

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, TIMBERHILL with ST JULIAN, NORWICH

March 2022



PARISH PEOPLE

Parish Priest

Fr Richard Stanton
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Fr Richard's rest day is Monday.

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PCC Secretary

Liz Kilshaw

PCC Treasurer

Chris Bushnell

Gift Aid Secretary

Michael Watson

Organist

Keith Buxton

Head Server

Electoral Roll Secretary Elizabeth Sutherland

Safeguarding Officer Sue Bisley

Deanery Synod representatives Liz Kilshaw, Rhys Lewis

Parochial Church Council

Fr Peter Barnes-Clay,
Mary Barnes-Clay, Sue Bisley,
Harry Emerson, Andrew
Knights, Susan Snasdell,
Elizabeth Sutherland, Melissa
Symes, Jeremy Warren

Sidespeople Linda Baldwin, David
Baldwin, Mary Barnes-Clay, Barbara
Donnelly, Judy Hall, June Halls, Michael
Halls, Patrick Hawes, Andrew Knights,
Pauline McKinnell, Patricia Menaul, Susan
Snasdell, Elizabeth Sutherland, Dorothy
Tinkler, Stuart Tinkler, John Woodrow

The Julian Campus

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01603 767380 • www.julianofnorwich.org

Curate (Wed – Sat)

The Revd Edwin Wilton-Morgan
01603 218300 • curate@cathedral.org.uk

Lent in time of war

Dear friends,

Entering Lent with our consciousness dominated by 'wars and rumours of wars' brings home to us in a particular way that conflict which to some degree always characterises our life on earth, the conflict in which Christ was immersed in his ministry and which reached its climax on the hill of Calvary. 'Fulfilling your will and gaining for you a holy people,' the celebrant says at Mass, 'he stretched out his hands as he endured his Passion, so as to break the bonds of death and manifest the Resurrection.'

War is never surprising to the Christian even while we grieve over its pity and tragedy, its consequences for the innocent and its rending of the social fabric by which peoples and nations should be held together under God. A Christian recognises that life on earth involves a share in conflict, that battle between good and evil which each of us can identify in ourselves and our own souls, and which we see magnified and amplified between individuals, communities, authorities and nations.

The heartrending tragedy unfolding before us in Ukraine, and the emerging humanitarian catastrophe in Europe, are the results of appalling aggression which seeks to secure political goals by military means. Feeling the tectonic plates of history shifting beneath our feet and fearing a new iron curtain descending on Europe as Russia's political, economic and cultural isolation grows, we need to remember that the Cross of Christ, the sign of God's judgement and mercy, teaches us both hatred of sin and love of sinners, and the Gospel command for us to 'love our enemies' must be heard more intensely than ever when we realise that many Russian citizens are ending up on the 'other side' of a division which they have not chosen. Indeed, our penitence and horror over the events of the past fortnight should be shaped in large measure by our recognition that the Church herself is caught up in this war, that there are Christians on both sides of the conflict and that the bitter divide between the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and the Moscow Patriarchate is by no means irrelevant in the development of this disaster. As we walk the Way of the Cross, especially at the weekly celebration of the Stations each Friday noon, we see Christ in dereliction and pain bearing the sorrow which we continue to inflict on each other even in his Body, the Church.

The prayers for peace which we offer with all our hearts should be combined with prayers for justice and for deliverance for the oppressed, both in Ukraine and in countless other places around the world where the horror of war, violence and displacement are no longer considered newsworthy.

We should be praying that our God, who through the Death and Resurrection of Christ has already secured an eternal victory, would give us all the penitence and humility which are necessary for us to recognise where we ourselves, and our communities and nations, have strayed from the path of integrity or justice, even as we

pray too that the leaders of the nations may have the courage to act in accordance with God's glory and honour and the wellbeing of the people committed to their care, and that he would convert the hearts of all who are set on war and violence and who disdain the divine gift of human life. Our prayers find a particular focus, of course, in the daily celebration of the Eucharist, where we offer the sacrifice of Christ for the needs of our time and recognise the Risen Presence of one who gave his life so that others might live.



*The Holy Eucharist in a bomb shelter in Ukraine.
'Where two or three are gathered in my name,
I am there among them.'*

Our prayer for peace and justice at this time is an integral part of the reorientation and refocussing of priorities which Lent demands of us. Lent summons us both to contrition and sorrow for the effects of sin in ourselves, in our Church and in the world, and to firm purposes of conversion and amendment. Lent opens on Ash Wednesday with a call of brilliant simplicity: 'In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to

us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.' Be reconciled to God! Our faithful keeping of this holy season, which helps us to live more fully by the light of faith and to grow in the Christian life, will teach us how great is our need of this reconciliation, and will lead us upward to Jerusalem and our celebration of the Paschal Mystery in Holy Week, where the 'peace which the world cannot give' is received as the precious gift of a Crucified and Risen Saviour who forgave even his murderers and whose suffering love is written in the palms of his hands.

We entreat you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God.

Your friend and parish priest,

Fr Richard

The following prayer, from an Orthodox source, has been displayed in St John's beside the statue of Our Lady and the Child Jesus.

For Peace in Ukraine
to the Most Holy Mother of God
before her Icon 'The Softener of Evil Hearts'

O much sorrowing Mother of God, more highly exalted than all other the daughters of the earth, according to thy purity and the multitude of the suffering endured by thee on earth: hearken to our sighs and soften the hearts of evil men, and protect us under the shelter of thy mercy. For we know no other refuge and ardent intercessor apart from thee, but as thou hast great boldness before the One who was born of thee, help and save us by thy prayers, that without offence we may attain the heavenly Kingdom where, with all the saints, we will sing the thrice-holy hymn to One God Almighty in the Trinity, always now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.



Lent: renewal for eternal life

*'And now we give you thanks
because you give us the spirit of discipline,
that we may triumph over evil and grow in grace,
as we prepare to celebrate the Paschal Mystery
with mind and heart renewed.'*

The daily Mass: the foundation of Lent in our parish

Can you add an extra weekday Mass to your keeping of Lent this year?

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Monday | 10am (St Julian's) |
| Tuesday | 12 noon (St John's) <i>followed by Lent Lunch</i> |
| Wednesday | 10am (St Julian's) |
| Thursday | 12 noon (St John's) <i>preceded by Holy Hour</i> |
| Friday | 5pm (St Julian's) |
| Saturday | 12 noon (St John's) <i>preceded by musical meditation</i> |

Tuesdays in Lent *(beginning 8 March)*

Lent Lunch follows the 12 noon Mass in St John's: join us for soup, bread, fruit, cheese and fellowship. Donations in aid of the Bishop of Norwich's Lent Appeal to purchase beds for the Sag Sag Health Centre in Papua New Guinea. Speak to Patricia Menaul if you could assist with one of these lunches.

Thursdays in Lent *(beginning 3 March)*

Holy Hour at 11am at St John's: the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed for silent prayer. Feel free to come and go during this time of devotion, prayer and quiet. Benediction at 11.50am closes the Holy Hour, and Mass follows at 12 noon.



**more
fervent in
PRAYER**



**more
generous
in WORKS of
CHARITY**



**more
eager in cele-
brating the
MYSTERIES
by which we
are reborn**

Thursdays in Lent (*beginning 10 March*)

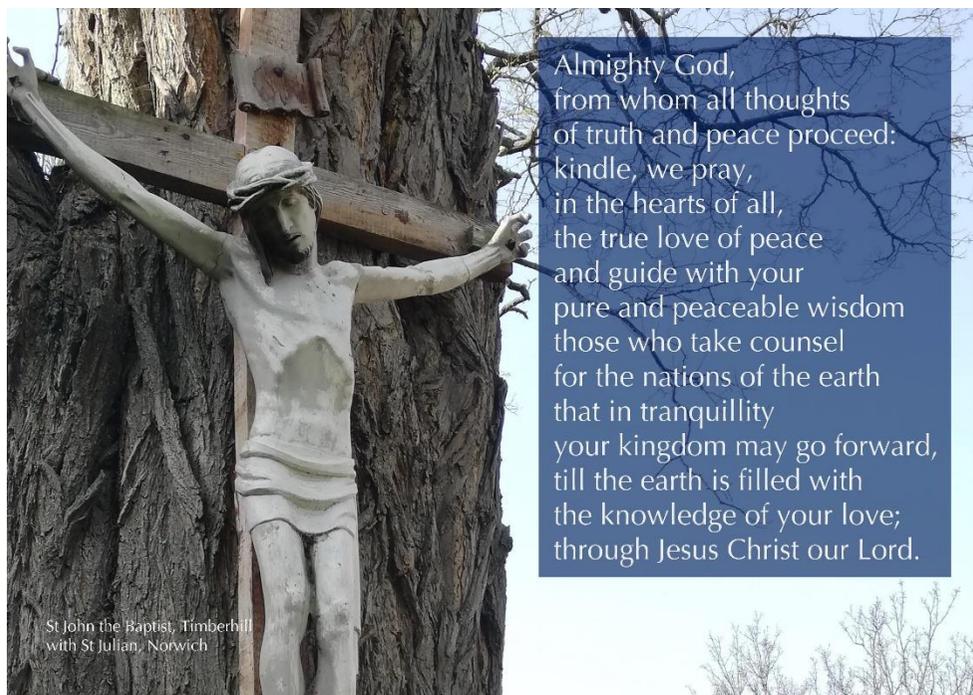
Lent Book Group meets on Zoom at 7.30pm: we'll be reading the new book *What do you seek? Wisdom from Religious Life for today's world* by Fr John-Francis Friendship. As well as helping us to learn about consecrated life in the Anglican tradition, it will also help us to think about our own response to the call of Christ on each of us. Copies (£13, discounted from £16.99) are available in church. Let Fr Richard know if you'd like to come to the discussions and he'll let you have the Zoom login details and reading lists.

Fridays in Lent (*beginning 4 March*)

Stations of the Cross at 12 noon at St John's. There'll also be Stations of the Cross with Benediction at 6pm on Palm Sunday (10 April).

Saturdays in Lent (*beginning 5 March*)

'Lamentation' at 11.30am at St John's – a weekly series of twenty minute musical meditations on the Lamentations of Jeremiah the Prophet, with choral music by Thomas Tallis, Michel Delalande and Osbert Parsley (our own Norwich composer who was a 'singing man' in the Cathedral Choir for fifty years in the sixteenth century).



The Bishop of Norwich's Lent Appeal

This year churches throughout the Diocese of Norwich will be raising money to support the purchase of beds for **Sag Sag Health Centre in Papua New Guinea**.

Near the western tip of New Britain Island in Papua New Guinea, on the edge of the South Pacific, lies the very remote community of Sag Sag. Although small, it is central to the lives of many people living remotely in the rainforest which surrounds the town. The health centre there has a building, and it has people, but it has no beds and no equipment.



The 2022 Lent Appeal aims to provide much-needed beds for young children and mothers-to be. The most vulnerable targeted groups will be children under one year old and mothers-to-be attending antenatal clinics, although many other vulnerable groups will also be able to use the centre. All the help we can give is needed. Right now, mothers and children lie on their own blankets on the bare floorboards when they arrive for treatment, sometimes having canoed along the coast for a day to arrive at Sag Sag.

Through our PNG Link Group, the Diocese of Norwich is in regular contact with all five Papua New Guinea dioceses and, with your support, can get help directly to the people in Sag Sag. In recent years the Lent Appeals have raised money to provide a 4x4 vehicle for the remote community of Alotau in Dogura Diocese; learning resources for ordinands in Popondetta Diocese; a new church building at Simbai in Aipo-Rongo Diocese; classrooms at a school in a settlement in Port Moresby Diocese and resources to empower women across the province.

Please support the 2022 Lent Appeal and help to bring much-needed hospital beds to our brothers and sisters in Papua New Guinea. Donations at our **Lent Lunches on Tuesdays at 12.30pm** will be given to the Appeal, as will the proceeds from our **spring raffle** during coffee after High Mass on **Sunday 6 March**. **Envelopes for your gifts** are also available: please return them to church by Low Sunday (24 April) and we'll send off all our gifts together.

Friday 25 March

Feast of the Annunciation

7.30pm Pontifical High Mass

(St John's)

Celebrant and Preacher: The Rt Revd the Bishop of Richborough

followed by wine and cake –

an evening's relaxation of Lenten discipline in honour of this joyful feast

Also **Low Masses** at 11am (*St John's*) and 5pm (*St Julian's*)
and **Stations of the Cross** at 12 noon (*St John's*)

Sunday 27 March

Refreshment Sunday

11am High Mass

with presentation of floral posies
and rosé and simnel cake served afterwards



Saturday 2 April • 10.30am at St John's

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Coffee will be served from 10.15am before the meeting
The final musical meditation in the 'Lamentation' series follows at 11.30am,
then Low Mass at 12 noon

Sunday 3 April • 6pm at St John's

Via Crucis: a devotion for Passiontide

A newly-composed organ work (2021) by Philip Moore
played by David Ballard:
prayers on the Passion by Eric Milner-White interspersed with music

SAVE THE DATE

Flower Festival

celebrating the Saints of the British Isles in floral art
at St John's Timberhill for the Platinum Jubilee year

23 – 26 JUNE 2022

Next planning meeting on **Saturday 26 March** at 10am at St John's:
all welcome

From the Parish Registers

Communicants

| | <i>Sunday</i> | <i>Weekday</i> |
|---------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Week beginning 30 January | 51 | 97 |
| 6 February | 62 | 42 |
| 13 February | 52 | 86 |
| 20 February | 57 | 47 |

*Collection figures for February are not available at the time of going to press.
The amount given by standing order averages £3,000 a month.*

Holy Baptism

'As many of you as were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ'

19 February Jake HARVEY

Funerals and committals

'Lord all-pitying, Jesu blest: grant them thine eternal rest'

18 February John Richard FOOTTIT, aged 94



The preacher at High Mass on Sunday 20 February was **the Revd Dr Robert Mackley**, Vicar of Little St Mary's Cambridge, seen left with Fr Richard after Mass. Fr Robert made herculean efforts to reach Norwich despite disruption to trains and transport caused by 'Storm Eunice', and thoroughly deserved his G&T on arrival at the Rectory! In his sermon he encouraged us to recognise that Jesus's teaching that we must love even our enemies shows us the nature of our God and the depth of his love for us, since through the gift of his Son God reconciles to himself even those who work against him.

On Saturday 5 February Richard Norton made his vows as an **Oblate of the Order of Julian of Norwich** during Low Mass in St Julian's. He's pictured, centre, along with Fr Richard, Fr Edwin and his sponsors. OJN,

committed to intercession and conversion of life following the teaching and witness of the Lady Julian, is a community of nuns in the Episcopal Church of the USA. Oblates and Associates are clergy and lay members from around the world who observe vows in their own particular vocation and way of life. In his homily, Fr Richard highlighted the witness of martyrs such as St Agatha, whose feast it was, and drew attention to the way in which all Christians are called to bear witness to Christ in their own sphere of life.



'Glorious liturgy, a beautiful church and very welcoming people!'

— One visitor's view of St John's in February

March 2022

| | | |
|------|-----|--|
| 1 | Tue | St David |
| 2 | Wed | ASH WEDNESDAY 10am and 12 noon LM; 7.30pm HM |
| 3 | Thu | after Ash Wednesday |
| 4 | Fri | after Ash Wednesday |
| 5 | Sat | after Ash Wednesday |
| | | |
| 6 | Sun | The First Sunday of Lent |
| 7 | Mon | Feria of Lent (commem. SS Perpetua and Felicity) |
| 8 | Tue | Feria of Lent (commem. St Felix) |
| 9 | Wed | Feria of Lent (Ember Day) |
| 10 | Thu | Feria of Lent |
| 11 | Fri | Feria of Lent (Ember Day) |
| 12 | Sat | Feria of Lent (Ember Day) |
| | | |
| 13 | Sun | The Second Sunday of Lent |
| 14 | Mon | Feria of Lent |
| 15 | Tue | Feria of Lent |
| 16 | Wed | Feria of Lent |
| 17 | Thu | St Patrick |
| 18 | Fri | Feria of Lent (commem. St Cyril of Jerusalem) |
| 19 | Sat | St Joseph of Nazareth 12 noon LM |
| | | |
| 20 | Sun | The Third Sunday of Lent |
| 21 | Mon | Feria of Lent |
| 22 | Tue | Feria of Lent |
| 23 | Wed | Feria of Lent |
| 24 | Thu | Feria of Lent |
| 25 | Fri | THE ANNUNCIATION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY 11am and 5pm LM; 7.30pm HM |
| 26 | Sat | Feria of Lent |
| | | |
| 27 | Sun | The Fourth Sunday of Lent: Refreshment Sunday |
| 28 | Mon | Feria of Lent |
| 29 | Tue | Feria of Lent |
| 30 | Wed | Feria of Lent |
| 31 | Thu | Feria of Lent |

We pray for...

| | |
|--|-----------|
| The people of Wales | 1 |
| The grace of true contrition | 2 |
| Generosity in prayer | 3 |
| Generosity in fasting | 4 |
| Generosity in almsgiving | 5 |
| Our Parish and People | 6 |
| Peace in Europe | 7 |
| The mission of the Church in East Anglia | 8 |
| Ordinands and seminarians | 9 |
| The Departed: Year's Minds for March | 10 |
| Vocations to the Sacred Ministry | 11 |
| Theological colleges and courses | 12 |
| Our Parish and People | 13 |
| The nations of the Commonwealth (Commonwealth Day) | 14 |
| Freedom from our own hypocrisy | 15 |
| Perseverance in our keeping of Lent | 16 |
| The people of Ireland | 17 |
| Norman and Graham, our Bishops | 18 |
| Foster-fathers and guardians | 19 |
| Our Parish and People | 20 |
| Those in debt | 21 |
| The Church in Papua New Guinea | 22 |
| National Day of Reflection | 23 |
| Those preparing for Confirmation | 24 |
| Thanksgiving for the Angelic Salutation | 25 |
| Diocesan Synod, meeting today | 26 |
| Our Parish and People | 27 |
| The sick and suffering | 28 |
| Those preparing for Baptism at Easter | 29 |
| The shops and businesses of our parish | 30 |
| Our servers and sacristy team | 31 |

Candlemas: bearers of the light of Christ

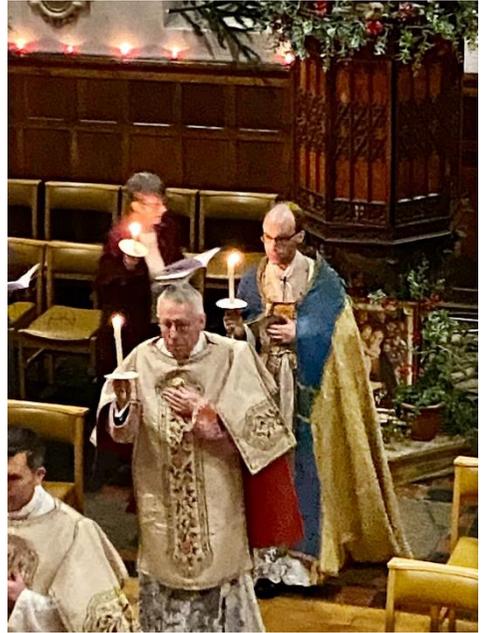
We had a wonderful celebration of Candlemas, the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, on Wednesday 2 February. St John's looked beautiful illuminated by the warm light of scores of candles, with many flowers including snowdrops in front of the Crib, and the whole congregation joined in the Candlemas Procession which encircled the church as we sang 'Of the Father's heart begotten'.

We were encouraged and stirred to fresh endeavour, faithfulness and obedience by our visiting preacher **Fr Stephen Coleman**, Vicar of St Peter's Grange Park in the Diocese of London (*seen right with Fr Richard after Mass*), and during Holy Communion Gordon Pullin, tenor, sang 'When to the Temple Mary went'.



At the lively reception after Mass, with sparkling wine and smoked salmon mousse, we welcomed Josiah and Jo English to the parish and their new home at All Hallows House: Josiah read the first lesson at Mass.

***Praise to
Christ our Light!***



*O Light of all the earth: thy children wait for thee!
Come to thy temple here, that we, from sin set free,
Before thy Father's face may all presented be!*



The good portion

A Sermon preached by Fr Richard Stanton, Parish Priest,
at the Funeral Mass for John Footitt RIP

18 February 2022

Lections 1 Kings 8.1, 10, 22-30: *A cloud filled the house of the Lord*

Romans 8.31-39: *Nothing can come between us and the love of Christ*

St John 14.1-6: *No one can come to the Father except through me*

'Where I am, you may be too. You know the way to the place where I am going.' (*St John 14.3-4*)

The Japanese minimalist Marie Kondo, who describes her admirably ambitious mission in life as 'to spark joy in the world through cleaning', recommends that you keep no more than thirty books. I once heard someone suggest that, surely, she means no more than thirty books *on the bedside table*. Among the thirty or so books on my bedside table is a small black volume which once belonged to my predecessor Fr Martin Smith. It's called 'The Priest's Companion', with the subtitle 'A Manual of Instructions and Prayers for Priests and Religious'.

It was written in 1946 by Fr Geoffrey Whatton, who was the chaplain to Community of St Mary at the Cross whose mother house is Edgware Abbey. Edgware was a very significant place for John: Reverend Mother, who was to be with us today until the weather intervened, tells me that John, who she called 'part of our family', in fact taught her to serve when she was a young Sister, and in 1993 he was the Master of Ceremonies at her installation as Mother. John himself was taught the ways of the sanctuary from his youth by, among others, Henry Cairncross, who wrote the influential book *Ritual Notes* which went through several editions and shaped the worship of countless churches around the world during the twentieth century, and who is himself buried in the Sisters' cemetery. John also knew, and greatly revered, the Sisters' longstanding chaplain Fr Whatton, who I believe baptised both Michael and Peter, and who wrote the book *The Priest's Companion* which sits beside my bed. I took it with me to the hospital when I went to see John on the afternoon he died.

It begins with a chapter called 'ADMONITIONS FROM THE FATHERS'. The first, from the writings of St Ambrose, says: 'Jesus Christ is

your inheritance, O ye ministers of the Lord. Jesus Christ is your sole domain. His Name is your wealth... Your heritage is not dried up by heat, nor devastated by storms. *The sun shall not burn thee by day, neither the moon by night.* Keep then the portion which you have chosen, for it is *the good portion, which the possession of the world cannot equal.*'

John had discovered that this is true. He found, and held fast to, the good portion which even the possession of the whole world could not equal, held it fast because he knew that through the gift and grace of his Baptism he himself had been found and held fast by one who would not let him go, 'through all the changing scenes of life.'



John's body was received into St John's the afternoon before his funeral, Thursday 17 February, followed by Vespers of the Dead

Although he spent a lifetime serving at the altar of the Lord and helping to lead others into an experience of the presence of God through the beauty of holiness – like the one described in the first reading today when 'the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord' – his faith was not limited to the externals of religion: it permeated his whole being, his conduct and behaviour, his choices. It was the governing principle of his life, a long and glorious life for which, rightly, we give thanks today even as we mourn his passing 'through the grave and gate of death' – not a wall, no, but a gate, by which he enters into a new phase of life which that lovely photograph in the inside back cover of the order of service illustrates so well for us, the sun descending over the sea bidding him rest as he moves towards 'another shore and a greater light.'

With clarity of mind and conviction of purpose can come for so many people a degree of austerity or remoteness, and perhaps unsurprisingly

for one born in the reign of George V this was true too for John, but the passing years brought a softening and lightening which continued as he saw his family growing and as he adjusted to a new phase of life following the death of his beloved Pam. One among the many tributes which have been paid in recent weeks expressed well the thoughts of so many of us by calling John the 'epitome of a wise and quietly devout Christian gentleman' and 'we were all enriched by his life and witness.' For all of us, the intellectual decision for Christ, or the established convention of religious practice inherited from our upbringing, must be matched and partnered with a decision of the heart, and the softening of all our stony hearts is the work of the Holy Spirit and a sign of redemption within us – a mercy since, as St John of the Cross put it, 'in the evening of life we will be judged on love alone.'

Love, said St Paul in today's second lesson, bridges every gulf and crosses every barrier: there is nothing at all, nothing of any kind, which 'can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Love is our Way home to our Father, and Christians believe that that Love has a name and an identity, a name greater than any other name and an identity which often eludes our grasp but never fades from the eyes of those who have seen and touched and handled the Word of life.

Invariably immaculately dressed, with a Jarrolds bag in one hand and, in the summer, a panama hat in the other, John carried himself through life with the confidence of one who trusts not in himself nor, after the teaching of the Psalmist, in 'princes or in any child of man', but who made his own the injunction of the same Psalm: 'While I live will I praise the Lord: yea, as long as I have any being, I will sing praises unto my God.' Certainly that was true of this Benedictine oblate, who loved to sit with his office book in hand (just over there), joining in the prayer of the universal Church, and I smiled once when he came into the sacristy before Mass, having just finished saying his prayers, and said to me, 'I always look forward to saying the Office! I don't know why more people don't; I'm sure the world would be a much better place.'

But his was by no means the kind of narrow life which non-believers think must be the inevitable consequence of faith and the knowledge that this world is passing away; his zest for life, captured in that incredible photo on the back cover of today's booklet, and his embrace of life's opportunities were precisely expressions of his faith and his conviction that life could and

can be lived in a God-ward direction. Perhaps it was that that kept him youthful: only in November, while some of us were standing near the door discussing a parishioner who was absent and under the weather, he said, 'Well, that's these old people!' St Irenaeus of Lyons said that, 'The glory of God is man fully alive' – and how alive he was – but the saint goes on, 'the life of man is the vision of God.' And that vision guided and steered John, as it guides and steers him still, for he keeps the portion he has chosen, 'the good portion, which the possession of the world cannot equal'.

As we gather in the faith of the Resurrection to offer the Sacrifice of Christ for John, we do so in the conviction that he finds the Jerusalem he has been seeking, and with Mary of Bethany who sat at the Master's feet, we believe that you, John, have chosen the better part which will never be taken away.

The shaken sieve

A Sermon preached by Fr Richard Stanton, Parish Priest,
at the High Mass

on the Eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time:

27 February 2022

The Sunday following the Russian invasion of Ukraine

Lections Ecclesiasticus 27.5-8: *The test of a man is in his conversation*
I Corinthians 15.54-58: *Death is swallowed up in victory*
St Luke 6.39-45: *A man's words flow out of what fills his heart*

'In a shaken sieve the rubbish is left behind.' (*Ecclesiasticus 27.4*)

On the day Vladimir Putin ordered his soldiers into Ukraine, Arina had planned a dance class after work and then a party. Three days later, the English teacher was making Molotov cocktails in a park. I found her crouching on the grass with dozens of other women, grating polystyrene chunks as if they were cheese and ripping sheets into rags for homemade bottle-bombs. Such scenes are unimaginable to most in Europe. They were unthinkable here too, once.' Thus a BBC reporter yesterday opened a tiny window onto what war does, what war does to people like you and me, people like you and me who find themselves driven into underground shelters by the wail of air raid sirens, people like you and

me who find themselves crammed into train carriages and bumper to bumper as they flee for the border, people like you and me who find themselves, yes, being deployed to the west to invade a sovereign nation, people like you and me who find themselves crouching on the grass making Molotov cocktails in a park.

The unspeakably heartbreaking tragedy which is unfolding before us in Ukraine speaks more eloquently than a thousand sermons of our need for redemption and has added fervency to the request which we make at every



Eucharist in the ancient prayer known as the Embolism which amplifies the last clause of the Lord's Prayer: 'Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, graciously grant peace in our days, that by the help of your mercy, we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ.' The same need was expressed, coincidentally but fortuitously, in similar terms in the opening prayer at today's Mass: 'Grant us, O Lord, that the course of our world may be directed by your peaceful rule and that your Church may rejoice untroubled in her devotion.'

*Fr Richard preaching at High Mass
on Sunday 27 February*

It's a prayer which may catch in the throat when we survey the wreckage on our television screens as war returns to mainland Europe, bringing home to us the reality of conflict with which numberless millions around the world have lived on a daily basis – in Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Iraq, and more – and our hearts break not only for the violence and viciousness of the waging of war, but for its social consequences by which numberless lives are

'bleared, smeared.' From this battle-scarred earth the hearts of men, women and children have cried out to God for peace, for justice, for freedom... and, yes, in honesty, also for revenge, and even the beauty of Anglican chant cannot disguise the raw pain which the psalmist expressed for every afflicted soul when he said, 'For thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble: and of thy goodness slay mine enemies.'

'But,' said Jesus in the Gospel last Sunday, 'I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you... for God himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.' A difficult Gospel and an impossible demand, but one which teaches us about the radical nature of the love of the God we worship, for as last Sunday's preacher Fr Mackley put it, 'Daily we line up against God, daily we are his enemies. And still he loves us... He comes to us as a human being to win us, his enemies, back. He makes himself into vulnerable flesh and hands himself over to us in Bethlehem, at Jerusalem, on Calvary and every day in the Eucharist. Why should we love our enemies? Because God loves his enemies. Jesus knows what he is saying is outrageous, but he is saying it because God's love for us and the lengths he will go to to win us back *are* outrageous.'

Those lengths are brought home to us when we gaze on Christ Crucified, 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief', and as we recall our share in his dying and rising through our baptism. In Holy Week, we see unfurled the 'breadth and length and height and depth' of 'the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge', and we prepare for this with the season of Lent which Ash Wednesday ushers in for us this week. It's a time for fasting and abstinence, a time for penitence and honesty, a time for self-examination when we pray that there may be 'created and made in us new and contrite hearts.' God knows we need them; for God knows that, as Jesus put it in today's Gospel, 'a good man draws what is good from the store of goodness in his heart; a bad man draws what is bad from the store of badness.' It is from the heart, said Jesus elsewhere, that there proceed all the things that defile a person: 'evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander.' Lent, kept well, is painful but joyful: painful because it forces open heart surgery upon us; joyful, because the heart of stone is replaced with a heart of flesh, a heart open to judgement and so to mercy.

Where does war come from? We clutch at answers expressed in the trite binaries of half-sentences – Islamism versus the 'West', the haves versus the have-nots, the nations that (nominally) 'play by the rules' versus those

that don't – or in geopolitical theories: the end of the imperial age, the degeneration of the West, the distribution of economic resources. But beyond that outward clothing, where does war come *from*?

A Christian understands that war is the concentrated form of the clash of human wills. We are created not as automatons or puppets but as beings with free wills which are expressed in our actions and our choices. Where these free wills are not in harmony with the perfect will of God, we resist God's grace, or we rebel against him, or we turn on other men and women created in the image of God. We know that when you and I, with different free wills, are not in harmony with one another, there is conflict between individuals; magnify that, and when the will of a people (or its leaders) is not in harmony with the will of another people (or its leaders) there is conflict between nations.

From beginning to end the scriptures are peppered and pockmarked with conflict: then, as now, brutality and aggression were near-unremarkable experiences which expressed the tragedy of the human condition.

Again, the Psalmist vocalises the resolve of one who looks out from the madness: 'The Lord is my light, and my salvation; whom then shall I fear: the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid? ... Though an host of men were laid against me, yet shall not my heart be afraid: and though there rose up war against me, yet will I put my trust in him ... I should utterly have fainted: but that I believe verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.'



'In a shaken sieve the rubbish is left behind,' and war forces upon us all a sifting, a sifting in which the poverty of our nature is brought home starkly even as we realise too the nobility of the human spirit and its capacity for love and self-sacrifice, its capacity to choose the good and reject the deceit and corruption of evil. The arrival of Lent invites us to see this sifting in its proper context, which is God's almost unbearable love for us, tender and strong, and the share which he gives us in the victory of his Son's death and resurrection: 'Let us thank God,' said St Paul this morning, 'for giving us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

And it is *this* victory, the victory which looked like abject defeat in the world's terms, which gives us the courage and the confidence to continue: in the saint's words, to 'never give in, never admit defeat, [to] keep on working at the Lord's work always, knowing that, in the Lord, you cannot be labouring in vain.' We will all be salted with fire, said Jesus, we will be purified by the fire of God's judgement burning its path through history, and in our response to that fire lies our judgement. The ashes which remain when fire has consumed a substance will be daubed on our foreheads this Wednesday as reminders of our mortality and invitations to that brokenness of spirit and contrition of heart which we know God will not despise.

'Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ,' is the call with which Lent begins; as we pray today for peace, we join it with the prayer that we may ourselves lay seriously to heart the tragedy of sin and turn back to Christ even as we pray that those leading Russia into this war may walk in the same paths of justice and peace. And as we make this prayer we come together to make Eucharist, to literally 'give thanks' for the victory which is already ours in Christ Jesus, a victory revealed in suffering love and the triumph of a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

To keep a true Lent

by Robert Herrick (1591-1674)

| | |
|--|---|
| Is this a fast, to keep The larder lean ? And clean From fat of veals and sheep ? | No ; 'tis a fast to dole Thy sheaf of wheat, And meat, Unto the hungry soul. |
| Is it to quit the dish Of flesh, yet still To fill The platter high with fish ? | It is to fast from strife, From old debate And hate ; To circumcise thy life. |
| Is it to fast an hour, Or ragg'd to go, Or show A downcast look and sour ? | To show a heart grief-rent ; To starve thy sin, Not bin ; And that's to keep thy Lent. |

WORSHIP WITH US

We warmly welcome you.

| | | |
|----------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Sundays | 9am Low Mass | <i>St Julian's</i> |
| | 11am High Mass and Sermon | <i>St John's</i> |
| | 6pm Evensong (said) | <i>St John's</i> |

Weekdays

| | | |
|-----------------|------------------|--------------------|
| <i>The Mass</i> | Monday 10am | <i>St Julian's</i> |
| | Tuesday 12 noon | <i>St John's</i> |
| | Wednesday 10am | <i>St Julian's</i> |
| | Thursday 12 noon | <i>St John's</i> |
| | Friday 5pm | <i>St Julian's</i> |
| | Saturday 12 noon | <i>St John's</i> |

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| <i>The Rosary</i> | Monday 10.30am | <i>St Julian's</i> |
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| <i>Morning Prayer</i> | Tuesday to Saturday 8.30am | <i>St Julian's</i> |
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| <i>Evening Prayer</i> | Tuesday to Saturday 6pm | <i>St Julian's</i> |
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The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession)

Confessions may be heard at any time
by arrangement with the Parish Priest

St John's and St Julian's are both **open daily** for prayer, quiet and visiting. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved on the High Altar of both churches for the Communion of the Sick and the devotion of the faithful.

We warmly welcome enquiries about **baptisms and weddings**.

We will be pleased to help you in any way we can.



stjohnstimberhill.org



[stjohnthebaptisttimberhill](https://www.facebook.com/stjohnthebaptisttimberhill)

On the cover: Both our churches are open daily: here, St John's is seen on a bright and clear late-winter morning. *Photo: ROS.*