



St Mary's Magazine

Mar 2022

Thank you to all who helped at the Christmas Fair.
And to all those who came.
£314.98 was raised.

Fr Eddie

Fr James said of Fr Eddie that he was a simple and generous man. Generous with his time, always ready to help when he could and with a compassionate nature, treating others gently and with understanding.

Many of us will remember him telling us, at the time of another refugee crisis, how he himself had fled from his homeland, separated for a while from his mother, re-united but then evacuated once again. He said that he could well understand what the refugees must be feeling. It was this understanding and compassion that made him someone you could go to in times of need. He will be missed.

Anne

I first met Fr.Eddie when he came to school functions. Some of his parishioners were pupils in the school and he was always keen to support them. However it was after he retired as parish priest and came to live in Anstey Lane that I came to know him well.

He was happy in his flat. Many old friends and relatives would visit him. He said mass at the convent on Wednesdays and the sisters enjoyed a chat with him over 'a cuppa'.

His interests were varied. He loved music and would attend concerts from time to time. He collected CDs to enjoy in his armchair at home. He liked reading and we would



exchange books with him: history, mystery and detective, to name a few.

Fr.Eddie was always happy to join the sisters and friends at Christmas, New Year, Easter and, in fact, he felt he could drop in at the convent at any time.

In conversation he showed a good sense of humour and we had many a good laugh. But what shone through was his great commitment to his vocation as a priest. He was sensitive to people's needs, and treated everyone with great respect and kindness. He always found the right thing to say in a crisis.

It was very sad for us all when his health started to decline and he suffered the loss of his independence as he ceased to be able to go for a stroll and walk into town for his shopping. (His favourite outing was to walk over to Kingfisher's fish and chip shop to collect his Friday evening meal!)

We shall always remember Fr.Eddie with great affection, and we feel very privileged indeed to have had him as our neighbour.

Sister Helen

A Child Explains God

Written by an 8yr old for his homework

"One of God's main jobs is making people. He makes them to replace the ones that die, so there will be enough people to take care of things on earth. He doesn't make grownups, just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make. That way he doesn't have to take up his valuable time teaching them to talk and walk. He can just leave that to mothers and fathers.

God's second most important job is listening to prayers. An awful lot of this goes on, since some people, like preachers and things, pray at times beside bed-time. God doesn't have time to listen to the radio or TV because of this. Because he hears everything, there must be a terrible lot of noise in his ears, unless he has thought of a way to turn it off.



God sees everything and hears everything and is everywhere which keeps him

pretty busy. So you shouldn't go wasting his time by going over your mum and dad's head and asking for something they've already said you couldn't have. Atheists are people who don't believe in God. I don't think there are any in Chula Vista. At least there aren't any who come to our church.

Jesus is God's Son. He used to do all the hard work like walking on water and performing miracles and trying to teach the people who didn't want to learn about God. They finally got tired of him preaching to them and they crucified him. But he was good and kind, like his father, and he told his father that they didn't now what they were doing and to forgive the and God said OK.

His dad (God) appreciated everything that he had done and all his hard work on earth so he told him he didn't have to go out on the road anymore. He could stay in heaven. So he did. And now he helps his dad out by listening to prayers and seeing things which are important for God to take care of and which ones he can take care of himself without having to bother God. Like a secretary, only more important.

Found in other bulletins

Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring husbands.

Alton Clothes Bank

Sometime back last year, I was scrolling through Facebook and I came across a request from a Petersfield resident for clothing for a family that had contacted them in desperate need of clothing. They had escaped a life of domestic violence and had literally left with no clothes or possessions at all. I desperately wanted to help but as my children were older, I had no suitable clothes to donate so I decided to ask the parishioners of St. Mary's to help.

I was amazed at the response and the family were gifted with such lovely items to help them start over again. It felt good doing



something for someone else and at the time, I didn't consider the fact that by helping this family, we were also helping the planet by recycling.

It's funny but when we talk about recycling, we often think about glass, plastic, paper and cardboard, forgetting about textiles and clothing. The reality is that an estimated £140 million worth of clothing going into landfill each year. This landfill contains toxins which decompose and produce greenhouse gases such as methane which in turn, contributes to global warming.

When I realised this and having read Pope Francis' encyclical '*Laudato Si*', I concluded, I could ignore these facts and continue to add to the problem caused by 'fast fashion' or I could attempt to do something about it. I decided that something had to be done but realistically, this could only be done at a local level.

It was through this thought process that the Alton Clothes Bank was born in November 2021. With the help of a fantastic team of parishioners, we were up and running within two weeks of pitching the idea and organised through social media, we received an abundance of donated good quality clothing.

Four months in and the ACB works like a well-oiled machine. Thanks to the team and under the auspices of Father James, we have been able to recycle approximately 2500 items to date. The ACB is also growing weekly and currently we have over 340 members on our Facebook page alone. We are



working alongside other community projects, charities and schools in order to offer our service to people who might struggle financially to clothe themselves or their families.

The ACB is open every Tuesday from 9am to 12pm and many of the donated items are advertised on our Facebook page during

the week ready to be collected from the church hall. An unforeseen benefit to this is that we are hearing from people who had no idea that there was a Catholic Church in Alton and the ACB has helped people realise that we are part of the Alton Community, ready to support and take part in local projects where possible.

It certainly feels fantastic to be helping so many families and to be helping the planet at the same time. Of course, we could not do this without the support of St Mary's parishioners and particularly Father James and Tracy who not only allow us to use the facilities free of charge but often personally collect up the donations left at the church door, a service for which we are very grateful and wish to thank them for.

In the meantime, there are other Churches interested in running their own Clothes Banks so watch this space for further details.

Cathie Joseph

After seeing that the Community Centre were collecting men's clothing to go to Ukraine we sorted some out to give them.

On the same day we were approached by a group who were collecting clothing to go to Poland for the Ukrainian refugees arriving there. So we were able to sort out a large number of women's and children's clothes and they were collected that afternoon. This has all been made possible by the generosity of all those who have donated items and it was wonderful to be able to respond so quickly, and a privilege to be able to help. Two weeks later and we were packing up another load to go to Ukraine while also responding to local needs. It has been an amazing few weeks.



A prayer for Ukraine

Loving God,
We pray for the people of Ukraine,
for all those suffering or afraid,
that you will be close to them and protect
them.

We pray for world leaders,
for compassion, strength and wisdom to guide
their choices.

We pray for the world
that in this moment of crisis,

we may reach out in solidarity
to our brothers and sisters in need.

May we walk in your ways
so that peace and justice
become a reality for the people of Ukraine
and for all the world.

Amen.

From the Caritas website

Date for the Diary



Queen's Jubilee Party

Saturday 28th May

Please come and join us,

Details to follow

Responding to Pope Francis

If you are a regular at St. Mary's and St Lucy's, you've probably heard Father James talk about '*Laudato Si'*'. *Laudato Si'* is a letter (encyclical) from Pope Francis to all Catholics. In it, the Pope asks us to reject the contemporary 'throwaway' culture and to open our eyes to see how God is present throughout creation. He asks us to think about the reality facing many of our sisters and brothers across the world, who are being pushed deeper into poverty due to climate change. Pope Francis asks us all to have a change of heart so we may truly respond to "both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor". He says, 'the issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle', including what he calls our 'environmental footprint'.



So approximately a year ago, the Parish formed a *Laudato Si'* group – initially five people – who volunteered to coordinate the parish's response to the Pope's letter. At first, we focused on raising awareness of what the Pope says in *Laudato Si'*, through making a series of posters and displaying these at the back of church, as well as on the Parish *Facebook* site and *Whatsapp* group. At the same

time we undertook an environmental audit of the church and its grounds, to see if there was more we could do to reduce our environmental footprint.

The next stage was to invite people to a meeting in order to share what we had learned about the Pope's letter, and to ask for ideas of how to respond. The seventeen people who attended the meeting (after 11am Mass on December 14), and the two who contributed views in written form, suggested 89 ideas; several people also pointed out that people in the parish are already doing a lot to address the Pope's concerns.

Consequently, we offered everyone in the parish a brief questionnaire that listed the most frequently-mentioned ideas and asked, a) what do you already do? and b) what would you be willing to do in the future? 71 questionnaires were returned – far more than we expected. We were pleasantly surprised to find that all of the ideas we presented were already being done by at least one person and some of them were being done by 80% or more of the parishioners! (These were 'Shop locally'; 'Recycle packaging & paper'; 'Donate used goods to charity shops'; 'Replace light bulbs with LED lights'; and 'Donate good clothes to the clothes bank'.)

Encouraged by these results, we decided to apply for CAFOD's 'Live Simply' Award. This is 'Inspired by the Pope's encyclical'. It is given to parishes who can show how they have been living simply; in solidarity with people in poverty; and sustainably with creation. To get it, we need to draw up quite a detailed plan for living simply; in solidarity with people in poverty; and sustainably with creation. Then we need to involve as many parishioners as possible to implement the plan. We expect to take 1-2 years to achieve the award and during this time we will have the support of CAFOD for our efforts to do what Pope Francis asks. At the end of that time, a CAFOD assessor will tell us whether we have achieved our aims and, if we have, we will celebrate as a parish.

Also inspired by *Laudato Si*, the Alton Clothes Bank has been set up. This is run by Cathie Joseph and a team of willing and able volunteers from our church; it has rehomed thousands of items both to families within Alton and to refugees fleeing from Ukraine. The

people who donate good clothes, and the volunteers who run the Clothes Bank are, by their actions, living more sustainably and in solidarity with people in poverty

So the Clothes Bank, the parish environmental audit and all of our many individual actions are already making a difference – we are already doing a lot in our parish to respond to the Pope's call. However, we want to do more. Right now, as part of the Live Simply Award, we are asking you to focus on the aspect of Food and shopping: is there anything you would like to do, to be live more simply or sustainably?

There are small green sheets of paper at the back of church which contain some ideas which you might find helpful. It also contains an invitation to commit to a practical change in your use of food and your shopping; to write that commitment on the form, and to place this in the basket at church. These completed forms will be placed at the foot of the altar.

Whilst we do not want anyone to feel obliged to do anything they are not comfortable with, we hope as many parishioners as possible will want to make a few changes in their lifestyle, in order to respond to Pope Francis' call.

If you would like to know more about anything in this article, please do ask a member of the Laudato Si group, or visit these web-sites:



Laudato Si: www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

The Live Simply Award: <https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/LiveSimply-award>

Laudato Si group

John Bird, Anne Bothwell, Tim Cain, Cathie Joseph and Pam Taylor

Seed Swap

Some may have noticed that on the Laudato Si board at the back of St Mary's, we are suggesting that if you have any extra seeds that you would like to share, you can pin them on the board and anyone can take them to use in their

garden/allotment etc. Some have already been taken and it is a lovely way to share as well as not wasting those hundreds of seeds you get in packets.

Knit and Natter Club

This meets on the 2nd and 4th Monday of the month in the church hall. It is a very relaxed and friendly group. Come with a project that you are working on, come to learn another craft or just come just for a chat. You will be very welcome.

Parish Bulletin

At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be 'What is hell?' come early and listen to our choir practice.

The Sweetness of Life

Oh, the sweetnesses of life, how beautiful they. Forget your woes and wars and look to God for life. Look at what we have been given. Give thanks. How can we ever think of turning this away by our thoughts of wanting more. Whatever comes our way it is what we deserve at present. To face this with right thoughts can only make our journey easier. We have a purpose here on earth and only the mighty force knows the truth. If only man would listen and learn he too would know the truth about his true higher self and the spirit world where he belongs. Just look to nature alone which comes bouncing back, however she is abused and misused. Look at the beauty of the eyes of animals who just want our love and care. But once again we exploit them with no heart. How can we expect to live in harmony and peace until we change our minds and look at the beauty of each thing?

Fortunately, there are many good souls that see the truth who will be the teachers of future humanity, who will need guiding along the way. We are here to be happy. It is up to us. God did not intend anything else.

But to be happy we have to respect all the kingdoms of nature in order to be in harmony and have happiness beyond our wildest dreams. Only by love can this come about. Being kind to all that tread our path.

It is only by example and forgiveness that the minds of man can change. Animals too respond to kindness as do the other kingdoms.

Be positive in this beautiful world which has been given to us. We can only keep it if we look after it. Value all life, then life will be good to you.

Laura Beaumont

Closer to Christ Campaign

Many of you will have seen that Alton has recently embarked on the *Closer to Christ* Campaign. This initiative aims to raise vital funds for our clergy throughout all stages of their priestly life, while also providing our parish with increased regular income. Fr. Carling will be sharing the initiative with all parishioners over the coming weeks through meetings, Mass announcements and newsletter inserts, and we hope you will consider taking part.

We look forward to keeping you up to date on our progress.

Matt Bloomer

Parish Bulletin

Potluck supper Sunday at 5pm—prayer and medication to follow.

CaFE

"The study of the Sacred Scripture must be a door opened to every believer." Pope Francis

"I love my old Bible – it has seen my triumphs and been wet with my tears. It is my most prized possession" Pope Francis

In the notices at the end of Mass and in the newsletter, you'll have heard mention of [CaFE](#). Autocorrect in Word insists that this should be written as café, but this is CaFE, a Catholic Faith Exploration course that has been happening in the parish (although our CaFE sessions do also involve tea and biscuits or cake). The course is called "The Big Picture" and we've been exploring the bible and God's big plan.

It's not about a scholarly study of the bible. Rather, it is based on the idea that God speaks to us in and through the bible, and that

by praying, digging deeper into scripture, declaring, and sharing we can be helped to live according to God's plan.

There are 12 sessions, each on focusing on a theme: The Plan, God, Creation, The Fall, The People, and Incarnation (the 6 sessions we did in autumn 2021) and The Cross, New Life, Resurrection, Holy Spirit, The Church and End Times (spring 2022). Although there is an over-arching structure to the themes, each session can stand alone.

In each session we watch a short DVD clip exploring the theme of that session. In the clip a biblical expert sets the scene, there is a narrated section, an interview with a theologian who answers questions from ordinary people, and finally a piece from someone in the UK who is seeking to live out the challenge of that week's theme. The DVD clips have produced many reactions in us. We have laughed, cringed, wondered, questioned and been enlightened and inspired.

The discussions which follow are always friendly and interesting. As we share our thoughts, we are enriched by the insights of others, or simply encouraged to know that we are not alone. Since the sessions happen on a Wednesday, we finish each time with prayers and intercessions to coincide with the wider parish prayer time at 8.45pm on Wednesdays.

We are encouraged to continue the theme through the next week as there are short bible passages for reading each day, with questions for us to ponder or suggestions for prayers or actions. We can then discuss these at the start of the following session.

The number of attendees has grown steadily as the course has progressed. Many of us have found it to be inspiring and to deepen our faith and understanding. It has certainly encouraged me to read the bible more and to think and pray about what is said there. A big thank you goes to those who made this CaFe course happen.

Jane Hinde

Baptism preparation

The next course will be held on

Sunday 3rd April

Following the 11am Mass

Please contact the parish office



An Easter Prayer

by Helen Steiner Rice

God, give us eyes to see
the beauty of the Spring,
And to behold Your majesty
in every living thing.

And may we see in lacy leaves
and every budding flower
The Hand that rules the universe
with gentleness and power.

And may this Easter grandeur
that Spring lavishly imparts
Awaken faded flowers of faith
Lying dormant in our hearts.

And give us ears to hear, dear God
the Springtime song of birds
With messages more meaningful
than man's often empty words.

Telling harried human beings
who are lost in dark despair
'Be like us and do not worry
for God has you in his care.'

Easter Services 2022

Thurs 14th April—Holy Thursday

8pm Mass of the Lord's Supper

Watching until 10pm

Friday 15th April—Good Friday

10.30 Children's Stations

3pm Solemn Passion Liturgy

Saturday 16th April—Holy

Saturday

8pm Solemn Easter Vigil

Sunday 17th April—Easter Sunday

9am Mass at St Lucy's

11am Mass at St Mary's