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ALCUII NEWS

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM SAINT ALCUIN OF YORK
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND CHAPLAINCY IN TOURAINE

Christmas is Coming

verses from the poem 'Christmas' by John Betjeman

And is it true,
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall?
The Maker of the stars and sea
Become a Child on earth for me?

And is it true? For if it is,
No loving fingers tying strings
Around those tissue fripperies,
The sweet and silly Christmas things,
Bath salts and inexpensive scent
And hideous tie so kindly meant,

No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare -
That God was man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.



WORSHIP WITH US THIS CHRISTMAS

SUNDAY 24TH DECEMBER
11.00 am CHRISTMAS EUCHARIST WITH CAROLS
at Savigny-en-Véron

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WHO'S WHO

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AT THE HEART OF OUR LIFE



THE EUCHARIST with Junior Church

11.00 am
on the 4th Sunday of the Month
in the Parish Church of St Michel
Le Bourg,
Savigny-en-Véron

HEROES OF THE FAITH

Eglantine Jebb

Social Reformer

Eglantine Jebb was born in 1876. After studying at Oxford, she became a teacher for a few years until ill-health led to her resignation. She then devoted her energies to charitable works and in 1913 went to Macedonia to help refugees in the Balkan wars. After the First World War, she and her sister Dorothy Buxton founded the Save the Children Fund, which aimed to help children who were suffering in the post-war famine in Europe, a charity which is now global in its scope. Eglantine fought for the rights of children to be recognised, the League of Nations passing her 'Children's Charter' in 1924. She inspired many by her personal spirituality and was greatly mourned on her death in Geneva on 17th December 1928.

Pessimist: 'My glass is half empty.'

Optimist: 'My glass is half full.'

**Psalmist:
'My cup runneth over.'**
(Psalm 23)



FR JOHN WRITES



IT WAS BY SHEER COINCIDENCE THAT IN OCTOBER WE CELEBRATED TWO SERVICES WHERE YOUNG PEOPLE WERE AT THE CENTRE. You will find details of these on pages 4 and 5.

We have a considerable number of young people who regularly worship with us at St Alcuin's and feel at home with us. For example, they are generally to be seen handing round snacks after the Eucharist. But could there be the ulterior motive in that they hope the adults don't take too many, leaving the rest for them (particularly when there are sweet chilli tortilla chips to be had)?

I have been fortunate that throughout my ministry each parish that I have served in has had a large number of young people, so, over the years, my thoughts have focussed on what ministry to them entails.

First, I am firmly convinced that children are not just the Church of the future: they are an integral part of the Church of today. Jesus said, "*Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.*" (Mk 10.14b,15) We have so much to learn from them.

We adults, in our turn, have much to offer them as a Christian community. At St Alcuin's it is largely through our flourishing Sunday School, animated by the parents.

But they also learn through our attitude to worship itself. Do they see us fully engaged in it? Do they see us expecting to meet our Lord through word and sacrament? Do they see us as those who realise the potential of the liturgy to deepen the love of every Christian for the Lord?

We now have many young new communicants. May our example help them grow in the faith.

Fr John

THE ST ALCUIN CALENDAR

Our worship in the coming months

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE A EUCHARIST IN TOURS,
PLEASE CONTACT FR JOHN**

November	26th	<i>Christ the King</i>	11.00 am	Sung Eucharist
December	24th	<i>Christmas Eve</i>	11.00 am	Christmas Eucharist
January	28th	<i>Epiphany 4</i>	11.00 am	Sung Eucharist
February	25th	<i>Lent 2</i>	11.00 am	Sung Eucharist

Chaplaincy Council Meeting

OUR MEETING IN SEPTEMBER, ON THE SECOND FRIDAY AS USUAL, WAS EXPECTED TO HAVE JUST ONE MAIN ITEM OF BUSINESS: THE PURCHASE OF AN ORGAN TO ACCOMPANY OUR SINGING. However, following a telephone call Fr John had received from Bishop Robert's chaplain, there was also major discussion to be had on the subject of Safeguarding.

The matter of a portable organ had been mulled over at previous Council meetings, but no decision had been taken.

We resumed our consideration of a Viscount Cantorum VI and discussion centred round whether we should buy new or second hand. We agreed unanimously that we should buy a new instrument, which would cost in the region of 1,800€, particularly as the saving over a second hand one may not be great. We also agreed to set up an organ fund and encourage donations towards its cost (*at the time of writing, the fund has already raised 640€.* Further contributions will be welcome - Ed).



A large part of our meeting concerned the issue of Safeguarding. Fr John reported that in early August he had received a phone call from the bishop's chaplain to express the bishop's disquiet that he should be responsible for safeguarding issues as the bishop did not think it ap-

propriate for a chaplain.

Fr John had been asked to resign from this role and that the Council be required to appoint a new Safeguarding Officer for services to continue.

We were most grateful that, subject to there being no other volunteers, Gilly Bromilow agreed to take this on, thus enabling us to continue our life. Deo Gratias.

Further discussion concerned our possible loss of participation in diocesan democracy if Synod meetings continued to use Zoom technology rather than meeting in person. It was decided to communicate our feelings to archdeaconry officers.

Retirement of Bishop David

BISHOP DAVID HAMID, THE BISHOP SUFFRAGAN OF THE DIOCESE, HAS ANNOUNCED THAT HE WILL RETIRE AT THE END OF FEBRUARY 2024. We wish him many happy years of retirement.

We at Saint Alcuin's have particular reason to feel grateful for his ministry.

It was in 2016 that he came to St Alcuin's to (re-) inaugurate us as a chaplaincy of the Diocese of Gibraltar in Europe. He licensed Fr John, admitted our first churchwardens and blessed crosses for our new servers.

That was only what he did "up front". On the day before—having just arrived in Tours from a busy Archdeaconry Synod in Brittany—he paid a visit to the Archbishop of Tours and also



recorded an interview for local radio. Both of these helped to put us on a firm foundation with our ecumenical partners.

Now the process to choose a new suffragan bishop must begin, starting with an assessment of the needs of our disparate diocese.

You might like to use the prayer below. It is for the appointment of a new bishop. It first appeared on a prayer card of the Advisory Council for

Church Ministry at Petertide 1975.

Give us a man of God,
Father, to pray for us,
Longed for, and insignificant,
But excellent in mercy,
And ordain him
Someone who loves the mystery of the
faith
Whose conversation seems
Credibly to come from heaven
A poor man, a hungry man
Whose hospitality is endless.

Give us a preaching man,
Father, who doesn't know how to fake,
A free man, on holiday
In this parish, a still man
Good as an ikon
With a heart full of treasure;
Someone to talk to
When death comes here,
A fellow countryman of birth and death
And the dynasty of our family,
Whose eye has missed nothing.

Give us a man without sanctimony
Father, to handle what is eternal,
A private citizen among miracles
Not his, modest
Capable of silence
Someone who reminds us now and then
Of your own description
And another kingdom
By the righteousness of his judgement
Or some grace in what's done
In laying down his life even
For his friends.

Celebrating God's Blessing

IT IS ALWAYS A DELIGHT TO BE ASKED TO PERFORM AN "OCCASIONAL OFFICE", FOR THEY ARE AN IMPORTANT LINK WITH THE WIDER COMMUNITY. So it was with great pleasure that we celebrated the Naming and Blessing of two small boys, Lucien and Robin, at Saint-Avertin, near Tours, at the beginning of October.



The family had made the request to us as the boys' mother is half English, hailing from the Wirral. The couple thought Blessing more appropriate for their sons than Baptism as, although their mother is a Christian believer, their father is not.

The family live at Saint-Avertin, and we are very grateful to the curé, Père François-Xavier Oniossou, with the sup-

port of the vicaire general of the Diocese of Tours, Père Christophe Raimbault, always a good friend to St Alcuin's, for allowing us to use the parish church.

This was quite poignant for us, as the parish was founded in the ninth century, the time when Alcuin was Abbot of Tours.

Early on, the family requested that the blessing take place in a wider context of worship. We decided that Morning Prayer would be most appropriate for the occasion and were glad that a number of our regular worshippers shared in the service, even travelling as far as 70 km to be there.

A challenge for Fr John was that, as neither of our two organists was available that morning, it fell to him

to accompany the hymns on their three manual organ, the largest he has played since leaving Britain.



THE BIBLE IS CLEAR: Moabites are bad. They were not to be allowed to dwell among God's people.

(Deuteronomy 23)

BUT THEN comes the story of Ruth the Moabite, which challenges the prejudice against Moabites.

THE BIBLE IS CLEAR: People from Uz are evil. (Jeremiah 25)

BUT THEN comes the story of Job, a man from Uz who was the "most blameless man on earth".

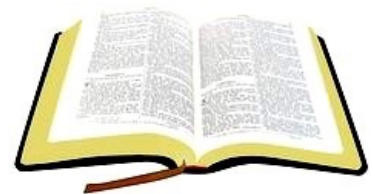
THE BIBLE IS CLEAR: No foreigners or eunuchs are allowed.

BUT THEN comes the story of an African eunuch welcomed into the Church. (Acts 8)

THE BIBLE IS CLEAR: God's people *hated* Samaritans.

BUT THEN Jesus tells a story that shows not all Samaritans were bad.

THE STORY MAY BEGIN with prejudice, discrimination and animosity, but the Spirit moves God's people towards openness, welcome, inclusion, acceptance and affirmation.



from the magazine of St Peter's, Formby

Called to the Lord's Table

“THE LORD’S OWN SERVICE FOR THE LORD’S OWN PEOPLE ON THE LORD’S OWN DAY” IS HOW WE SEE OUR CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST AT ST ALCUIN’S. So we were very happy that five of the Lord’s own young people made their First Communion at our October Eucharist.



They were prepared at home by their parents, though Fr John looked in on the candidates a week before the celebration itself. Amongst other things he rehearsed receiving Holy Communion with them, partly to eliminate the risk of an “Ugh!” moment at the occasion itself.

The first photo at the bottom of the page shows the candidates having their first taste of the wine—a Banyuls from the Catalan region of southern France—with an appropriate slogan on the wall behind!

The session was also a great chance for the young people, with their parents, to come together as a group. Our other photo at the bottom of the page gives a flavour of the happiness we all felt in anticipation of the following week.

At last the great day dawned, thankfully bright and not too cold. The church was well filled: friends and relatives had come in support, not only from other parts of France, but also from Ireland and as far away as the United States of America. It was also a delight that two of our founder members, who had spent some years living in England, have now returned to France and were worshipping with us once again.

However, the youngsters were not the only stars of the occasion. They had to share their stardom with the dedication of our new organ. For the technically minded, we have bought a Viscount Cantorum VI which, although portable, has a full organ specification, with 21 stops.

Once dedicated, we were able to enjoy the enhancement it brings to our singing

compared with the parish’s harmonium.

The theme of the Eucharist, very appropriately, was Thanksgiving for Holy Communion and this featured strongly in the readings and prayers.

And so, the candidates came to the altar with their families to receive Holy Communion for the first time. The smiles on their faces—and on the group photo taken after the service—said more than any words possibly could.

But that was not all. Light refreshments are always the order of the day after our eucharists. To celebrate this special occasion the ladies of the Church had gone to town and produced a most splendid buffet.

A fitting climax to a wonderful day.



The Year of Mark

EACH YEAR IN ORDINARY TIME (THAT IS, BETWEEN EPIPHANY AND LENT, THEN BETWEEN PENTECOST AND ADVENT) THE READINGS AT THE EUCHARIST CENTRE ON ONE OF THE FIRST THREE GOSPELS, MATTHEW, MARK OR LUKE. We are now about to embark on our insight into the life and ministry of Jesus as seen in St Mark's Gospel.

TO START WITH

This, the shortest of all four gospels, was for centuries regarded as an abridgement of Matthew which is why it was placed second in the New Testament. Now it is accepted that it was the first to be written, with St Matthew using some 600 of Mark's 661 verses.

A great characteristic of Mark is its sense of urgency. There is no account of Jesus' birth, nor of his ancestry, unlike Matthew and Luke. Straight in he goes: "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." (*Mk 1.1*)

THE BASIC OUTLINE

The gospel is in two distinct parts. The first is set in Galilee and contains most of Jesus' miracles. The break comes after Jesus asks the disciples who they say he is and Peter blurts out "You are the Messiah." (*Mk 8.29*)

The action then moves to gentile areas and to hostile Judaea, until Jesus and the disciples reach Jerusalem at the end of chapter 10. In this part, the main thrust is the teaching Jesus gives to his disciples.

PART THE FIRST

Mark starts by straight away announcing Jesus as the Son of God. We are left in no doubt. The paradox is that others do not know this and when they get an inkling Jesus tells them to keep it quiet.

First of all we meet John the Baptist and his preaching of repentance, which leads on to Jesus being baptised by him and receiving the Spirit before being sent into the wilderness to be tested.

And so Jesus' ministry begins: he gathers his disciples, he teaches, he drives out demons, he heals—cleansing lepers, giving sight to the blind—he raises the dead, he feeds the hungry.

But already in the early chapters of the gospel he has his first clashes with Jewish law-keepers, by eating with sinners and breaking sabbath rules.

Jesus' teaching in parables was intended for the disciples, but as they fail to understand, he directs his teaching to the crowd.

As well as teaching and healing, Jesus is recorded as performing other miracles such as calming a storm and walking on

water. Through his mighty acts and teaching, the demons recognise who he is, but the disciples and the crowds still fail to grasp it.

Then comes Peter's momentous confession, which is followed by Jesus taking his three closest followers up a mountain where "his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them" (*Mk 9.3*) and Moses and Elijah appeared and talked to him. So he is affirmed as Son of God. Jesus commands them to silence, but adds that the Son of Man—an expression Jesus uses of himself in all four gospels—must go to Jerusalem and be killed.

PART THE SECOND

Chapter 10 deals with the journey to Jerusalem, where Jesus makes an entry on a donkey and is greeted as "the one who comes in the name of the Lord." (*Mk 11.9*) Events unfold at a great pace and he goes to the temple evicting

the money changers, thus angering the powers-that-be even more.

When a woman pours ointment over him while he was at table, Jesus says "she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial" (*Mk 14.8*) and, at the Passover meal shared with the Twelve, he declares the bread and wine to be his body and blood and openly talks of his coming death and resurrection.

CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION

Betrayed to the Jewish authorities by Judas Iscariot, Jesus is turned over to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. Pilate has him crucified as 'the King of the Jews'.

Abandoned by his friends, it falls to a sympathetic member of the Jewish Council to have him buried in his own tomb.

Early on the Sunday morning, three women who had followed Jesus came the tomb to perform the customary funeral anointing of Jesus body, which they were unable to do before because it was the sabbath. They found the body gone and a man in a white robe who told them to tell the disciples and Peter that Jesus was going ahead of them to Galilee.

But "they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid." (*Mk 16.8*)



... AND THERE IT PROBABLY ENDED

The earliest existing Greek manuscripts of St Mark's gospel have it ending at chapter 16, verse 8: "*They (the women) went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.*"

Modern scholarship believes the short ending to be original and that verses 9 to 20 are a later addition. In deference to their importance within many manuscripts over the centuries many bibles print these verses, but as a clear addendum.

FOR OUR YOUNGER READERS (young in age or young in heart)

We are now at the end of the Church's year and we sum up all we have learned about Jesus by celebrating him as King—King of all creation and particularly King of our hearts.

Here is a picture of him being crowned. Can you colour it in bright colours like a stained glass window?



Bishop's Advent Appeal

Bishop Robert writes:

AS THE DIOCESE IN AND FOR EUROPE, WE ARE DEEPLY AWARE OF OUR INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT; perhaps we're also well-placed, then, to think internationally outside Europe itself. I'm delighted to say that we will be supporting this Advent the Anglican Communion Fund of the Archbishop of Canterbury. It exists to make small investments across the church; in the right hands, these can have great impact. The focus of this year's work is South Asia, with which I now myself feel a special link, after my sabbatical in that part of the world in early 2023.

PAKISTAN

Women in Pakistan regularly experience domestic violence, sexual abuse, forced marriages, kidnappings, acid attacks and more. Christian women and girls in Muslim Punjab face discrimination due to their gender, faith, and low position. They are the poorest of the poor, and often illiterate. At risk of forced conversions and false charges under blasphemy laws, they are often unable to stand up against these offences; they often don't know their constitutional rights.



The Diocese of Sialkot, in Punjab Province, is supporting women and girls. The Bishop's wife there is leading in teaching women about their rights and protection, for them to pass on to younger women: it is all born of the insight that God has made them wonderfully and fearfully, and it hopes to erase what is often the experienced shame of being female. Sessions on the law of Pakistan educate women about domestic violence and harassment; girls are given strength and confidence to recognise the protections they need.

YOUNG WOMEN IN SOUTH INDIA

The Covid pandemic took its toll on the economy and the health care industry in South India. The economy is still struggling to recover from the severe lockdown measures. The costs of essential goods has increased, and unemployment is high, with young women particularly vulnerable. At the same time, the need for nursing-at-home and health care support increased further, while the pandemic meant that skilled and educated young people migrated for work opportunities elsewhere.

The Church of South India is responding to these issues by starting a programme for young women aged 18 to 28, particularly from rural areas, to study home care nursing and health care. After completing a basic training course, some will go on to higher level training, and others will work in some of the CSI Mission hospitals. Not only will these young women gain skills and employment, bringing benefit to themselves and their families, but the pool of nursing and health care staff will also increase.

HPA-AN DIOCESE, MYANMAR



A rat plague hit two parishes in the Diocese of Hpa-An, Myanmar in 2022, destroying seed sown and causing a loss of the following year's harvest. A religious minority, Christians in Myanmar are more vulnerable to poverty, and government structures cannot be relied upon to offer a safety net to struggling families. A grant from the Fund helped the Church to purchase and distribute rice - both to Christian families and to the very poor of other faiths, feeding the hungry and serving as a witness to God's love in this area touched by conflict, natural disaster and other maladies.

To donate to the ACF Appeal please see the notes below.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

+Robert Gibraltar in Europe

HOW YOU CAN DONATE TO THE BISHOP IN EUROPE'S ADVENT APPEAL 2023:

By cheque: Diocese in Europe (Advent Appeal 2023)
Diocese in Europe Board of Finance
14, Tufton St
London SW1P 3QZ

By bank transfer: Account number: 40317039
Sort code: 20-06-13
IBAN: GB16 BUKB 2006 1340 3170 39
Swiftbic: BUKGB22

On the Diocese in Europe Just Giving page:
<https://www.justgiving.com/diocese-in-europe>

Or: via our Treasurer

Please add a reference to "Advent appeal 2023" to bank transfers and Just Giving.