

BATH DEANERY NEWSLETTER

Apocalypse Now - Revelation in the Mass

Hollywood has long been fascinated with the Book of Revelation (also called the *Apocalypse*), focusing on its unusual presentation and characters in order to heighten its mystery, and of course sell huge amounts of cinema tickets! We are sometimes put off from reading Revelation because of its reputation as a strange and complicated text, but when we have the chance to read it as it is intended (i.e. through the eyes of faith) we experience an altogether different book; one that reveals God's word and love in a way that is remarkably familiar.

Unveiling the Mass

The Greek word *Apocalypse* means "unveiling". This word alone invites us to see what God is wanting to reveal; and the answer, according to numerous Catholic theologians, is the Eucharist. Revelation actually mirrors the Eucharistic liturgy in a unique way, which when unveiled is beautiful to see. As an example, how familiar are the following? For they all are key features in the book of Revelation:

An Altar (Rev 8:3), Robed Clergy (4:4), Candles (1:12), Incense (5:8), Manna (Bread of Heaven) (2:17), Chalices (Ch 16), Sunday Worship (1:10), Role of Mary (12:1-6), Holy Holy Holy (4:8), Gloria (15:3-4), The Sign of the Cross (14:1), Alleluia (19:1, 3, 6), Readings from Scripture (Ch 2-3), Lamb of God (28 times!), Gospel Authors (4:6).

This is not a new discovery at all, rather it's as old as the Book of Revelation itself - The Church Fathers, Vatican II and the Catechism of the Catholic Church all reflect this opinion (Catechism no. 1137 & 1138)

Temple Unveiled

To us the images the author is explaining in Revelation are perhaps not so obvious, but to first century Jewish Christians it would have been clear and "revealing". The audience for

whom Revelation was originally intended would have immediately recognised key features of the Jewish Temple (destroyed in A.D. 70) poetically explained in the book, for example:

The Menorah (seven golden lamp stands - Rev 1:12), Altar of Incense before the Holy of Holies (8:3-5), 24 Elders (*presbyteroi* in Greek = priest) representing the 24 priestly divisions, The Sea of Glass (4:6) representing the polished bronze pool in the Temple, The Ark of the Covenant (11:19).



Ancient Jewish beliefs state that the worship in the Temple mirrored the worship of angels in heaven. It was as close as you could get to heaven on earth. Revelation shows us something even closer i.e. not just imitation of heavenly worship but full *participation* in it. Where Israel prayed in imitation of the angels, the Church of the Apocalypse worshiped *together* with the angels (Rev:19:10). Whereas only the priests were allowed in the holy place of Jerusalem's Temple, Revelation showed a *nation* of priests (Rev: 5:10 & 20:6) dwelling always in the presence of God. Revelation, therefore, unveils **one worship** shared by angels and men, a thing unheard of before but which we now celebrate every Sunday at Mass. Significantly, the *veil* of the Temple was torn in two as Jesus died on Good Friday. Now everyone - brought together in the Church - can enter His presence.

"For I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb" (Rev 21:22)



The Lamb

As previously stated, Jesus is referred to in Revelation as "The Lamb" 28 times. The author turns to see a lamb standing "as though it had been slain" (Rev 5:6). John also

identifies Jesus as the “Lamb of God” at the beginning of his Gospel (Jn 1:29). But why a lamb and why is this image so important? Because Jesus is the new Passover Lamb.

In the original Passover meal (Exodus Ch 12) a perfect lamb without blemish or broken bones is sacrificed and its blood used on a hyssop branch to identify Jewish households. This same pure lamb is then eaten so that the Israelites can escape death and be freed from slavery. In the Eucharist we too we are invited to eat the Lamb so we can escape death and be freed from the slavery of sin. Interesting again is the fact that John’s Gospel highlights the “Lamb” connections even more by showing how the sour wine offered to Jesus on the cross is raised up on a hyssop branch and that his legs were left unbroken, in accordance with how the sacrificial lamb should be presented.



Rejoicing in Heaven & The Tree of Life

In the light of the Easter Vigil Liturgy it is fascinating to see how the final chapters of Revelation play out. After the great battles with Satan are won by God’s armies of angels, the new heaven, earth and Jerusalem appear (Ch 21). The first Scripture quoted at the Easter Vigil by the priest is from Revelation 22:13 - “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End”. What immediately follows in the bible are Jesus’ words:

“Blessed are those who will have washed their robes clean, so that they will have the right to feed on the tree of life and can come through the gates” (Rev 22:14)

When Adam and Eve sinned by eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, part of their punishment was to be denied the privilege of eating from the Tree of Life (Genesis 3:24). Yet here we are in Revelation finally being invited back into Eden to eat from the Tree that gives eternal life. At the Lamb’s Supper (Rev 19:9) we are invited to eat and the food that we eat is Jesus himself. He is both the Tree of Life and the Lamb of God, present for us in reality at each Eucharist. Through his loving action we are now back in Eden and in harmony with God once more, i.e. heaven on earth.

An Open Invitation

The Book of Revelation truly has a unique and powerful role in helping us understand what God is revealing to us in the Eucharist. God speaks directly to us through Revelation’s inspiring imagery and metaphor, offering us an eternal open invitation to share in the life and love of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me. . . After this I looked, and lo, in the heaven an open door . . .” (Rev 3:20. 4:1)

Matthew Hemson

Suggested further reading: Scott Hahn’s “The Lamb’s Supper” (Doubleday, 1999) “The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible” (Ignatius Press, 2010).

First Holy Communion



Many congratulations to all the children in the Deanery making their First Confession and First Holy Communion this summer. And a big thank you to all their hard-working catechists.

Thank you Jesus for coming to us in Holy Communion.

We know that we cannot thank you enough for you

never ending gifts to us, especially the gift of your love.

Help us to receive you often and to grow strong

in our love for you and for each other.

Jesus, I adore you.

Jesus, I believe in you.

Jesus, I hope in you.

Jesus, I love you with all my heart.

Jesus, I offer my whole self to you.

Jesus, I thank you for all your gifts to me.

Jesus, I thank you for giving yourself to me in Holy Communion.

Jesus, I thank you for my family and friends.

Jesus, I thank you for this beautiful world in which we live.

Jesus, I ask you to help me to live as you want me to live.

Jesus, I ask you to bring us all one day into the happiness of heaven. Amen.

Spotlight on St Joseph's Peasedown St John



St Joseph's serves Peasedown and the and the neighbouring villages of Farmborough, Priston, Timsbury, Dunkerton, Tunley, Carlingcott, Camerton, Wellow , Shoscombe, Stony Littleton, Single Hill and Foxcote with a total of about 11,500 residents. Our parish oversight is provided by Fr Tom Gunning and our weekly 9 a.m. Sunday Mass is normally celebrated by Fr Malcolm Smeaton , Chaplain of Prior Park College, during term time and by Fr Matty Hayes and other retired priests at other times. The parish has a busy pastoral programme focusing on the Diocesan guidelines of prayer, community and mission. Liturgy of the word with Holy Communion plus seasonal devotions are held on Tuesdays at 7 pm, Wednesday at 11 am. and Saturdays at 10am; we have a Holy Hour between 4 to 5 pm one Sunday a month. Our community programme includes parish picnics, parish 'talking' suppers, Churches Together events and pilgrimages; our regular fundraising events help support two young people in Rwanda who need special medical care also Fr Danny in Peru, Fr Leonard Hategekmana (M.Afr) in Burundi, plus CAFOD, Mission, AOS and Julian House.....a busy but enjoyable programme.

The Church building is modern, opened in 1990, is at Ashgrove on the main road through Peasedown (on the left about 100 metres before the Co-op) ; the beautiful statues of the Madonna and Child and St Joseph with the Child Jesus are by the late Peter Watts whose work for many local churches is well known. The Stations of the Cross are prints from wood engravings by Eric Gill based on his larger Stations carved for Westminster Cathedral. The kneelers were created by a group of parishioners over a 5 year period from wool handspun by parishioner Hilary Stevens from her sheep named after the Saints listed in the Eucharistic prayers:- Felicity , Lucy Perpetua Anastasia, Agatha and Cecelia. Do come and celebrate with us and enjoy 'real coffee' and cakes after every Sunday Mass. P.S. We need an organist, any offers?

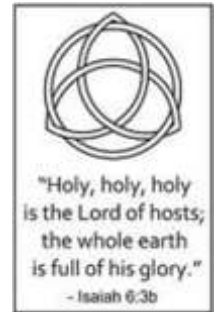
To make contact with the parish call our Parish Administrator Michaela Larbalestier on 01761 437073 or e mail to stjosephpeasedown@btopenworld.com



From the Dean

This publication reaches you on Trinity Sunday when we contemplate the inner life of God, Father, Son and Spirit. This is a mystery and yet this truth is at the heart of our Christian faith. In considering the Trinity we acknowledge that God is not infinitely removed from us. He is near. God is Love and he has revealed his love for us in the life and death of Jesus, God made man. God calls us to share his life, to enter into the inner life of Communion with him. We are called to be one as the Father, Son and Spirit are one.

We may only get glimpses of God's presence in our lives. We need to think of ourselves as precious sons and daughters of God who is always pouring out his love upon us, affirming us and supporting us. *"Live in my love"* Jesus tells us (Jn 15:9). May we give thanks today for this great love that God is always giving to us and to all the world. May we know the love of the Father, Son and Spirit and bind ourselves to the Trinity.



Congratulations to Giles Mercer

Giles Mercer is delighted to have been accepted by Bishop Declan for diaconal formation, a four year course beginning in September. He is a parishioner at Our Lady and St Alphege in Bath, having previously been in the parishes of St John's and St Peter and St Paul, as he and his wife, Caroline, have lived in various parts of the city. Their family also live in Bath. "I am very grateful", he said, "for the support I have received from my parish priest, Fr Richard Barton, from Fr Tom Gunning, from other priests in the deanery, and from fellow parishioners and friends. Above all I am grateful for Caroline's unstinting support." Giles grew up in Scotland and was boarder at Austin Friars School in Carlisle. He gained a history degree at Cambridge and a doctorate in Italian history at Oxford, then spending almost all his professional life as a teacher. In 1985 he was appointed by the Jesuits to be the first lay headmaster of Stonyhurst College in Lancashire, where he stayed until 1996, when he became headmaster of Prior Park College in Bath until he retired in 2009. From 2000 to 2004 he chaired the Catholic

Independent Schools' Conference and Pope John Paul II appointed him a Knight of St Gregory in 2004 for his services to Catholic education and to ecumenism. He serves on the national committee of papal knights. He is a Trustee of the Clifton Diocese, a trustee of the Bath Preservation Trust, and is writing a biography of Bishop William Brownlow. "I guess I have been thinking about the permanent diaconate for many years. When it was introduced – or restored – after the Second Vatican Council it struck me then as being a really important development in the Church, a particular expression of service going back to the early Church, and it is inspiring to see the number of deacons in this diocese. However things go with me, I hope and pray that many more deacons will be ordained in Clifton in the years ahead and wish Fr Christopher Whitehead and his team every success in their running of the formation programme."



St Gregory's Catholic College



Noticing that no picture of its patron saint was in the possession of the College, which lies within the parish boundaries of Ss Peter & Paul, and on a visit to the church of Ss Gregory and Augustine, Oxford, seeing the new picture of St Gregory the Great recently commissioned for the church there from the Norfolk artist, James Gillick, Father Bill OSM asked the artist for permission to have a print made, to which James Gillick readily agreed. James Gillick has painted numerous portraits including those of Baroness Thatcher, Bishop Malcolm McMahon of Nottingham and Pope John Paul II and is establishing himself as a highly respected and successful artist with much inspiration derived from his Catholic faith. He had hoped to be present for the presentation but commitments elsewhere in the end prevented him from attending.

The print of the painting was framed in a style complementing the fine display on the main wall of the entrance foyer of the College and the Head Teacher, Mr. Raymond Friel expressed great pleasure that the picture was such a pleasing gift from the Parish which for the occasion of the blessing of the picture was represented by parishioners Mrs Jane Allan, Mrs Kristine Fishlock, Mrs AJ Gate, Mrs Alison Kirkham and Mrs Patricia McSherry whose daughter Georgi is a student at the college and Mrs. Ian Hancock - a parishioner who is on the College Staff - together with the parish priest, Father Bill, OSM and four students of the college and the Deputy Head, Mrs. Anne Barrett. The blessing of the picture by Abbot Aidan of Downside took place on 14/03/2011. Both Father Bill and the Abbot spoke of St Gregory, the patronal saint both of the College in Bath and also of the Abbey Church and School at Downside for which reason Father Bill had asked the Abbot to conduct the blessing. It was remembered that Pope St. Gregory had sent St. Augustine of Canterbury to evangelise to the English and was a fitting patron of much that resonates with the life of the College in music and studies of a wide range. A pleasant lunch was provided by Mr. Friel for the guests afterwards.



Dates For Your Diary

Thursday 16 June – St John the Evangelist, Bath – 2.30 p.m.

Mass for the housebound with tea in the presbytery afterwards.

Sunday 19 June – St Mary's, Bath – 10.30 a.m.

First Communion Mass

Wednesday 22 June – St Thomas More, Bradford on Avon – 7 p.m.

The Feast of St John Fisher and St Thomas More. All are invited to attend a Mass followed by a talk at 7.30 on St Thomas More given by Giles Mercer.

Saturday 25 June – Good Shepherd, Batheaston – 7.30 p.m.

Concert by the Smithy Singers featuring Fr Jim Williams with his flute. For more details please contact Terry Bletso, St Mary's Church, Bath, on Bath 311725. Proceeds to Good Shepherd church funds.

Sunday 26 June – St John the Evangelist, Bath – 10.00 a.m.

First Communion Mass

Sunday 3 July – St John the Evangelist, Bath – 11.30 a.m. onwards



Parish Picnic in the Parade Gardens

Sunday 3 July – Holy Ghost and St Hugh, Midsomer Norton and Radstock – 3.00 p.m.

Parish Picnic at Ammerdown. All parishioners of Norton-Radstock welcome – young and old. Games, music, food and sunshine!

Sunday 10 July – St Joseph's, Peasedown St John – 11.30 a.m

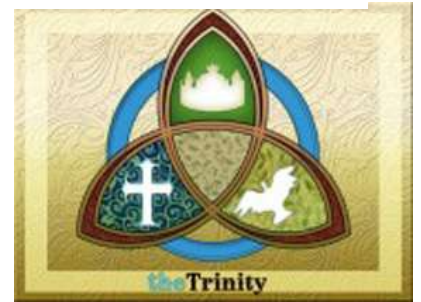
Glastonbury Pilgrimage. Parish minibus from St Joseph's at 11.30 a.m. Contact Michaela on 01761 437073 to travel with St Joseph's

Sunday 10 July – St Mary's, Bath – 7.30 p.m.

Summer Concert with Organum. Tickets available on the door.

Saturday 16 July – St John the Evangelist, Bath

Churches together in Bath at Downside Retreat Day



Saturday 3 September – St Joseph’s, Peasedown St John – Evening

Parish Fundraising Event – ‘Musical Evening for Africa’ at Stony Littleton

Sunday 23 October - St John the Evangelist, Bath

Parish Walk – venue not yet decided



Saturday 19 November - Holy Ghost and St Hugh, Midsomer Norton and Radstock

St Hugh’s Patronal Feast Day Celebration. Details to be confirmed but will probably take the form of a concert of parish talent.

Sunday 20 November - St John the Evangelist, Bath

St John’s Christmas Fayre

Tuesday 22 November – St Alphege’s Bath – 7.00 p.m.

Deanery Confirmation Service with Bishop Declan

Saturday 26 November - St John the Evangelist, Bath

Half day of reflection led by Fr Nicholas King

Sunday 27 November – St Mary’s, Bath

Christmas Bazaar

December - Holy Ghost and St Hugh, Midsomer Norton and Radstock

Advent and Christmas Crib display

Clifton Diocese News If you would like to hear more about the Catholic Church in the region and you have internet access, then you can subscribe to the Clifton Diocese Newsletter. Go to <http://www.cliftondiocese.com/> scroll down the page and click on Newsletter.

Springboard Bath... A website dedicated to helping Christians in Bath to communicate and work together. Take a look at <http://www.springboardbath.org.uk/>

