



St John the Baptist, Sevenoaks



About St John's

The parish magazine of
St John's, Sevenoaks

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The Vicar writes...

'Because if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him' Romans 6.6,8



By any standard these are odd times to live in. Six weeks into 'social distancing' and it is almost beginning to feel normal. Queuing outside Sainsburys no longer feels shocking. Realising that it has been five days since one last the house is normal. I am almost getting used to home school, not that the content is necessarily anything of any quality.

Whatever your circumstances, I am sure your lives have been affected by the Coronavirus emergency. I am conscious that each person's circumstances vary hugely. For some people it is a time of great loneliness, for others a time when there is too little space. Some have too much time on their hands, having been furloughed from work, others are exhausted working harder than ever. Each person will be affected differently.

I hope, whatever the impact upon your lives, you are finding ways of creating and sustaining new patterns. I am particularly moved by the number of you tuning into the daily Mass. It has taken me a while to work out new technology and indeed to get over being a little camera shy. Many Priests have discovered all sorts of slightly odd habits they have gathered by having to watch their Masses back! We have been able to sustain a relatively full liturgical life, all things considered, and

I hope to continue this in the coming weeks. I will keep working on keeping the technological gremlins out and improving sound and picture quality!

Prayer at this time is particularly important and I really do commend to you the Church Union's resource '*Praying at Home*'. It is simple and well-constructed and can be a real basis of an active and lived faith at this difficult time. It is available online (Google *Church Union* and head to the news page). If you would like a copy printed and sent please just ask me and I will arrange it.

I am continually looking at what other Churches are doing and cherry-picking good ideas! Clergy are working cooperatively and well, trying to support one another. Bishop Norman has been a real star and is 'Zooming' (a verb I would not have known about before lockdown) his clergy every Monday night to support and be with them. It is a chance for us to chat, pray and laugh together. If you have ideas, do let me know and I will see what is possible.

Fundamentally I would love to be able to write to you and say we will all be back by the summer but, alas, it is still very unclear what will be possible and when. There is no doubt that what we do will be altered for some time. Nevertheless, this will end and our Church life will go back at some point.

Celebrating Holy Week in the Clergy House and without you all was a very strange experience. The liturgies, in their simpler form, were still deeply moving and a reminder of the truth of the Resurrection. In this Easter season we need to hold on to this truth, not least in these frightening times.

Fr Robin Jones

St Francis of Assisi - thoughts on choosing the statue of St Francis in memory of Michael O'Donoghue

He wasn't a sweetly, softly, charming sort of saint. He had a bad temper – he had several well-documented rows with people, especially his father. He did, however, love God with all his heart. The wounds Christ suffered were imprinted on Francis' own body, he felt so close to Him. These are called the Stigmata.

I feel he is a saint we should listen to in our own day because his words are especially relevant to us. A clever man – far ahead of his time – Francis understood that God loves all of His creation. He grieves not only for suffering human beings but also for suffering animals, depleted forests, devastated war zones and polluted oceans. His is the love that moves the sun and the other stars. Francis called the sun his brother. All these are neighbours and should be loved. If our species is to survive, we need to do this. Francis loved creatures. He rescued a wolf (presumably wounded) who was hanging about in the outskirts of a village and was being tormented by the villagers. My daughter-in-law's maiden name was Wolfe. Michael loved

birds too. Like Francis he would talk to crows in their own language: very embarrassing at the railway station and Canterbury Cathedral. I would like to have included two robins to remind us that we have had two well-loved vicars called Robin.

Finally, I would like to mention that Francis is credited with setting up the first Christmas Crib. For many this is their first introduction to the wonderful life of our Lord, who came to earth to show us how much He loved us.

Thanks be to God.

Annie O'Donoghue



The Easter Candle

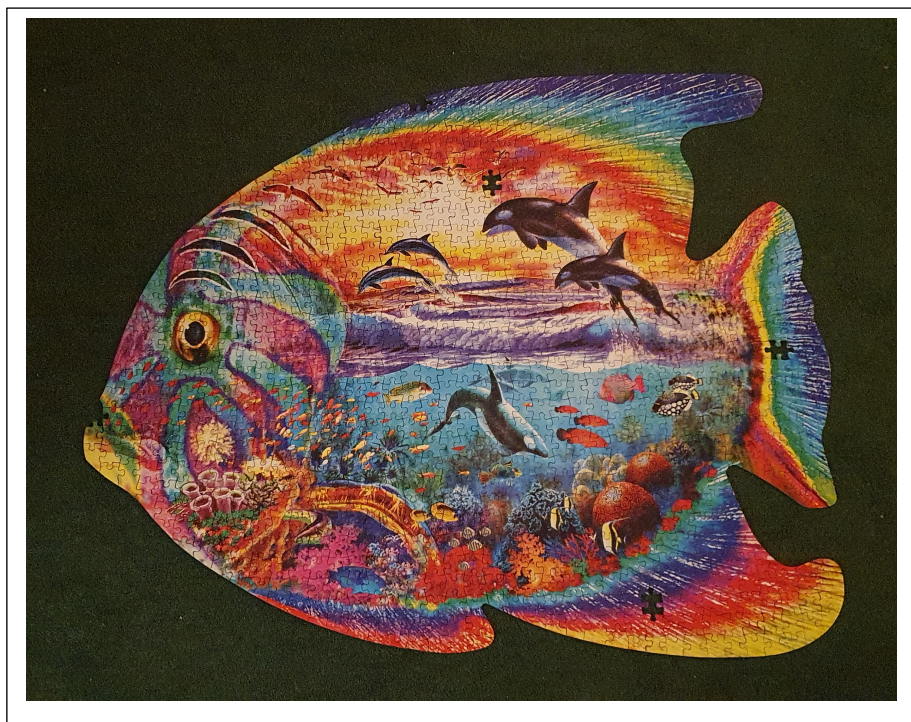


It was only after the lights had been turned on that a sharp-eyed parishioner noticed the growing mark on the ceiling and sent a comment to warn Fr Robin.

The Easter candle has since been shortened!



Colour in Lockdown



Jacob Davies has completed this amazing 1000-piece jigsaw. One of the advantages for those who are able to view this magazine on a screen is that you can zoom in and see the detail in the design (and only five missing pieces, I think!).

Well done, Jacob – and thank you to Mary-Clare for sending the photo to brighten up the magazine.

A light in the darkness...



In these uncertain times it is good to see the west end of our church building standing out in the darkness, a beacon of hope for those travelling past on St John's Hill.

And finally...

As we have seen on television, the lockdown has meant that much of our broadcasting has been coming from people's homes, rather than studios, just as our Masses are able to be streamed from the Clergy House while the church building is closed.

There have been many comments on the rooms used for these broadcasts, even to noticing books arranged on someone's bookshelf by the colour of the covers! Much as we might feel less isolated if we could see each other during Mass, it could be very distracting to see who's watching...

