

# St Mary's Parish Magazine



**November - December 2020**

**50p**

## **Editor's notes**

Although life seems somewhat gloomy at the moment, we are doing our best to keep our parishioners in contact with what St Mary's can offer to help and support through these difficult times – daily prayers on our website and Facebook, streamed services, weekly newsletters and the bimonthly magazine. For me, the return of the choirs is a particular joy and I am reminded of the words of that popular ABBA hit:

*I'm nothing special, in fact I'm a bit of a bore  
If I tell a joke, you've probably heard it before  
But I have a talent, a wonderful thing  
'Cause everyone listens when I start to sing  
I'm so grateful and proud  
All I want is to sing it out loud*

*So I say  
Thank you for the music, the songs I'm singing  
Thanks for all the joy they're bringing  
Who can live without it? I ask in all honesty  
What would life be?  
Without a song or a dance, what are we?  
So I say thank you for the music  
For giving it to me*

November 1<sup>st</sup> sees my 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of joining the choir in this wonderful church, and I am truly grateful to everyone I have sung with over the years and for all the joy and happiness it's given me. Thank you one and all!!

**Tony King**

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### Footnote:

Copies of the magazine can be posted to your home or friends and relations. Subscription rates are £6.50 for a year (6 editions), including postage. Please contact the Parish Office.

# REFLECTIONS FROM THE RECTORY

## SUMMER

Do you remember those balmy days of early September? Warm summer weather was still with us and the overwhelming anxiety about the COVID-19 pandemic seemed to be receding. By the end of the month everything had changed. Not only had the weather become more autumnal, but Coronavirus concerns had returned too. Since then we've been urged to prepare for 6 months hard graft to get through the next demanding stage of the disease.

## AUTUMN

I recall thinking at the start of September that we might be able to restart even more services at St Mary's, but in a relatively short space of time the picture changed – nationally and locally caution re-emerged. The fact that circumstances can adjust so quickly means that we need to be prudent and careful in how our church proceeds in the months leading up to Christmas and then into the New Year. The practical challenges are huge. We're having to rethink and reinvent how we do things in church.

## CHRISTMAS

We have brought back staff from furlough onto part-time working within the government's revised scheme. We have volunteers working in new and unfamiliar ways. Many people are putting in an immense amount of effort to do what we're doing at the moment, without seeking to extend our ministry further. And of course, we have Advent and Christmas to come. As we enter November the most practical way to deal with the volume of people who like to share in our services will be to put our Advent and Christmas Carols online, along with our Crib Service. We are hoping this will give us greater flexibility to offer more socially distanced Eucharists on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day – provided there are no local lockdowns in Warwick and Leamington. Please keep an eye on our weekly newsletter and social media for developments.

Many, many thanks to all who are helping St Mary's through this very challenging time.

*Vaughan*

*The Revd Vaughan Roberts*

## ST MARTIN'S DAY

Martin of Tours (c.316 – 97) was a soldier in the Roman army when he decided to convert to Christianity, and was imprisoned for his refusal to fight. He later became a monk, founded the first monastery in Gaul, and then became Bishop of Tours in 372, in which position he served until his death. His reputation for miracles, before and after his death, made him an extremely popular saint in France and neighbouring countries, including Britain, throughout the Middle Ages, and numerous churches were dedicated to him.

The most famous legend concerning him was that he had once cut his cloak in half to share with a beggar during a snowstorm, to save the latter from the cold. That night, he dreamt of Jesus, wearing the half-cloak and saying to the angels, "Here is Martin, the Roman soldier who is now baptised; he has clothed me."

The main aspect of this day in the traditional year, however, had little connection with the saint and his life, but everything to do with its position in the farming calendar. Martinmas was traditionally the time when animals were slaughtered to prepare for the coming winter months. It is because of this wide-spread activity that November was called 'blood-month' in the Anglo-Saxon calendar, and a vague superstition persisted until recent times, in Ireland at least, that something should be killed on this day 'for luck'! The slaughtered meat was salted or dried, and 'Martinmas beef' became a common term for meat preserved in this way. For much of the population, Martinmas itself was therefore one of the last opportunities in the year to eat fresh meat, and was known for food that was a by-product of the slaughter, such as black puddings and offal. The day therefore had something of a reputation for merrymaking.

St Martin's Day also took the place of Michaelmas as a 'settling day' in some parts of the country, particularly Cumbria and other parts of the North, although it was never one of the official English quarter days. In these areas it was the day when rents were due, annual terms of employment or occupancy started and finished and house-moving took place. Across the whole country, one aspect that made it seem pale reflection of Michaelmas was the popularity of roast goose for the dinner table.

A useful piece of advice was included by Richard Inwards in his collection of *Weather Lore*, first published in 1869: 'If the wind is in the south-west at Martinmas, it keeps there till after Candlemas (2 February).'

# WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

The poignant third verse of Lawrence Binyon's poem *For The Fallen*, engraved on war memorials and recited at countless ceremonies since 1919, neatly encapsulates widespread postwar feeling that there was a national obligation to remember the fallen and their sacrifice.

There has been much debate about who first suggested the mass commemorative silence. Although Lord Milner suggested the idea to the government of the day, it is not known for certain who first suggested it to him, and the South African Sir Percy Fitzpatrick and Australian journalist Edward George Honey are the main contenders for the honour. Either way, it was already in place in 1919, and has continued ever since, except during the years of World War II. Between the wars, the silence was literally imposed at 11:00 am on 11 November. Police stopped traffic, public transport paused, and people in offices and schools were expected to conform, as the King's proclamation that announced the day decreed that 'All locomotion should cease, so that, in perfect stillness, the thoughts of everyone may be concentrated on reverent remembrance of the glorious dead.'

Moving the ceremony to a Sunday certainly blunted this effect, and there were many who complained that this downgraded the ceremony in national life. However, the real problem in recent years has been that 'silences' have become the standard response to tragedies, large and small, including terrorist attacks, the death of famous figures, natural disasters and high profile murders. Social commentator Patrick West has written on the subject: 'They are getting longer and we are having more of them, because we want to be seen to care – and increasingly are compelled to do so.'

West and other critics refer to 'silence inflation' and condemn mass silences as 'conspicuous compassion', which do nothing but make the participants feel superior. Others claim that these 'silences' devalue the meaning of the original. It is the sacrifice of the fallen on our behalf that should be commemorated in this way, not the unfortunate but unknowing victims of tragedies both natural and man-made. However, there is no denying the emotional impact of a mass of people suddenly and impressively falling silent, in 'perfect stillness'.

*Steve Roud*

# CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS

The tree was an important symbol to every Pagan culture. The oak in particular was venerated by the Druids. Evergreens, which in ancient Rome were thought to have special powers and were used for decoration, symbolized the promised return of life in the Spring and came to symbolize eternal life for Christians. The Vikings hung fir and ash trees with war trophies for good luck.

In the 7<sup>th</sup> century, St Boniface, a monk from Devon, went to Germany to teach the Word of God. Legend has it that he used the triangular shape of the fir tree to describe the Holy Trinity. The converted people began to revere the fir tree as God's tree, as they had previously revered the oak. By the 12<sup>th</sup> century it was being hung, upside-down, from ceilings at Christmastime in Central Europe, as a symbol of Christianity.

In the Middle Ages, the Church would decorate trees with apples on Christmas Eve, which they called 'Adam and Eve Day'. However, the trees remained outdoors. In 16<sup>th</sup> century Germany it was the custom for a fir tree decorated with paper flowers to be carried through the streets on Christmas Eve to the town square, where, after a great feast and celebration that included dancing around the tree, it would be ceremonially burned.

Martin Luther is credited with starting the custom of lighted candles on Christmas trees. He returned from a night walk in the woods with an image of the stars seen through the trees as a symbol of God's love being there if one looked for it. He put candles on his tree at home to explain to his children what he meant.

But despite the role of the English Boniface, the custom did not become popular in England until much later. Christmas trees were introduced by the Georgian dynasty but it was properly established through the example of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Though Tudor England did not have the Christmas tree, there were decorations. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, a hoop, or sphere, was woven from ash, willow or hazel. In the middle was placed a small effigy of the Christ-child or the Holy Family and the whole hung up inside the threshold of the house. Such items were called 'Sacramentals' and were blessed by the local priest. Anyone calling at the house during the Christmas season showed that they brought goodwill with them by a symbolic embrace under this Holy Bough.

Over the decades this Bough became important also as a status symbol, as families would vie with each other to dress their bough more finely. Ribbons, gilded nuts and small apples were typical.

When the Puritans banned Christmas and all its associations, these Holy Boughs were banned too. But people who lived well away from the prying eyes of soldiers, in the very rural areas of Britain, still hung up a rough bunch of evergreens to remind them of the custom. Of course there was no baby Jesus, and no ribbons and gilded nuts, just a bunch tied to a hook, usually in the kitchen, where they could say they were drying herbs or hanging greens to repel flies. Secretly they still exchanged a symbolic embrace under the boughs, and some of them were still blessed by recusant priests, who under pain of death would travel around the Catholic and Anglo-Catholic houses tending the spiritual needs of their people.

But two or three generations down the line, such memories became hazy. By the time the Victorians took joy in acknowledging all the old customs again, the custom of the Holy Bough had degenerated into a Kiss under the Mistletoe (which, being evergreen, was always used in the making of the Holy Bough). The Bough became known as first the Holly Bough, which was a logical step - Holy/Holly – especially as the bough also had holly in it. Then it became a Kissing Bough or Bunch.

Holly, ivy and mistletoe were all important plants to the Druids. It was believed that good spirits lived in the branches of holly. Christians believed that the berries had been white before they were turned red by Christ's blood when He was made to wear the crown of thorns.

Ivy was associated with the Roman god Bacchus and was not allowed by the Church as decoration until later in the Middle Ages, when a superstition arose that it could recognize witches and protect against plague.

Rosemary was used for its sweet smell because it remained green but it also had a legend attached to it. When Mary washed out the baby's swaddling cloths, she hung them on a small bush to dry. This bush had been used for washing because of its antiseptic qualities, but it bore no flowers. After Mary used it, it is said that it grew the small blue flowers in memory of the occasion.

# AN ENGLISH WINTER'S DAY

On those cold and frosty winter's mornings when the grass crunches beneath your feet, and you're wrapped up in layers, hats and scarves, as is everyone else you meet

When each time you exhale a breath of steam quickly disappears into the chilled air, and any part of you that is open or exposed is numbed and quickly covered, or beware

Often every outside surface is dusted with winter's cold makeup white, and Jack Frost at your nose your ears and fingertips tries to take a bite.

Icicles form to look just like the teeth of some long since past prehistoric beast. Winter's grip in some places on this our Earth holds on; we hope never ever to cease.

The winter sun is low in the sky and its weak rays have little warmth, if any. God's creatures brave the cold in search of food, but really not that many.

Snug in their winter's long sleep, others see neither day nor night. The world outside of which they knew now blanketed cold and white.

Eventually when the night draws in and there are no clouds and the sky is clear, and the only light is from the moon, its silvery glow throughout the heavens appear.

The temperature drops until the very air you breathe chills your lungs with every gasp, and even the tiniest sound seems to be magnified and its echo all around is cast.

And when the morning light again returns as the sun is again risen from its slumber, the beauty of our treasured land we once more behold, with eyes of awe and wonder.

*Paul L Kennedy*



## SPOIL SPORTS!

The Puritans denounced everything! For them, Christmas was part popish, part pagan, and it was forbidden to be kept as a holiday or feast day.

The attack started in 1644 when the Long Parliament changed Christmas into a Fast Day. In 1647, after the Civil War, even this was abolished as a relic of superstition, synonymous with the Church of Rome. Effectively Christmas was banned! The news resulted in riots at Oxford and Ipswich and the Mayor of Canterbury, who had the duty to announce the ban, found the windows of his house smashed and front door alight. In 1652, it became even more intolerable when it was:

*Resolved by Parliament that no Observation shall be held of Five-and-Twentieth day of December commonly called Christmas Day, nor any solemnity used or exercised in churches upon that day in respect thereof.*

In 1656, the Puritan Hezekiah Woodward proclaimed in a tract that:

*The old Heathen's Feasting Day, in honour to Saturn their idol God, the Papist's Massing day, the Profane Man's Ranting Day, the Superstitious Man's Idol Day, the Multitude's Idle Day, Satan - that Adversary's - Working Day, the True Christian Man's Fasting Day. We are persuaded, no one thing hindereth the Gospel work all the year long than doth the observation of that Idol Day once in a year having so many days of cursed observation with it.*

There were, of course, constant protests and another pamphlet, *The Vindication of Christmas* was one such published.

It was not unusual to see soldiers searching for mistletoe, yule logs and mince pies; people were thrown into prison for celebrating the day and churches were locked. But although Christmas observation stopped in churches, they were known to continue at home; the diarist John Evelyn and his wife were arrested in 1657 for attending a secret service.

In 1660 Charles II was restored to the throne, and with him revelry was restored. Although mistletoe and mince pies returned, Christmas was never really the same again.

# THE SON

A wealthy American and his son loved to collect rare works of art. They had 'everything' in their collection, from Picasso to Raphael. They would often sit together and admire the great works of art. When the Viet Nam conflict broke out, the son went to war. He was very courageous and died in battle while rescuing another soldier. The father was notified and grieved deeply for his only son.

About a month later, just before Christmas, there was a knock at the door. A young man stood there, with a large package in his hands. He said, "Sir, you don't know me, but I am the soldier for whom your son gave his life. He saved many lives that day, and he was carrying me to safety when a bullet struck him in the heart; he died instantly. He often talked about you, and your love for art."

The young man held out his package. "I know this isn't much. I'm not really a great artist, but I think your son would have wanted you to have this." The father opened the package. It was a portrait of his son, painted by the young man. He stared in awe at the way the soldier had captured the personality of his son in the painting. The father was so drawn to the eyes that his own eyes welled up with tears. He thanked the young man and offered to pay him for the portrait.

"Oh, no sir, I could never repay what your son did for me. It's a gift."

The father hung the portrait over his mantle. Every time visitors came to his home he took them to see the portrait of his son before he showed them any of the other great works he had collected. The man died a few months later. There was to be a great auction of his paintings. Many influential people gathered, excited over seeing the great paintings and having an opportunity to purchase one for their collection. On the platform sat the painting of the son.

The auctioneer pounded his gavel. "We will start the bidding with this portrait of the son. Who will bid for this painting?" There was silence. Then a voice in the back of the room shouted. "We want to see the famous paintings. Skip this one." But the auctioneer persisted. "Will someone bid for this painting? Who will start the bidding? \$100, \$200?" Another voice shouted angrily. "We didn't come to see this painting. We came to see the Van Goghs, the Rembrandts. Get on with the real bids!" But still the auctioneer continued. "The son! The son! Who'll take the son?"

Finally, a voice came from the very back of the room. It was the long-time gardener of the man and his son. "I'll give \$10 for the painting." Being a poor man, it was all he could afford. "We have \$10, who will bid \$20?" "Give it to him for \$10. Let's see the masters." "\$10 is the bid, won't someone bid \$20?"

The crowd was becoming angry. They didn't want the painting of the son. They wanted the more worthy investments for their collections. The auctioneer pounded the gavel. "Going once, twice, SOLD for \$10!" A man sitting on the second row shouted. "Now let's get on with the collection!"

The auctioneer laid down his gavel.

"I'm sorry, the auction is over. When I was called to conduct this auction, I was told of a secret stipulation in the will. I was not allowed to reveal that stipulation until this time. Only the painting of the son would be auctioned. Whoever bought that painting would inherit the entire estate, including the paintings. The man who took the son gets everything!"

God gave his son 2,000 years ago to die on a cruel cross. Much like the auctioneer, His message today is, "The son, the son, who'll take the son?"

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## CHRISTMAS

*Every time a hand reaches out  
To help another....that is Christmas  
Every time someone puts anger aside  
And strives for understanding  
That is Christmas  
Every time people forget their differences  
And realize their love for each other  
That is Christmas  
May this Christmas bring us  
Closer to the spirit of human understanding  
Closer to the blessing of peace!*

# NEVER A CROSSWORD!

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24							25					

## ACROSS

1. Singers could be so rich. (6)
4. Resort gets hot for a recess. (5)
8. Affirms, but is almost reluctant. (5)
9. Priest before being late. (7)
10. The office of a minister on the railway? (8)
11. Holy man has a year initially to remain in position. (4)
13. Song for a worker on the edge! (6)
15. Refrain from singing? (5)
18. A prophetess whichever way you look at it! (4)
19. Creamy food for the gods? (8)
22. Sailor and artist get meat for a patriarch. (7)
23. Curses! The porridge is getting hot! (5)
24. Biblical witch's home where cardinals do right. (5)
25. Very large prophetess gives an exclamation of praise. (6)

## DOWN

1. Tea deal worked up in Biblical land. (7)
2. Final letter? It's all Greek to me. (5)
3. Socialist in the shop and the fabric is looking better! (8)
4. Christmas for no English student. (4)
5. Assembly of canons doing things by the book? (7)
6. Song of mourning from Israel, Egypt and other countries. (5)
7. Bet on anger, when on top of the tower. (5)
12. Cleaner is to work on these vehicles. (8)
14. Crusader or spinning dancer to a T? (7)
16. Bird on an ocean represents a cathedral city. (7)
17. I'm a modest supporter, initially, of Muslim leaders. (5)
18. Open-mouthed at the feast. (5)
20. Father Xmas confused? The devil he is! (5)
21. God of North or South. (4)

# THOUGHT FOR FOOD

## Turkey goulash

Something to ease you past Christmas Day

### *Ingredients*

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 large onion peeled and sliced
- 2-4 garlic cloves, peeled and sliced
- 350g / 12oz potatoes peeled and diced
- 450g / 1lb fresh diced turkey
- 1 tbsp paprika
- 2 tbsp plain flour
- 450ml / pint of turkey or chicken stock
- 1 tbsp tomato puree
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 tomatoes, chopped
- few drops of Tabasco sauce
- 1 green pepper, deseeded and chopped
- soured cream and snipped chives to garnish



Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cook: 40 minutes

Serves 4

Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a large frying pan and gently sauté the onion and garlic for 5 minutes or until softened. Add the potatoes and sauté for 2 more minutes. Remove from the pan with a slotted draining spoon and reserve.

Add the remaining oil to the pan and seal the diced turkey on all sides then return the vegetables to the pan and sprinkle in the paprika and flour. Cook for 2 minutes stirring frequently, then gradually stir in stock, the tomato puree and seasoning to taste

Bring to the boil, stirring occasionally then lower the heat. Add the chopped tomatoes to the pan and Tabasco sauce to taste, then simmer for 20 minutes.

Blanch the green pepper in boiling water for 4 minutes, drain and add to the pan. Adjust seasoning, then cook for 5-10 minutes or until the turkey is tender. Turn into a warm serving dish, top with small spoonfuls of soured cream and sprinkle with the snipped chives. Serve immediately with warm crusty bread.

## HERE WE COME A-WASSAILING!

The word *wassail* comes from the Anglo-Saxon greeting *Wæs þu hæl*, meaning "be thou hale"—i.e., "be in good health". The correct response to the greeting is *Drinc hæl* meaning "drink and be healthy". According to the Oxford English Dictionary *wæs hæl* is the Middle English (and hence post-Norman) spelling parallel to OE *hál wes þú*, and was a greeting not a toast.

Traditionally, the wassail is celebrated on Twelfth Night (variously on either January 5 or 6). Some people still wassail on "Old Twelvey Night", January 17, as it would have been before the introduction of the Gregorian Calendar in 1752.

In the middle ages, the wassail was a reciprocal exchange between the feudal lords and their peasants as a form of recipient-initiated charitable giving, to be distinguished from begging. This point is made in the song "Here We Come A-wassailing", when the wassailers inform the lord of the house that

We are not daily beggars that beg from door to door  
But we are friendly neighbours whom you have seen before.

The lord of the manor would give food and drink to the peasants in exchange for their blessing and goodwill, i.e.

Love and joy come to you,  
And to you your wassail too;  
And God bless you and send you  
a Happy New Year

This would be given in the form of the song being sung. Wassailing is the background practice against which an English carol such as "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" can be made sense of. The carol lies in the English tradition where wealthy people of the community gave Christmas treats to the carollers on Christmas Eve such as 'figgy puddings'.

Although wassailing is often described in innocuous and sometimes nostalgic terms—still practiced in some parts of Scotland and Northern England on New Years Day as "first-footing"—the practice in England has not always been considered so innocent. Similar traditions have also

been traced to Greece and the country of Georgia. Wassailing was associated with rowdy bands of young men who would enter the homes of wealthy neighbours and demand free food and drink (in a manner similar to the modern children's Halloween practice of trick-or-treating). If the householder refused, he was usually cursed, and occasionally his house was vandalized. The example of the exchange is seen in their demand for "figgy pudding" and "good cheer", i.e., the wassail beverage, without which the wassailers in the song will not leave; "We won't go until we get some, so bring some out here".



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## AND FINALLY .....

### CROSSWORD SOLUTION

**ACROSS** 1 Choirs 4 Niche 8 Avers 9 Prelate 10 Deaconry 11 Stay 13 Anthem  
15 Chorus 18 Anna 19 Ambrosia 22 Abraham 23 Oaths 24 Endor 25 Osanna

**DOWN** 1 Chaldea 2 Omega 3 Restored 4 Noel 5 Chapter 6 Elegy 7 Spire  
12 Chariots 14 Tancred 16 Swansea 17 Imams 18 Agape 20 Satan 21 Thor

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