



THE NEWSLETTER



ALL SAINTS CHURCH Upper Norwood

****July 2020 Online Version****

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Here is our fourth exclusively online version of the newsletter. There are signs that it may be the last such, as it might be possible to return to a mainly printed version thereafter. However, I have had no contact with my printer during the lockdown and do not know at this time if the logistics of restarting a printed version soon will still be possible. Whatever happens, the newsletter will continue to be accessible via the church website.

As always, if you know anyone without internet access who would like to see a copy of this newsletter, please feel free to copy and print it out yourself. If you want to do this but find you cannot print it straight from the website, I shall be happy to email you a personal copy if you contact me. Keep well and keep positive.



The Vicar's Monthly Letter

Dear friends,

I send my good wishes as we enter another month under the developing conditions of lock-down. I hope you as well as family and friends have managed to stay well. I hope too you have managed to stay connected to us by looking at our website and joining in the online worship which has been posted on our parish website. Thanks to Philip Saunders our webmaster for facilitating this online outreach.

I ask you to keep our parish school in your prayers. This has been a challenging time for all schools. In the nation as a whole, serious economic consequences of this crisis have still to work themselves through. Food bank use has spiralled, and unemployment may grow to levels that many have not known in their lifetime. The closure of schools has had a serious impact of the well-being of particularly vulnerable children.

As I write we are preparing to open the church for private prayer on 28th June, and for a Sunday Eucharist at 10.00 a.m. on 5th July under the conditions that the government and diocese have directed. I hope you will be able to join us` on those occasions, even if for some while the conditions mean it is different from our usual experience of Eucharistic worship. I thank Churchwarden Mike for his work in undertaking a risk assessment that is required so we can open the church with safety. Other people have

worked very hard to enable the life of the church here to carry on as best we could. I will not name them, but feel it is important that their work is acknowledged.

I feel I need to point out what is fairly obvious - the financial effect of the church being closed has meant our rentals and church collections have not happened, while many financial outgoings have had to continue to happen. If you are able to give I ask you to do so, either on line Just Giving, on our parish website, or now as we begin to open for prayer and services.

I celebrate on 29th June, the feast of SS. Peter and Paul 40 years as a priest in the Church of God. I could not have imagined celebrating this anniversary in these present circumstances, but the Mass has been celebrated throughout the history of the church in many different contexts and circumstances. I have been touched by messages and cards, (and the lovely flowers), as I mark this occasion - thank you to everyone.

There has been a lot of speculation about what the future of church might be as we emerge from this pandemic. I cannot predict what that will be. My faith tells me that the Church is a people called into being by God for his purposes in creation and redemption. At our baptism we are reminded that we all share in the priesthood of Christ. Here on earth we are to do Christ's will and share in Christ's work. To do that we are nurtured, especially by the sacraments - those special signs of God's presence amongst us. It has been my privilege to serve the Church as a priest, to be a sacramental reminder of the calling of the whole Church to be God's priestly people. In the Eucharist Jesus Christ unites us to his offering as our eternal High Priest. He is here for us and has given himself for the salvation of the world.

I pray that we as a community may be open to what he offers us in this present time. That we may grow in his love, and that we may give ourselves as his people, to respond in love and generosity.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Leonard



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Saints of the Month: July.

- 3rd **St Thomas the Apostle**, patron of architects, and of the blind.
- 11th **St Benedict**. Abbot and author of the Benedictine rule. Patron of Europe and the European Community.
- 22nd **St Mary Magdalene**. Follower of Christ, patron of repentant sinners.
- 25th **St James the Great**, patron of Spain;
St Christopher, patron of travellers.
- 26th **SS Joachim & Anne**, parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- 31st **St Ignatius Loyola**, founder of the Jesuits.

The Children's Society

In line with many charities and other organisations much of the regular work of the Society has been put on hold. This includes our annual emptying of the collection boxes. This will take place once I am able to do this safely.

In the meantime the Charity always is in need of donations as they have and continue to be involved with outreach with young people and especially at this time of lockdown when many families are experiencing difficulties on all levels.

All Saints' were to have had a preacher from the Children's Society in April, but due to the suspension of all church services this was postponed. Hopefully in the autumn we may be able to re-invite the representative from the Society to come and talk to us about their work and role.

Alison Austin

Prayer for the Month

O God, teach us to live together in love and joy and peace, to check all bitterness, to disown discouragement, to practise thanksgiving, and to leap with joy to any task for others. Strengthen the good things thus begun, that with gallant and high-hearted happiness we may look for your kingdom in the wills of mankind. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The prayer of Toc H.



David Bentliff and John Welch

It is with sadness that I write this article for the Newsletter as All Saints' have lost two faithful parishioners in the last few months.

David Bentliff, who attended All Saints' for many years, mostly at the 8.00 am communion, service died in March. He had been unwell and housebound for some time and died in St Christopher's Hospice. He was a very interesting, thoughtful and knowledgeable man. Over the years he had been involved in the local community as Vice Chairman of the Norwood Society and also the Dulwich Arts Society (NADFAS) of which he was a member. He was also a fluent Japanese scholar. I have probably omitted many other attributes of his life.

Our sympathy, prayers and thoughts are with his wife Bridget, daughter Georgina and all the family at this sad time.

Equally we are very sad to learn of the death of John Welch, another faithful member of our congregation for many years. He served on the PCC for some time and latterly like David was a regular attendee at our 8.00 am communion service. John was a very kind, thoughtful man and full of knowledge and interest on many topics including his various travels and visits to galleries, both in the UK and abroad and to theatre and the opera, accompanied by his late wife Joyce. He was a great reader. He also would sometimes assist at the communion or morning service by reading the Epistle. Sadly after a successful hip replacement operation last autumn he had not been able to return to our services. Our thoughts, prayers and sympathy are with his son John and all the family.

Both David and John will be remembered for their Christian values and the discussions and conversations that took place between them, the Vicar and others after the services.

May they both Rest in Peace.

Perhaps when church services resume in a more usual manner we can remember both of them as we were unable to share in the celebration of their lives at their funerals due to the restrictions imposed by Covid-19.

The following prayer is one said by John every day and was read at his funeral.

By Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits

Teach us, good Lord,
to serve you as you deserve,
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labour and not to ask for any reward,
save that of knowing that we do your will. Amen.

Alison Austin



Father Leonard's Anniversary

Last Sunday, 28th June, we celebrated the 40th anniversary of Fr Leonard's ordination to the priesthood. In 2005, at time of his 25th anniversary, a sermon was given by Fr Rodney Bomford, who was the vicar of St Giles Camberwell when Fr Leonard was a curate there. We have great pleasure in reproducing that sermon below, together with photographs taken at the time.

Fr Rodney's Sermon

We are celebrating Fr Leonard's 25th anniversary to the priesthood. I want to go even further back into the history of the Church of England for a moment and tell you about a little incident in 1968. It was the end of my first year at Mirfield theological college and the senior year were preparing to be sent out into the big wide world as deacons in their first parishes. Not long before the then Bishop of Woolwich had told us all that the impulse to religion was dying out in modern humanity – belief in God was drying up. Everywhere the Church of England particularly was in decline. The future deacons were decidedly apprehensive, in fact an air of depression hung over the college. They felt as perhaps the final wave of troops might have felt going over the top at the Battle of the Somme – doomed to be wasted in a hopeless attempt. The Principal of the College addressed them before Compline on their last night in College. I know you are all very depressed about going into parishes – he said – the trouble is I don't think you are nearly depressed enough. They seemed totally crushed. Filled with the self-confidence and vanity of youth we in the junior year thought this was very funny.

I tell that story because I hope it shows that gloom and doom are nothing new in the dear old C of E. The trouble then was that there seemed not enough demand for religion. Now the trouble is that in a way there is too much. Those who believe seem to believe far too earnestly, far too confidently, far too crudely for their own good, or for the church's good, or indeed for the world's good. A rather effete and wishy-washy liberalism has been replaced by an aggressive and repellent fundamentalism. In many parishes groups of people who have been infected with the religion of the American Christian Right feel entitled to judge others, and often particularly the clergy the church has ordained to guide them - entitled to judge them whether their doctrine is pure or whether they have received the Spirit. And these are people with no theological training, no knowledge of the church's teaching

and traditions – even though they may spend much time attempting to study the Bible, but studying it without the guidance of their priests.

25 years ago the revival in interest in religion in this country had not really begun. Within the church there was a growing emphasis on the role of the laity and the responsibility of the laity to learn more of the faith and play a bigger part in the church. All that is very right and commendable. It was therefore rightly seen as good when lay people took up that challenge. But now in a time, when lack of interest has been replaced by excess of zeal we need to ask what guidance people need, what indeed it is to study the Bible rightly. The problem goes much further back. At the time of the Reformation five hundred years ago some put forward the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture. This meant that the plain meaning of Scripture as the ordinary person read it, was indeed God's truth. It took no account of the change of culture from biblical times. It took no account of the prejudices with which we all approach a document of any kind, and particularly a very important ancient document. From this doctrine sprang many of the ills of seventeenth century religion, the multiplying of sects each believing they had a unique hold on truth. It led to some of the bloodiest wars in history. We might today be shortly facing a not dissimilar situation. The troubles of the Middle East are not helped by those of the Christian Right in America who believe that when Israel regains its supposedly God-given ancient frontiers, the end of the world and the rapture of the blessed will come, Such people are said to have influence in the White House itself.

I asked if we could have that first reading tonight from the book of Exodus. The people of Israel are gathered at the foot of Mount Sinai. God said to Moses, Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel and worship afar off. Moses alone shall come near to the Lord, but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him.

It is sometimes said that the church should get away from Old Testament models of ministry and adopt something else, supposedly derived from the New Testament. I suggest that we need a good dose of Old Testament ministry in the church today. I suggest that our priests like Moses have a responsibility to approach near to God first, and the people should have a certain hesitation about rushing in unprepared. In particular this is relevant to the study of the Bible. We do not meet God on the top of Mount Sinai, but in Word and Sacrament. I am not suggesting that the Word, the Scriptures, are kept away from the people of God, far from it. I am not suggesting that the priest stands between God and the people, far from it. I am suggesting that the priest needs in some sense to enter first, and as he does at the Eucharist, act as a host on behalf of God for the people.

Think how that Exodus story continues. They all went up – and they saw God, and there was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And God did not lay his hand on them; they beheld God and ate and drank. Yes, they all got there to the summit of divine revelation. They saw God and ate and drank in his presence. Moses went in first to the presence so that that might happen. He did not stand between them or keep them away or anything like that – but the order of their going up was vitally important.

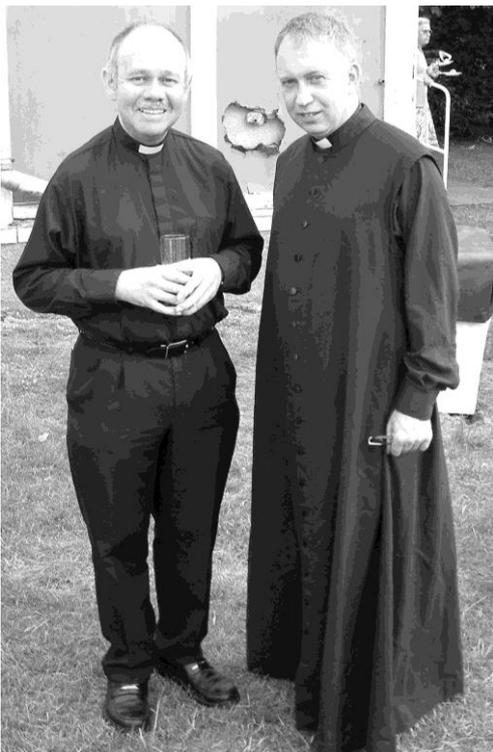
So that puts a huge responsibility on the priesthood: to act as hosts for God; to go up first and lead the people in. I suppose most of us have acted as hosts – welcoming people into our homes, perhaps for a meal. There is a lot of preparation to be done if we are to act well as hosts: food and drink and so on – and in my case at least a great deal of tidying up and arranging of things suitably. It all creates a sense of welcome, an atmosphere in which one's home is for a time a home to one's guests – so that they are at home as well. How much more is that the case if a priest is to be a host for God.

For worship, there must be preparation – of the setting, the building, of the music, of the words to be read, and indeed of the souls of those participating. Obviously that is so, but there is much more to it. In opening the Word of God, as well as in the Sacraments, the priest is welcoming people into his or her understanding of God and his ways. He is inviting people into a spiritual banquet that has taken much preparation: study, prayer, contemplation. Not so that he can always be ahead of the people, or between them and God, but so that in the end all may see God and eat and drink in his presence. So that all may reach their own understanding, which may indeed go far beyond the priests if God so chooses.

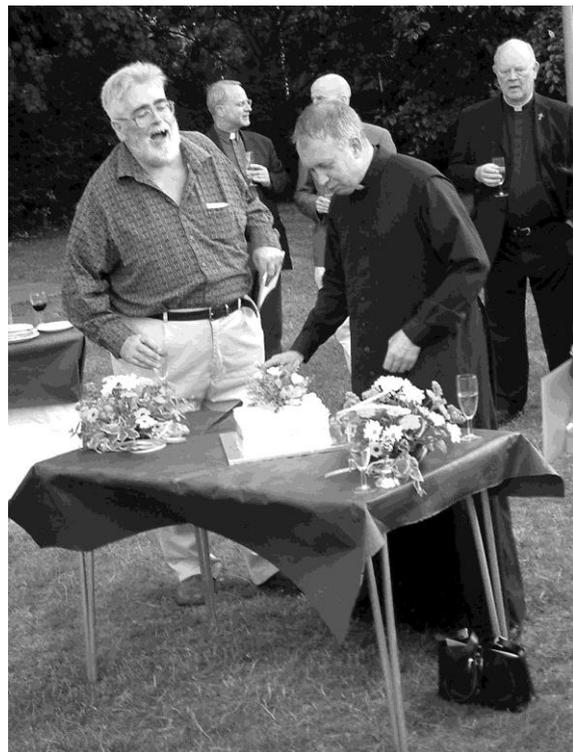
I am thinking of the priest as host – not just of the external things – but of the interior things of the knowledge of God. I see the priest’s role as sharing that interior understanding, an understanding guided by the church’s developing tradition, the fruit of study and of prayer and of reflection upon action. Of course that is not to confine the people to the priest’s own thoughts or to his limited understanding. But as a priest, charged with a particular ministry, it is his responsibility to be at home in Word and Sacrament so that he can share that home with his people. In the reading from Colossians, St Paul expresses it like this: I became a minister to make the word fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations, but now made manifest to God’s saints. May Fr Leonard be blessed in that task as much in the next 25 years as in the last, and indeed more!

It is to set them off in the right direction, as it were, towards the mountain-top where God dwells. Towards a sight of the true divine glory so that together all may eat and drink the things of the spirit in the presence of the true, who is the Blessed Trinity himself.

Fr. Rodney Bomford



Fr Len with Fr Rodney



Fr Len and the late Geoffrey Nyberg