

## ST. MARY OF NAZARETH /ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM

**3<sup>rd</sup> September 2023: 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity**

### **Hazel writes:**

Over the past week, we've had two stories showing our **compassion**:

- Kate Dyer took a car full of donations to the Bromley Homeless Starter Pack project. Many thanks from Anne Horner-Tree for these. We will continue to take donations for this project and there is a notice later in the pew sheet about this.
- Our Community Garden Open Morning was a great success showing what can be achieved when working with others in the community. We are hopeful that this will develop into a space where garden therapy is beneficial to others for many health issues. Clientele will come through the social prescribing officers in GP surgeries and notices in community spaces.

This week we have Holy Communion services at 8am in St Francis' Church and a joint service at 10am in St Mary's Church.

Next **Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> September**, our theme will be Creation Sunday and there will be a Holy Communion service at 8am in St Francis' Church, Morning Praise at 9.15am in St Mary's Church and Morning Worship at 10.45am in St Francis' Church.

**Morning Prayer** is held each week in St Francis' Church on Wednesday morning at 9.30am, followed by the church being **open for private prayer** from 10.30-11.30am. It is also held in St Mary's Church on Thursday morning at 9am.

**Resources and updates for the week ahead** – Each week our service is livestreamed on YouTube at 10am or before. All other files for this week have been combined and included in this pew sheet which will be sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line.

Our **new group praying for growth of the Church** will start to meet on Tuesday 5th September between 10-11am at 130, The Avenue. Please contact Jean Pogose for more information: (dennis.pogose@ntlworld.com or 8289-5996).

**Messy Church** is on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> September at 3.45pm in St Mary's. Please do tell friends and neighbours with young families about this monthly activity which happens after school on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of every month.

The **Deanery Pilgrimage** is being repeated this year, but this time the other way round. This will be on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> September and is an opportunity to walk between all the

churches in the deanery and pausing to pray in each one. You may simply want to be present in your church when the group arrives, or to do a couple of legs at different times of the day, or some of you may want to walk the whole route. You can change conversation partners as you go along and sometimes quite simply walk in companionable silence. Bring a picnic lunch and plenty of water. The timings to meet in each of the churches are as follows:

- 8 – 9am Coffee, tea, juice and croissants at St Mary's, Addington Village
- 9.35 - 9.45 St Francis Monks Hill
- 10.20 - 10.45 Coffee at St John the Divine, Selsdon
- 12.15 – 1.15 Eucharist & lunch (bring your own) at St Edward's New Addington
- 2.35 – 2.45 St John West Wickham
- 3.30 – 3.40 St Mary of Nazareth, West Wickham
- 4.05 – 4.30 Tea at St Francis', West Wickham
- 5.00 – 5.10 All Saints', Spring Park
- 5.50 – 6.00 St George's, Shirley
- 6.35 - 6.45 St John's, Shirley
- 7.25pm Drinks and celebrations at St Mary's Vicarage, Addington Village

There will be a **Coffee Morning** with a cake stall and a 'prize-every-time' table at 2 Long Meadow Close on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. All profits made will be split between Macmillan and Bromley Welcare. All donations of cakes or produce would be much appreciated. Thank you.

**Brian Griffiths' funeral** will be held at 1pm on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> September in St Francis' Church. More details to follow in due course.

Our next **Community Lunch** for senior citizens and those living on their own will take place on Sunday 24 September in St Francis' Church Hall from 12.30pm-2.30pm. If you would like to come and join others, tickets are on sale from Barbara Goodchild on 0208 777 8782 and are £7.00 in advance.

**St. Mary's Harvest Supper is on 30<sup>th</sup> September** and will be a bring and share. There is a list in both churches for you to sign up if you intend to come along and to advise what you will be bringing.

**St. Mary's Christmas Market is on 25<sup>th</sup> November.** If you are interested and can help in any way at all, please contact Gifty: [gifty@nortey.com](mailto:gifty@nortey.com). If you are new to the Market and can spare an hour or so to man a stall, please contact Gifty. We are also looking for a face painter if anyone could help and we now need to start collecting large jars with

lids for the pickled onions. Please leave in St. Mary's vestibule. Any offers for homemade jams, marmalade, pickles etc. will be gratefully received. Thank you.

We will continue to collect items for the **Bromley Homeless Starter Pack Scheme** for those starting out in a new home with nothing. Starter packs for families in need include cutlery, crockery, duvet covers (not duvets), pillow slips, tea towels, saucepans, frying pans, bath towel, toothbrushes, etc. Please continue to bring any excess items that you have in cupboards at home.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they require tinned vegetables, cold meat tins, desserts (e.g. sponge pudding, jelly, Angel Delight), coffee, ladies' deodorant and toothpaste. They have plenty of pasta, cereal and biscuits. Please do not bring any fresh or frozen food, or baby milk as the foodbank cannot pass this on. You can also donate financially here:

<https://bromleyborough.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money>. Thank you for your continuing support.

If anyone would like a pedestal at either church in memory of a loved one or to commemorate a special anniversary etc., please contact Merri Womack (8777 8772) for St Mary's (or there is a list to sign in the vestibule at St. Mary's) or Nicky Nightingale ([nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk) or 8916 9855) for St Francis'.

The sanctuary pedestal at St. Mary's this week has been donated by Gifty for family birthdays and has been arranged by Beryl.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl [berylbolton@hotmail.com](mailto:berylbolton@hotmail.com) and items for the websites to Gifty [office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk](mailto:office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk).

**Collect**

Almighty God,  
you search us and know us:  
may we rely on you in  
strength and rest on you in  
weakness, now and in all  
our days; through Jesus  
Christ our Lord.

**First Reading:**

**Romans 12: 9-21**

<sup>9</sup> Let love be genuine; hate  
what is evil, hold fast to  
what is good; <sup>10</sup> love one  
another with mutual  
affection; outdo one  
another in showing honour.  
<sup>11</sup> Do not lag in zeal, be  
ardent in spirit, serve the  
Lord. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice in hope, be  
patient in suffering,  
persevere in prayer.  
<sup>13</sup> Contribute to the needs  
of the saints; extend  
hospitality to strangers.  
<sup>14</sup> Bless those who  
persecute you; bless and do  
not curse them. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice  
with those who rejoice,  
weep with those who  
weep. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony  
with one another; do not be  
haughty, but associate with  
the lowly do not claim to be  
wiser than you are. <sup>17</sup> Do  
not repay anyone evil for  
evil, but take thought for  
what is noble in the sight of

all. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, so far  
as it depends on you, live  
peaceably with all.  
<sup>19</sup> Beloved, never avenge  
yourselves, but leave room  
for the wrath of God; for it  
is written, 'Vengeance is  
mine, I will repay, says the  
Lord.' <sup>20</sup> No, 'if your  
enemies are hungry, feed  
them; if they are thirsty,  
give them something to  
drink; for by doing this you  
will heap burning coals on  
their heads.' <sup>21</sup> Do not be  
overcome by evil, but  
overcome evil with good.

**Gospel Reading:**

**Matthew 16: 21-28**

<sup>21</sup> From that time on, Jesus  
began to show his disciples  
that he must go to  
Jerusalem and undergo  
great suffering at the hands  
of the elders and chief  
priests and scribes, and be  
killed, and on the third day  
be raised. <sup>22</sup> And Peter took  
him aside and began to  
rebuke him, saying, 'God  
forbid it, Lord! This must  
never happen to you.' <sup>23</sup> But  
he turned and said to Peter,  
'Get behind me, Satan! You  
are a stumbling-block to  
me; for you are setting your  
mind not on divine things

but on human things.'

<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus told his  
disciples, 'If any want to  
become my followers, let  
them deny themselves and  
take up their cross and  
follow me. <sup>25</sup> For those who  
want to save their life will  
lose it, and those who lose  
their life for my sake will  
find it. <sup>26</sup> For what will it  
profit them if they gain the  
whole world but forfeit  
their life? Or what will they  
give in return for their life?  
<sup>27</sup> 'For the Son of Man is to  
come with his angels in the  
glory of his Father, and then  
he will repay everyone for  
what has been done.  
<sup>28</sup> Truly I tell you, there are  
some standing here who  
will not taste death before  
they see the Son of Man  
coming in his kingdom.'

**Post Communion Prayer**

God our creator,  
you feed your children with  
the true manna, the living  
bread from heaven:  
let this holy food sustain us  
through our earthly  
pilgrimage until we come  
to that place where hunger  
and thirst are no more;  
through Jesus Christ our  
Lord.

## REFLECTION – Hazel O’Sullivan

Last week Richard talked about Peter being the rock on which Jesus would build his church and how we are all called to be rocks on which the Church is built today, through each of us living in relationship with God.

I wonder what you think it means to have that relationship with God and to say that you are a Christian. Is it about coming to church on a Sunday? Praying and reading the bible daily? Leading a ‘good’ life and making ethical choices? Believing in Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah, which is just what Peter had admitted to before he was given his new name, Peter, and his role in building the church? Maybe you think it’s all these things. That’s a tall order!

Is this what Jesus means when he talks about taking up our cross and following him, as he does in v24 of the gospel reading today? If so, I definitely don’t match up: I’ve not been to church for the past two Sundays and some of the choices I’ve made recently haven’t been the best.

Let’s look at where this command of Jesus to ‘take up our cross’ fits with the rest of his conversation with Peter and his disciples to see if there are any clues as to what he might have meant.

At the start of the reading Jesus begins to outline some of the downsides of his role as Messiah – that he will suffer and die before being raised. That’s what he talks about in v21. This is what Peter takes objection to. Suffering and death is not how the Messiah should be treated, and he, Peter, is not going to stand back and let this happen to Jesus. But in response Jesus tells Peter, in v23, to get behind him and he calls him ‘Satan’. It seems that in no time at all, Peter has had his role of a rock in the building of the church taken away from him. We think of Peter as being told off here, and as a result we have negative associations with carrying the cross.

But maybe there’s a different way of looking at this interaction. Calling Peter ‘Satan’ could be a reference back to the temptation that Jesus underwent in the wilderness before starting his ministry. Satan was trying to lead him in the human way of life, taking the easy route to success and having people worship him. At this time Jesus ordered Satan to be gone from his sight completely, but here he tells Peter to simply get behind him – to become his follower again, instead of his leader. So, when Jesus says ‘get behind me’ to Peter, it could be that this is his reaction to Peter leading him away from God’s way. He says as much at the end of the same verse, verse 23, when he says that Peter sees things as humans see them, not as God does. He is, in effect,

telling Peter not to be his leader, but to follow him in God's ways. Peter's place is to follow Jesus, not to lead him in the way that Peter would like him to go – Peter's got a step ahead of himself almost.

So, you could say that this is what it is to take up your cross and to be a Christian. It means to follow Jesus' lead and to recognise when we get this wrong, so that we can know God's forgiveness. This is what he wanted Peter to do in building up his church. Not to see things in human ways – it certainly wasn't about liturgies and styles of worship: the only instruction that Jesus gave us in this respect was sharing bread and wine to remember him by.

No, building up the church is about changing our lives to follow in Jesus' ways. And if you want to know what that looks like, it really helps to have someone alive today to look to, to use as a role model. Jesus lived such a long time ago in a very different culture to us today. For me, my role model as I was growing up was an uncle of mine. He gave up two weeks each year to take me and my two sisters on holiday, together with his own two daughters (who lived with their mother in France for the rest of the year). Those holidays were nothing special: we always went to the same places in Galloway, Scotland. Walks, picnics and swimming in lochs and rivers played an important part in how we spent our time. I was the oldest of the five girls and I knew that my uncle was making a sacrifice for us to have this holiday every year. So, while it never involved going into a church, or prayer, or reading the bible, every day on the holiday he showed me what it was to think of others rather than oneself and to have regular quiet moments as time out with God.

And there are different ways in which you can show this to others. Many of us will have been remembering Brian Griffiths over the past week. You could say that he was a similar role model, but in a very different way: doing his fret work was his way of having quiet moments (his time out with God) and setting up the Work Club was one of the ways in which he thought of others, rather than himself. Some might say that neither of these things would be their way, but you can't deny that Brian was one of the rocks of our churches. He was someone who lived in relationship with God.

In our first reading Paul outlines in different words what it means to live such a life – as a rock of the church in relationship with God. It includes honouring others before yourself, living at peace with everyone, associating with the lowly, feeding our enemies and overcoming evil by doing good.

It doesn't have to be about great sacrifices. There may be some, but it's more about a focus on how we live our lives, so that we think of others rather than ourselves. This may result in some inconvenience, but this is undertaken willingly and without moaning. It's about having a relationship with God, not on blindly following the traditions of the church.

This is what it means to take up your cross and follow Jesus. Yes, passion like that which inspired Peter's insight when he recognised Jesus as Messiah can result in difficulties, but don't see it about suffering and sacrifice in a negative way, as Peter did. See it rather about having a positive impact on others through your words and actions.

We can't only follow Jesus when it suits us. Still less can we try to control Jesus, or the direction others are led in by their convictions and commitment. But we can give support to each other in making the right choices in difficult situations. In his last sermon to us at the end of June, Brian talked about how the kindness of others in the congregations was the one thing that kept him going and enabled him to maintain his relationship with God. It was through this support that he knew that God valued him and would look after him. In supporting others, we will, from time to time, get it wrong. But there is always a way back to finding God's way and that's through Jesus – we take up our cross and follow him.

Amen.

### **Prayer Pointers**

Pray for our church leaders, particularly Bishops Christopher and Rosemary and Archdeacon, Greg. Thank God for their service and dedication.

Pray for those who suffer as a result of climate change: those caught up in the terror of wildfires and floods; those who are starving due to their land becoming infertile.

Give the victims of war hope and help them to see glimpses of God, even in the most difficult times. Thank God for those who work to bring peace between nations.

Pray for the victims of crime, perpetrators of crime, accidents and traumas.

Reflect on and pray for all those who have encouraged you over the years to grow deeper and closer to God. Ask for wisdom to see how you can encourage others this week with a word or a smile or an action that will help build others up.

We think of people who are suffering in many ways. We remember by name Vicky Pearce, Jane Smith, Graham Stone, Rowena Griffiths, Daphne Dack, John Dack, Barbara Goodchild, Joan Mountain, James Pitt-Payne, Jack Bramwell, Sue Jones, and Tina Hamilton.

We think of those who have recently lost loved ones, remembering especially the family of Brian Griffiths. We ask that Rowena, Rhys and Gareth might find a light at this dark time in their knowledge of your presence with them.