



# St Mary's Magazine

Dec 2023

## **Welcome to Fr Peter**

We welcomed Fr Peter back to St Mary's in September to take up the reins as Parish Priest after a gap of 7 years.

## **Cafod Harvest Appeal**

Thank you for your generous donations to this year's appeal. It really is needed and appreciated as you can see from the information about Dr Nasha's Mobile Clinic.

'When flooding hit Pakistan, Dr Nasha's mobile team of healthcare professional travelled hundreds of miles to treat people who needed help.

That's how they met Meera. Meera gave birth just as her home was destroyed by the floods. The family moved into temporary shelter at the side of the road. With little food and no clean water to drink, diseases started to spread throughout the camp.

When Dr Nasha and her team arrived in her village, Meera hurried to bring her children to the clinic and got them the life-saving medicines and treatment they needed.

Meera's baby, Marwi, is now a healthy one year old. Together, Meera and her husband have rebuilt their home and are working to recover what they lost in the floods.'

Your gift to Cafod means that families like Meera's can get help from doctors and other local experts when they need it most.

## **History of the Church in Alton**

I was recently given an article which had been written by Fr David Buckley some years ago when he was a curate at St

Mary's. Some of you may remember it but many will be unaware of the information and I thought you might be interested. It is not intended as a complete history.

'The history of the Catholic Church in Alton goes back many hundreds of years to the time when the first missionaries, successors of St Augustine, settled here in 1161.

At the time of the Reformation, which began in 1534 under Henry VIII, the parish priest was Fr Ralph Herriot. The Reformation brought great changes and the old religion of the country disappeared from public life. The subsequent history of those who remained faithful is not well documented, however we do know that during the years of persecution and despite the terrible penalties a small group persisted, evidence of which can be found in some unusual places.

The 'Salt Library' at Stafford contains an invaluable manuscript which gives details of those over the age of 16 who did not attend the Established Church for the year 1676. This document records 24 known Catholics in the Alton area. A total of 846 known Catholics are recorded for Hampshire.

The diaries of Douay College in France, record 2 young men who came from Alton to study for the priesthood. John Pitts was born here in 1560, was ordained in France and died on 17th October 1616. John Matthews born in Alton in 1659, after ordina-

tion he returned to England where he died on 8th Sept 1744'

To be continued.....

### TEN WAYS TO LOVE

1. **LISTEN** without interrupting. (Proverbs 18)
2. **SPEAK** without accusing. (James 1:19)
3. **GIVE** without sparing. (Proverbs 21:26)
4. **PRAY** without ceasing. (Colossians 1:9)
5. **ANSWER** without arguing. (Proverbs 17:1)
6. **SHARE** without pretending. (Ephesians 4:15)
7. **ENJOY** without complaint. (Philippians 2:14)
8. **TRUST** without wavering. (Corinthians 13:7)
9. **FORGIVE** without punishing. (Colossians 3:13)
10. **PROMISE** without forgetting. (Proverbs 13:12)

*Proverbs 13:12*

### CaFE Sessions - GLOBAL HEALING

On the first three Fridays in November St Mary's CaFE group met to watch 'Global Healing', a series of films commissioned by the Bishops of England and Wales which aims to raise practical awareness of Pope Francis' Encyclical Laudato Si. In Laudato Si His Holiness addresses every single person on the planet with his perceptive drawing together of all aspects of environmental issues, and he has moved Roman Catholics to the heart of the ecological debate. Laudato Si is the most widely read encyclical of all time.



The central theme of the films, 'Care for the Poor' and 'Care for the Environment', took us on a journey through our spiritual connection with God the Creator, challenging us to think about our personal connection with God and the amazing gift of His Creation. The dialogue nudges us towards a deeper awareness of the interconnectivity between spirituality and all of creation; to allow the world's beauty to touch us. In the words of John Arnold, Bishop of Salford, 'Faith is not something about prayer over there or the environment over here, they are all part of one great plan.'

Catholics are asked to think about the dignity of all people and the damage the lifestyle of the developed nations is doing to the millions whose livelihoods are vulnerable to climate change. People God has created and cares for as much as He cares for us, who are denied the right to the basic dignity of a sustainable livelihood in their own homes. We are asked to consider questions such as:

*How do you experience the gift of creation?*

*How do you feel about the state of our planet?*

*How are you challenged by ecological conversion?*

*What sacrifices could you make to help heal the planet?*

Central to these questions about our 'Global Caring' is the very real concern of individuals that the problem is so huge, 'is anything I do going to make any difference?'. Pope Francis reassures us that we must seize the moment, that nothing is too small. To avoid further irreversible damage is a matter of urgency. Now is the time to act. The small changes we make to our personal lifestyles are likely to be noticed by others. It sets the ball rolling. It stimulates discussion and raises awareness. It is not a problem for Governments alone.

*We are asked to make an honest appraisal of what it is that hinders us from making practical changes.*

We are led to think about consumerism and our buying habits in a world dominated by corporate power. Dr Carmody Grey asks us to be aware that when we spend money, we are making a moral decision, we are casting a vote for the world we want.

We are asked to be particularly mindful of food waste and how it can be reduced. Bishop Arnold reminds us 'that the food [we] eat is a precious gift from God. We should 'consume only what we need' and rethink our complacent throwaway attitudes. We have a responsibility to think

about how our consumer habits affect the environment and the livelihoods of others. We are asked to consider needs versus wants. Bishop John Arnold notes that that simple living is far more comfortable than existing in a cluttered state of material possessions.

Children interviewed about nature and the environment voiced their enthusiasm for practical gardening and their interest in the ecology lessons taught at school. They discussed how they were taking their environmental knowledge back home to educate their parents. They expressed their concerns that there is no 'Planet B', that they are worried about rises in CO2 and sea levels, about a 'spoilt future'. It was sad to hear their anxieties. They envisage that the quality of their future lives, and that of succeeding generations, will be seriously compromised because of the selfish actions and inaction prevalent today and yesterday.

The film series ends with an observation about the importance of educating ourselves about our environmental impact. Fr Sean McDonach, SSC, an eco-theologian in Ireland, points out that 'We know everything about electronics, but we know nothing about entering into a relationship with the natural world. How many of us know the names of grasses, flowers, birds, trees...?' Jesus, during His time on earth constantly referred to nature in His teachings – birds, seeds and growth, wind, rain and sun, animals, trees and water. He was very connected to nature. Many of us have seriously lost that connection.

Thus, the final challenge posed in the film series.

***How can we respond to the call of Pope Francis:***

***as a parish community,***

***as families,***

***and as individuals?***

It is acknowledged that it is difficult for us to make these changes, to live in a 'green way' and generally there is some distance

between aspirations and practice. We are all at different stages of awareness and capability. However, we all need to reconnect. We need to open our hearts and minds to a spiritual change, and a conversion to a new way of thinking about the world.

### **A Prayer for Our World**

Lord, hear the prayer we offer  
On behalf of our suffering world  
In this time of terror and tribulation.

Your Son came and lived among us,  
One of us in all things except sin.



And called us all to share together  
In the bond of love and solidarity.

May we be one in our hope  
For the future destiny of our world,  
That together we can strive  
To make our world a place  
Where your kingdom may come,  
Where your justice may flourish,  
Where our human family  
Can live in harmony and peace.  
Inspire the hearts of political leaders  
To find just solutions  
To the terrors that beset us.



May your healing Spirit  
Enlighten our path forward,  
Shine in our darkness like a candle,  
That we may never despair,  
But in spite of all the uncertainties  
In our world today  
Hold fast to our trust in You. Amen.

### **The Mighty Oak**

All native trees are beneficial to biodiversity and in the UK, the willow, birch, and hornbeam are some good examples. But

the oak still remains the king of biodiversity. It is a symbol of strength and essence of Englishness, and is a vital and fascinating haven for wildlife.



Oak trees are a **keystone species**, meaning they are trees that *entire ecosystems* depend on for survival and habitat. Often called the cathedrals of the natural world, they have an exceptionally long life span and are only officially considered 'old' when they reach 400 years of age. This slow and methodical maturation leads not only to the fine quality of the wood, but also to the remarkable biodiversity of life that the trees support

The oak family has graced our planet for a remarkable 65 million years and is one of its most ancient species. This long-term survival can partly be put down to the design of acorns. The hard shell protects the seed (or to be correct, the fruit); naturally occurring high levels of tannic acid protect against fungal and insect threats.

The contribution of oak trees to landscapes, biodiversity, culture and economy is enormous. Renowned in history and legend, oak trees symbolise royalty, patriotism and strength. But perhaps their greatest feat is nurturing wildlife. They are a haven for a colossal 2,300 wildlife species.

The 2300 species consist of some 38 bird species including the woodpecker, rook and jay; 229 mosses, 108 fungi, 1178 invertebrates, 716



lichens of many shapes, colours and sizes, which offer nesting material, food and shelter; and 31 mammals including badger, deer and squirrel with acorns as one of the main attractions. Of these species, 320 are found only on oak trees, and a further 229 species are rarely found on species other than oak.

The trees are also a favourite of wild bees

and pollinators. Uniquely, they do not offer the traditional nectar from flowers but provide a similar substance that is secreted through galls growing on the tree.

The oak's main reason for secreting this secret substance is to attract insects that can help protect it from other harmful insects.

It's not just the tree's living parts that provide for wildlife. As a tree becomes older, it gradually dies. The trunk thickens and the innermost heartwood decays and becomes exposed, helped along by animal damage, weather extremes and specialist fungi. One of nature's essential recycling processes, dead and decaying trees are a vital part of a wood's biodiversity: they provide habitat and nourishment for a dizzying array of species. Holes and crevices appear, making perfect nesting spots for birds while the holes made by woodpeckers are ideal for bats to roost in. An amazing tree.

### **Church Cleaners**

Are wanted to help clean the Church and Hall.

1-2hrs every 5th week

Please contact the Parish Office if you can help.

### **Bishop's Pastoral Letter**

This is available on the Parish website. In it he talks about the importance of Sundays, of participating actively in our parish, works of charity and of the importance of rest in our lives.

<https://stmarysalton.co.uk/>

Happy Christmas  
Have a holy and peaceful  
Christmas Season



