Flatman.

St.Teresa's Network is our local parish e-mail group that is used for sharing information about parish events. You can join by sending an e-mail with the subject "subscribe" to StTerasasNetwork+subscribe@groups.io

A reflection on Luke's Christmas Story by Frances Flatman

I am scholar of the Greco-Roman background to the New Testament and I have privately published 3 Books with Reflections on the Readings throughout the year. Here is my offering on the Christmas story

When St Luke wrote his Gospel, (2:1-14) most likely in the 80's CE, he was part of that great move, begun by St Paul, to take the good news out to the pagans, people like us, non-Jews. In the circumstances of the time it had to be a story which was politically non-challenging to members of the Greco-Roman world, a world recovering from the effects of the terrible Jewish Revolt which had devastated Palestine only a decade before, and was responsible for the deaths of many Greeks and Romans, as well as Jews and others. Moreover, the Empire itself had just undergone a vicious Civil War which had brought the Flavians to power. Titus, the victorious Emperor, was about to open his Colosseum in Rome, and celebrate his 100 day triumph for his victory over the Jews and to kill the leaders of the revolt. It was not the best time for a pushy story about a Jew, certainly not one who threatened the status quo, as Luke writing from Antioch in Syria would have been very much aware. Antioch would have witnessed the gathering of legions sent to fight against the Jews, and as a veteran and imperial city would have had many who had fought in the war as well as its orphans and widows.

No doubt this is why Luke's nativity story is so insistent that Jesus' parents, Mary and Joseph, were obedient to the imperial will (albeit that we know Luke's time scale is confused, as there were any number of censuses, and that of Quirinius of Syria took place between 6-9 CE). Our story has them going to considerable lengths, travelling an arduous route to get to Bethlehem, and at a time when Mary was heavily pregnant. The baby Jesus may have been of the Davidic line, but is clearly far removed from its ancient kings, and therefore no threat to the Herod's, the interlopers imposed by the Romans. Unlike Matthew's Infancy narrative, with its visit from the powerful Magi, here in Luke the Good News is delivered to a group of shepherds. Now these would not have been the respectable sheep farmers of rural Oxfordshire, but rough men, social outcasts, people with deplorable personal hygiene, those rejected alike by Jerusalem and its Temple, and by the Pharisees. They were unable to keep the law being constantly ritually unclean by contamination with animal products, birth products, death and defilement. This meant that they

could not practise in the Temple. To respectable Romans, these 'outsiders' who so clearly worked with their hands would barely have been recognised. The majority of Roman shepherds were probably slaves on the large estates of the elite Romans. The job of shepherds was producing food and wool, but even for the average town dweller they would have had no part in society. Their semi domesticated and ferocious dogs guarded the sheep from marauders and wild animals alike. Syria and Palestine was still the haunt of lions, bears and wolves. All in all, they were just about the dregs of society, the very last people you would want to visit your new born baby! Yet it is to these men, that angels bring the message of the divine child.

Greco-Romans such as Theophilus, Luke's powerful patron and the one probably responsible for making sure his Gospel and Acts were written up and reached the world, and clearly a new convert from paganism, would have been profoundly shocked. Luke's account of the birth of God the Son went quite against the grain of all normal expectations of divine-human encounters. It would have been stunning news in the ancient world, where people were extremely fearful of meetings with the gods, and usually structured such meetings very carefully, by going on pilgrimage to holy sites and even spending the night in special 'dream-chambers', where the dreamers could be carefully supervised. Yet here in this Gospel, Luke shows God going quite off-piste, meeting the most ill favoured of men and out in the countryside, the uncontrolled and dangerous place where normal people feared to tread. Clearly Luke was expecting his audience to sit up and take notice, to question this nativity scene, weighing it up against other encounters with the divine with which they were so familiar. We know this because of the angelic hosts proclamation of 'Glory to God', by which means Luke makes clear that this event, whilst non-threatening to Rome, has the capacity to supersede it in majesty and power and – most significant for his hearers - embraces all manner of peoples in its revelation of God; and the angels greet the shepherds with news phrased in language usually found proclaiming emperors on imperial coin!

This is of course echoed in the Letter to Titus (2:11-14) 'God's grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race.' Now, in the Incarnation, the gift of the Son of God by God to humanity, we meet a salvation in which we are all included. Now it is no longer a favoured elite with special knowledge who 'know' God, but rather he has given himself to everyone.

Isaiah's great hope for his people (9:1-7), written in the 8th century BCE has now come about. Now no longer bound up with visions of a rejuvenated Jewish state based in land and temple in Jerusalem, something which can only ever bring death and despair, this Son, this man for the world, invites all, great and lowly alike, to enter into his life, God's life. Truly he has universal dominion and the peace he brings is no earthly kingdom but life in and through and with God eternally. It was something of the magic of this moment Luke was striving to bring home to his motley crew of converts, rich and poor alike; and the mystery is that we are all redeemed by this tiny baby in the manger. Theophilus, his convert patron, would have been startled out of his wits!

Frances Flatman

Inspiring words from St. Francis of Assisi to provide solace to those suffering:

"For the weaknesses of the body are given to us so that our souls may be saved. They are a great blessing, if you can endure them with patience".

Puzzled by her small son's request to draw a heart, a friend asked him to explain what he meant. "You know.....Our Father heart in heaven", was the response.

Contributed by Mary Prior

A Short History of the Parish:

Like so many country parishes, the parish of Charlbury started as a 'mission' supported by a recusant family, the Browne family. Services were held in the chapel of Kiddington Hall, the family seat. When it left Kiddington Hall the chapel closed, but Mr. Browne-Mostyn made a provision for the Catholic population endowing a small Pugin-designed church at Radford, not far from Kiddington. It was opened by Bishop, later Cardinal, Wiseman in 1840. In 1970, the old parish church and presbytery at Radford were sold and the move was to the then chapel of ease at Charlbury, a small church that had started life as a Primitive Methodist chapel in 1854. In 1999 an appeal was made to extend the site and bring it and its ancillary buildings up to date. The present church was reopened at Pentecost 2000.

Letter of thanks from ACN (December 2021)



Aid to the
Church in Need

ACN UNITED KINGDOM

23 November 2021

Rev Father Tony Joyce
Rev Father Clive Dytor
& the Parishioners of St Teresa's Church
5 Fisher's Lane
Charlbury
Chipping Norton
Oxfordshire OX7 3RU

Dear Father Tony, Father Clive and parishioners of St Teresa's,

Thank you so much for inviting me to your fantastic Christmas Dinner last Friday evening. It was the first time in some while that I was able to visit a parish group in person and I can't imagine having attended an event where I could have been made more welcome than I was in Charlbury. There was such a joyful and warm sense of community—I wish every parish could feel just like yours!

Suze Matthews tells me that you all raised around £850 from ticket sales, donations and the raffle (which I did my best to screw up, but was salvaged by those more intelligent than I!). This is phenomenal and, on behalf of all those in Haiti whom you will be helping, please accept my most heartfelt thanks for all of your hard work and generosity.

Christmas seems still a long way away, but as we enter Advent, I'd like to say again what a lovely time I had with you all and what a wonderful way this was to see out the liturgical year and look forward to the festive season.

Thank you all very much (and please invite me back to St Teresa's sometime soon!).

With thanks and prayers,

Caroline Hull
Head of Community Outreach

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Aid to the Church in Need

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