

St Michael's, Oulton.



July 2019

Robin S. Knightley

Services and Events July 2019

Thursday 4th July: Women's Fellowship Meeting.

2:30pm: Meet at 1, Elmhurst Avenue.—The Gideons.

Sunday 7th July: The Third Sunday after Trinity.

10:00am Morning Prayer led by Debbie Allsop with Jill Pirrie preaching.

Sides persons: Karen Langfield & Carol Keightley.

Saturday 13th July: Summer Coffee Morning / Fair

10:00 to noon in church. Why not come along and bring your friends for convivial morning of fun and fellowship.

Sunday 14th July: The Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

10:00 am : Holy Communion led by Debbie Allsop with Rev. Marilyn Zipfel preaching.

Sides Persons: Elissa Norman and Stella Saunders.

Monday 15th July: Knit and Natter Group.

1:30pm: Meet at 1, Elmhurst Avenue, Oulton Broad.

Sunday 21st July: The Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

10:00am: Holy Communion led by Jill Pirrie with Canon Peter Baxendall preaching.

Sides Persons: Carol Keightley and Carolyn Woodcock.

Sunday 28th July: The Sixth Sunday after Trinity.

10:00am Holy Communion led by Debbie Allsop with Rev. Marilyn Zipfel preaching.

Sides Persons: Tim Jones and Jane Boyce.

Sunday 28th July: Evening Prayer.

6:00pm: Led by Jill Pirrie with Debbie Allsop preaching.

Famous Christians.

John Wycliffe (1330 -1384) was a theologian, philosopher, lay preacher and translator. He produced some of the first English translations of the Bible and helped to make them widely available. He was an early critic of the Papacy and the clerical basis of the Catholic church; Wycliffe argued scripture was the primary basis for Christianity. He is seen by many as the precursor for the later Protestant Reformation of Martin Luther.

He was born near Richmond in Yorkshire sometime in the 1320s.

As a young man, he moved to Oxford to study natural science, mathematics and theology.

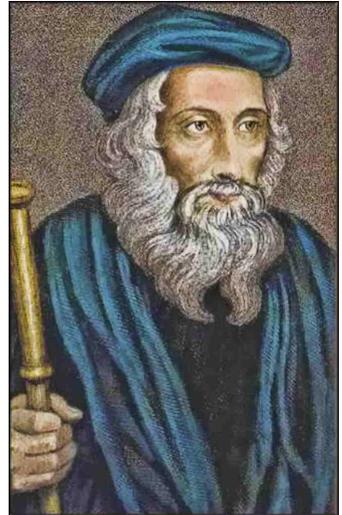
He studied at Balliol College, where he would later become the Master of Balliol. Wycliffe was most interested in theology and studying scripture.

During his time in Oxford, he read widely on religious issues. He also lived through the Black Death of 1348, which killed a high percentage of the English population and left a profound mark on Wycliffe's outlook on life. He would also have been in Oxford for the St Scholastica Day riot – between students and townspeople which left close to 100 people dead.

Wycliffe became well known for being an excellent scholar with a thorough understanding of the law. His scholarship gained the attention of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and he was made the head of Canterbury Hall in 1365.

When the Pope pressed England to send taxes, Wycliffe was instrumental in drafting a reply arguing that there was no basis for demanding a tribute from a foreign power. "Already a third and more of England is in the hands of the Pope. There cannot be two temporal sovereigns in one country; either Edward is King or Urban is king. We make our choice. We accept Edward of England and refute Urban of Rome." The pope, keen not to antagonise the English, soon withdrew his request.

In 1374, Wycliffe also served as a negotiator in the Peace Congress at Bruges – between England and France; this furthered his political influence and stature.



From his early days at Oxford, Wycliffe contended with various aspects of Catholic philosophy and influence and in so doing became increasingly critical of the Church of Rome

On his return from Bruges, he wrote tracts and books, expressing his views. This included denouncing the practice of – the church collecting indulgences for the remission of sin.

Wycliffe became a famous preacher in London, and many reformers allied himself to his views. Though as might be expected, he also attracted increased criticism from those with influential positions in the church, who were now threatened by Wycliffe's talk of reform. After calling for the secularisation of English church property, his opponents argued he was guilty of blasphemy. Wycliffe had to defend himself at Lambeth Palace. With opinion split, he was forbidden to speak further on these matters.

However, with powerful backers, Wycliffe continued his reforming attempts. In particular, he began the very significant step of translating and writing out the New Testament in English. This was a radical step as it brought the gospels close to the ordinary person who could not understand Latin and removed the Church as the 'interpreter'.

For the next few years, Wycliffe continued to attack the Pope and the church hierarchy. The church sought to destroy the English versions of his Bible, but the fact that so many copies survived suggest, that under his leadership, the movement to distribute the Bible in English was quite successful.

Wycliffe began to attract a group of followers – known as the Lollards. They spread Wycliffe's teaching and ideas throughout England. Attacks against Wycliffe continued until his death. But, supported by a sufficient number of people he was never excommunicated or deprived of his position.

After retiring to Lutterworth, Wycliffe suffered a stroke on Dec 28, 1384, and died three days later.

20 years later, Wycliffe was condemned as a heretic and a pronouncement that his books should be burned and his body exhumed and bones crushed. However, Wycliffe had already left a profound mark on English and European thought. He had challenged the authority of the church and pope, laying the foundation for the future Reformation, which would reject the Papacy and promote the Bible. Also, his work to make an English version of the Bible available was a critical moment in English Christianity.

‘Moving On.’

Parting is such sweet sorrow. That immortal line from Romeo and Juliet, by William Shakespeare; Juliet is saying good night to Romeo. Their sorrowful parting is also “sweet” because it makes them think about the next time they will see each other. I’m not a great one for saying goodbye without living in the assurance that we will have the opportunity to meet again someday, making the parting somewhat sweeter.

That is certainly the case in saying our goodbyes to Nick and Shuba. Sunday 30th June sees Nick conducting his last service at St. Michael’s before moving on with Shuba to Oxfordshire. We always knew that Nick’s time at Oulton was going to be limited, but in the short time he has been ministering to us he has won the respect, support and love of his congregation and will be sorely missed.



As sad as his move is, hopefully there will be a plus side in as much as Shuba will receive expert care from the Oxford oncology unit and will be much nearer to her family. Suffice it to say we offer our grateful thanks to you both for your time with us at St. Michael’s and wish you well for the future and please, give us a look if you find yourselves in the area.

God bless you both.

The Rectory

St. James the Least



My dear Nephew Darren

The estimate for re-hanging the bells in our church tower came as a great shock. The church council discussed fund-raising at length. Someone suggested selling part of the Rectory garden for building, another for getting 200 parishioners to loan £1,000 each, interest-free. Then Mrs Ffrench suggested holding a jumble sale. The jumble sale won – mainly because it was achievable without a great fight, and also gave everyone an opportunity to see what their neighbours think of as junk.

Expensive articles were brought with an ostentatious show of modesty when everyone was sorting donations. Genuine jumble, such as odd plates, old blankets and mysterious kitchen gadgets, were left at the church door in the dead of night.

On the day of the jumble sale, our helpers were ready behind wobbly tables stacked high with stuff. Had the tables collapsed, half the congregation would have been smothered. Little Miss Faversham was having a wonderful time flitting from table to table like a woolly bumble bee, kitting herself out for another year.

When the doors opened and the customers poured in, I realised how the Italians must have felt when they saw Hannibal with his elephants pouring down the sides of the Alps. That is when the mettle of our ladies really showed. They were tremendous - haggling at great length over whether something worth £10 should go for 10p or 11p. I noticed that those who are used to riding with hounds seem best able to control the crowds – even if they occasionally tended to regard the customers as the fox.

As it happened, the youth club were going pot-holing that day, so most of the teenagers bought complete sets of clothing for 10p which could then be discarded afterwards. But I wondered what their caving instructor would

think of teenagers arriving dressed in dinner jackets and tweed skirts.

Two days of preparation yielded a battle that was over in less than an hour. We emerged bloodied but unbowed, with only scraps of jumble left. Then it was home for a bath and a strong restorative, in the knowledge that the first step to saving the bells has been taken. Only another 2,500 jumble sales and we shall have reached our target. Indeed, the only jarring note of the day was to discover someone with a peculiar sense of humour had put a note on my car: "Sold – to be collected later".



Your loving uncle,

Eustace

‘I know that face!’

For those of you who regularly watch BBC’s Antiques Roadshow will have no doubt seen our former rector Robin Pritchard recently gracing our television screens. Robin attended a roadshow in Cromer last summer and took along a piece of glassware which he had felt obliged to bid for at a church auction when in his curacy. It transpires that he became owner of the piece which was sold to him for a ‘knock-down’ price of 50 pence! The resident expert informed him that it was a signed Scandinavian piece of glass with a current value of many hundreds of pounds. Not a bad investment of 50p!



So be warned you never know what little gem you might pick up at a church fair. Incidentally our next Summer Coffee morning is on Saturday 13th July, I can’t guarantee you’ll find a lost Michelangelo but I can say you’ll all receive a warm welcome!

MY FAVOURITE HYMNS by Pearl Stone

When Robin asked me to write about my favourite Hymns, I knew that it would be a difficult undertaking.

I have always enjoyed singing and over the years have come to know and love so many.

I was brought up in the Methodist tradition. I attended Sunday School on a Sunday morning.

Later I joined in the Adult Service in the afternoons where there was always a spot for a Hymn to be sung by the children. My favourites as a young child were, Tell me the Stories of Jesus,

Jesus bids us Shine and It is a Thing Most Wonderful. As a family we enjoyed wireless programmes especially The Chapel in the Valley on Sunday mornings and Sunday Half Hour of Community Hymn Singing in the evenings.

I remember once singing a duet with my mother which was Count Your Blessings One by One and it will surprise you what the Lord has done, it was worthwhile advice. My mother had a hard life for there were six of us children. We lived in a three bedroomed tied cottage that went with my father's job as an agricultural labourer. As for most people at that time there were no labour-saving devices, we were poor but happy.

Later I trained as a teacher responsible for Primary children enjoying again many favourite Hymns for young people such as One More Step Along the World, I go.....

From the Old things to the New keep me travelling along with you.

Dear Lord and Father of Mankind

Repton

C.H.H. Parry

Voices in unison

Piano

The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'Dear Lord and Father of Mankind'. It is written for voices in unison and piano. The score is in 4/4 time and the key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The music is arranged in three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The piano part features a steady bass line and chords that support the vocal melody. The lyrics are printed below the piano part.

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our foolish ways!
Reclothe us in our rightful mind,
In purer lives Thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard
Beside the Syrian sea
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word
Rise up and follow Thee.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee
The silence of eternity
Interpreted by love!

Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm.

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Dear Lord and Father of Mankind, a reflective Hymn that has always been a favourite for me, especially Verse 5,

Drop thy still dews of Quietness
till all our strivings cease,
Take from our souls the strain and stress
and let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of thy peace.

Finally, I have always enjoyed that great Hymn of Praise:
O Lord my God when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works thy hand has made.....
Then sings my soul my saviour God to thee
How great thou art. How great thou art.....

As I travel about the countryside, I often recall verses from many hymns which have become a special part of me.

Summer Coffee Morning.

Please don't forget that it is St. Michael's Annual Summer Coffee Morning and Fair on Saturday 13th July from 10:00 am to 12 noon. Please come along and join us for teas and coffee and also browse the numerous stalls. There will be craft stalls, the ever popular book stall, white elephant stall and the bottle stall.

If you have any produce for any of the stalls then please bring it into church preferable before the day in question.

We look forward to your support in this venture which is great fun and also raises important funds for the upkeep and running of our beautiful little church.



Love Bade me Welcome.

Jill Pirrie talks about a 17th century poem that has a message that spans the century's.

When Robin (Pritchard) put my name forward as a potential lay Minister (Reader) in the Church of England, a process of selection began. It started with a meeting in a Norwich church where we hopeful Readers were put through our paces. Among other challenges we were asked to choose either a poem or a prose passage, read it out and talk about it. I chose two poems; 'Love III' by George Herbert and St. Francis and the Sow; Galway Kinnell. I can share only the Herbert 17th century poem with you as the contemporary Kinnell poem is still in copyright.

First though a little about George Herbert himself. Born with a silver spoon in his mouth, educated at Westminster and Cambridge, he became a friend of James I. His gifts were enviable, and he thrived as musician, public orator, and politician. But then his life changed and courtly hopes disappointed, he renounced attributes of power to become a country priest in the village of Bemerton. The people were poor, ground down by the unrewarding toil of back-breaking work in the fields. George Herbert ministered there to these humble people only three years before he died from T.B., at only 39 years old.

Those last years, lived in obscurity were fertile. 'Love III' is the final poem in a sequence called 'The Temple', published after his death. It crosses barriers of time, place and society to reach us here in the 21st century. Simone Weil, French philosopher and mystic, says that, in the throes of an excruciating headache, she read the poem. She claims; 'Christ himself came down and took possession of me.' I hope George Herbert knows his God given poem lives today.

The vision is compelling: God as the host, urging a reluctant guest to come in for a meal, to sit and eat with him. The disarming simplicity of language and imagery enhances a deeply profound message. We use the expression 'breaking bread' together loosely and widely. It can mean anything from Holy Communion to a meal at a friend's house. Eating together is healing and restorative. Above all, it is a joyful submission on the part of the guest. A loving service on the part of the host.

'Love III' is a dialogue between God (the host) and the poet (the reluctant guest). The hesitations in the first stanza; 'yet', 'but', 'if' set the tone. The poet's self esteem is at rock-bottom. He does not love himself. The right

kind of self – love / esteem is crucial to personal growth and to loving relationships. That great commandment! love your neighbour as yourself’ says everything about God’s wise and loving purpose for each of us.

As a teacher, I found my pupils’ self-esteem crucial to their writing. A phrase, maybe just a word used judiciously – and recognized, celebrated – would bring that gleam in the eye and the unspoken response, ‘you think that’s good! You’ve seen nothing yet! And yet that’s how God works with us – joyfully expectant that we will play our part in this great story of creation. It starts with an invitation to a simple meal. It ends with glory and grace.



But, in the meantime, there is that difficult matter of our much-prized independence. The guest holds back through pride, the pride that attends our precious independence. Our neediness thrives on our anxious self-hood. Here, the host God, invites us to surrender – to sit and eat at his table. But still, we (the guests) hesitate. Here a proper sense of unworthiness becomes a stumbling block, and God reminds the guest that he owes God his very being. When the guest declines God’s invitation with ‘I cannot look on thee! Then, “love took my hand, and smiling did reply “who made the eyes but I?” Still the guest protests that he has ‘marred’ those eyes and is covered in shame. This is the moment of capitulation. But here there is so much more that giving in after a tiring battle. Exhaustion can drive us into the arms of God – especially as we grow old. This is, however, for the guest a decision hard wrought, made not so much in compliance, as in joy. Resignation to the will of God so often brings those two gifts: peace and joy. Stubborn independence is grounded in stress. God gives us rest – and it’s a rest captured in the last perfect line: “So I did sit and eat”. As each one of us sits and eats, we receive the gift. God’s hospitality is ours for the asking for and the taking.

But, what does it cost? We ask in our prideful desperation to pay our own way. Just like the guest we know the answer: Jesus has paid the bill. Our account is settled. It remains simply to “sit and eat – humbly, yet joyfully”. Let’s do that, first at our Communion table – and also in the glad hospitality of our own homes, at our own tables. May Jesus always be the unseen guest.

Love III

By George Herbert

Love bade me welcome. Yet my soul drew back
 Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
 If I lacked any thing.

A guest, I answered, worthy to be here:
 Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,
 I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
 Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?
 My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:
 So I did sit and eat.

The Bible that was thrown away.

The story is told by Brother Andrew, who worked for many years with the Persecuted Church, of a Christian pastor who was travelling some years ago on a train in the old Soviet Union.

There was just one other passenger in the railway car, and soon the two men were chatting. The subject of religion came up, and the other man extolled the logic of atheism and criticised religious belief. Then the Christian bravely expressed his own views, and even took out his Bible to show the man some relevant verses. But the atheist was both unmoved and annoyed.

As the futility of their argument became clear, the men lapsed into silence. When a little later the Christian was nearing his stop, he left the compartment for a few moments to get his suitcase. He returned to find his Bible was missing. The atheist was just closing the train window and sneered at him. It was clear that he had thrown the Bible out. The journey continued the final few miles in stony silence.

A few months later, a stranger came to call upon the Christian pastor in his village. It was a man from a neighbouring village who asked to be baptised. The pastor was astonished and asked him what he knew about such things. The stranger told him this story:

“Until a few months ago I knew nothing of Christianity. I am just a local builder, working on a site near the railway track. Then suddenly one afternoon a book came flying out of the window of a passing train and landed in the dust nearby. I walked over and picked it up. It was a Bible – the first I had ever seen.

“So I took it home and out of curiosity began to read it. I was amazed by what I read, and I have become a Christian. Now I want to be baptised and meet with other Christians. I have heard rumours that you are also a Christian, so I hoped that you would help me.”

The astonished Christian pastor did indeed baptise the builder, and also confided his side of the story of the flying Bible. Within a few years the builder had converted several of his neighbours, and a tiny Christian church had been planted within his own community. All because of a thrown-away Bible.

“Somewhere over the rainbow.....

Dear all- its time for me & Shuba to say farewell to great friends here at St Michael's. We leave with many fond memories- indeed.

I was musing about the promises of God seen in the rainbow and was considering how we see the rainbow's colours and the promises it holds out - 'in' and 'through' the rain.

If we are looking for promises that reside, in the words of that wonderfully nostalgic song -Somewhere Over the Rainbow, as Judy Garland and more recently Eva Cassidy and Shayne Ward sang - we'll miss God's promises. His promises are in, not -Over the rainbow- they come at a cost, but have real value.

The lyrics of George Matheson's hymn 'O love that wilt not let me go' expresses something of that 'seeing through and beyond' to God's promises, more eloquently than I can:

1. O Love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

2. O light that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.

3. O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain,
That morn shall tearless be.

4. O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.

May God bless and keep you all at St Michael's -as you continue your voyage on the good ship lolly pop- sorry on the Ark of God's salvation promises.
Nick & Shuba.

Shuba has penned the following poem as an adieu to Lowestoft.

(Our sweetest songs are those the tell of saddest thought - P B Shelly)

Lowestoft, Aloha Oe!

Lowestoft, Lowestoft, sitting by the sea,
Lowly and simply, lovely though you be;
Like the homeless, sitting in your High Street,
Like the Library, willing every soul to greet.

Lowestoft, I have loved you, four years gone by,
But, now must I leave you with a tear and a sigh?
The humble poor here, must I leave them now?
The tumble poets here, their worth they do not know.

But exit I must now, to a far away city,
That's not like Lowestoft, brexiting by the sea;
That's not like Lowestoft, so kind and so gentle,
That's not like Lowestoft, where life is so simple.

Lowestoft! Aloha Oe! I have loved you well,
Churches and you poets, I bid you farewell!
Lowestoft, lowly and simple will you always remain
The winds shall carry back my sad refrain.

Shuba (in memorium).

Glimpse from the past.

Having spent more than four decades working in the police service I sometimes felt the angst of police-officers in seeing a given sentence to lawbreakers as being to sometimes a little lenient. I stumbled across the following warrant issued in 1799 to the constables of Ranworth, just a few miles north of Acle, following the theft of 17 gooseberry bushes. I can't help but think the punishment was some what harsh! What do you think? Also bear in mind that 12 shillings in 1799 would equate a great deal of money.

WARRANT TO WHIP ROBERT MARSHAM, 1799.

NORFOLK.

To the petty Constables of Ranworth in the said County to execute and obey. WHEREAS Thomas Palmer of Woodbastwick in the said County, Gardener did make complaint upon Oath before me, one of His Majesty's Justices of the peace for the said County, that he had in the month of December last past, his garden situate in the parish of Panxworth in the said county, robbed of seventeen gooseberry bushes growing therein his property and that he had just cause to suspect & did suspect Robert Marsham of Panxworth, aforesaid Labourer, did dig, pull up, take and carry away the said gooseberry bushes, the same having been found in his custody. And whereas the said Robert Marsham is duly convicted of the said offence and is ordered to pay the sum of Twelve shillings to the said Thomas Palmer as a recompense for damages. And whereas the said Robert Marsham hath refused to pay the said sum of twelve shillings ordered by me as a satisfaction for damages, I do therefore hereby command you the said Constables forthwith to receive the said Robert Marsham into your Custody and to strip him naked from the middle upwards and whip him till his body be bloody. Given under my hand and seal this 9th day of May 1799.

On a happier note the following account appeared in the Norwich Mercury on the 24th September 1887 and tells of the benevolence to Oulton's poor.

Oulton Work House.

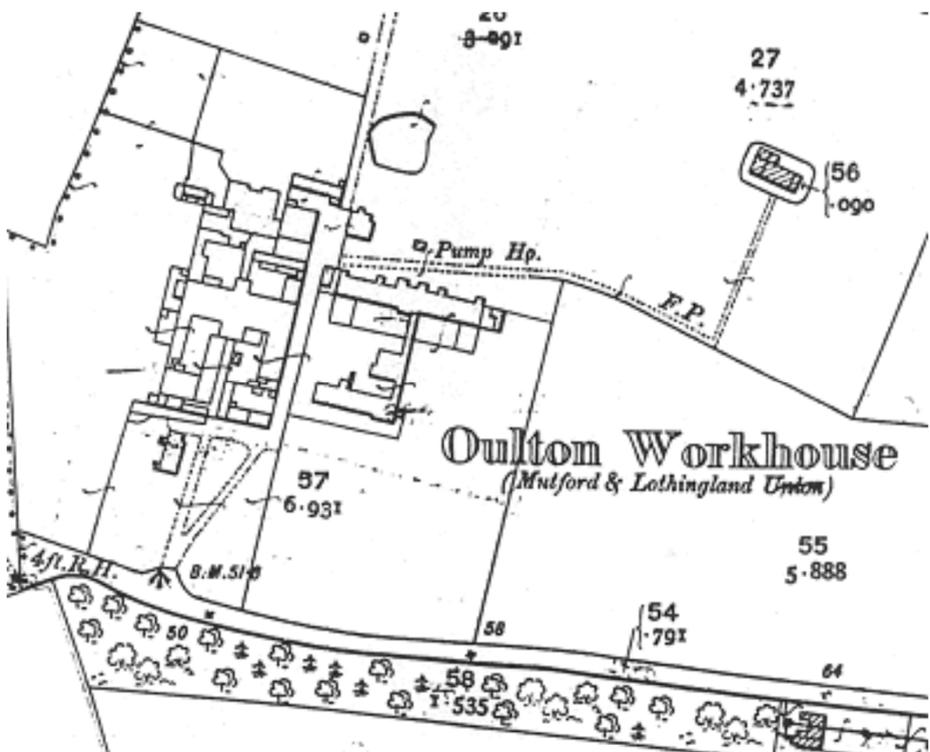
The old people, sick and children of the above institution were on Tuesday last, through the kindness of Mrs. Larkins of Holm View, Kirkly Cliff, treated to an excellent tea which all appeared to thoroughly enjoy, and for which they beg to return their best thanks.

After tea hearty cheers were given for Mr. and Mrs. Larkins.

Several pieces were sung by the children finishing with the National Anthem.

Mrs. Larkins was present accompanied by Miss. Leathes and had a good word for all.

Whilst on the subject of the old Oulton Workhouse, I had often wondered if there had been any tenuous links with St Michael's due to its close proximity. It had crossed my mind as to where those who had died in the institution were buried. It was during a recent meeting with the Oulton Parish Council that I learned that the Workhouse had it's own cemetery. Whilst most of the old buildings have long since gone the cemetery is still there and there are plans being undertaken to incorporate it in the new housing development



A section of an old Ordnance Survey map showing the work house buildings. The graveyard is located northwest of the top corner.

Faith, fear and death

Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., in August 2005 was elected president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. He received his doctorate at the University of Louvain, and is a member of the Catholic Theological Society of America, the Canadian Theological Society, and the Religious Studies Association of Alberta. The following article appeared in the June edition of The Catholic Herald.

'A common soldier dies without fear; Jesus died afraid.' Iris Murdoch wrote those words which, I believe, help' expose an over-simplistic notion we have of how faith reacts in the face of death.

There's a popular notion that believes that if we have strong faith we should not suffer any undue fear in the face of death, but rather face it with calm, peace and even gratitude because we have nothing to fear from 'God or the afterlife. Christ has overcome death. Death sends us to heaven. So why be afraid?

This is, in fact, the case for many women and men, some with faith and some without it. Many people face death with very little fear.

The biographies of the saints give ample testimony to this and many of us have stood at the deathbed of people who will never be canonised but who faced their death calm and unafraid.

So why was Jesus afraid? And it appears he was. Three of the Gospels describe Jesus as far from calm and peaceful, as sweating blood, during the hours leading up to this death.

Mark's Gospel describes him as particularly distressed as he is dying: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!"

What's to be said about this? Michael Buckley, the California Jesuit, once gave a famous homily in which he set up a contrast between the way Socrates faced his death and the way Jesus faced his. Buckley's conclusion can leave us perplexed.

Socrates seems to face death more courageously than Jesus does.

Like Jesus, Socrates was also unjustly condemned to death. But he faced his death with calm, completely unafraid, convinced that the just man has nothing to fear either from human judgment or from death. He discoursed very calmly with his disciples, assured them that he wasn't afraid, imparted his blessing, drank the poison and died.

And Jesus, how much to the contrary? In the hours leading up to his death he felt deeply the betrayal of his disciples, sweated blood in agony, and just minutes before dying cried out in anguish as he felt himself abandoned. We know, of course, that his cry of abandonment wasn't his final moment. After that moment of anguish and fear, he was able to hand his spirit over to his Father. In the end, there was calm; but, in the moments before, there was a time of awful anguish within which he felt himself abandoned by God.

If one does not consider the inner complexities of faith, the paradoxes it contains, it makes no sense that Jesus, sinless and faithful, should sweat blood and cry out in inner anguish as he faced his death. But real faith isn't always what it looks like from the outside. Many people, and oftentimes particularly those who are the most faithful, have to undergo a trial that the mystics call a dark night of the soul. What is a dark night of the soul? It's a God given trial in life wherein we, much to our own surprise and anguish, can no longer imagine God's existence or feel God in any affective way in our lives.

In terms of inner feeling, this is felt as doubt, as atheism. Try as we might, we can no longer imagine that God exists, much less that God loves us. However, as the mystics point out and as Jesus himself gives witness to, this isn't a loss of faith but actually a deeper modality of faith itself.

Up to this point in our faith, we have been relating to God mainly through images and feelings. But our images and feelings about God are not God. So at some point, for some people (though not for everybody), God takes away the images and the feelings and leaves us conceptually empty and affectively dry, stripped of all the images we have created about God. While in reality this is actually an overpowering light, it is felt as darkness, anguish, fear and doubt.

And so we might expect that our journey towards death and our face-to-face encounter with God might also involve the breaking down of many of the ways we have always thought about and felt about God. And that will bring doubt, darkness, and fear in our lives.

Henri Nouwen gives a powerful testimony to this in speaking about his mother's death. His mother had been a woman of deep faith and had each day prayed to Jesus: "Let me live like you, and let me die like you."

Knowing his mother's radical faith, Nouwen expected that the scene around her deathbed would be serene and a paradigm of how faith meets death without fear. But his mother suffered deep anguish and fear before she died and that left Nouwen perplexed, until he came to see that his mother's lifelong prayer had indeed been answered. She had prayed to die like Jesus - and she did.

A common soldier dies without fear. Jesus died afraid. And so, paradoxically, do many women and men of faith.



Father Ronald Rolheiser

Pause for thought.

We welcome back John Worsfold and his continuing story of St. Francis.

On Francis' return home from Egypt, he was found to be suffering badly with his eyes. It is believed this had been caused through small flies which are found in the desert, which had got under his eyelids and caused an infection which rapidly deteriorated. As we heard before, Francis received the Stigmata after he had returned from visiting the Sultan in Egypt.

Now he was visiting La Verna, the mountain where he had received the early wounds, two or three times a year. During his final year he became very frail, however he would still spend hours in prayer. It was decided by the doctor that he should have his eyes cauterised with red hot pokers. These were put in at the side of his head, which must have caused intense pain, but Francis didn't cry out. Before the operation commenced, he saw the red gleaming pokers and said, 'be gentle with me brother fire' - but the operation wasn't successful. By now he was so frail he could barely see. Brother Leo became his secretary and so wrote down things he needed to share with the Brethren.

By this time the large order of Franciscan's had split into two factions. Those Brothers who wanted to keep to the original rule of St. Francis were known as 'the Friars minor'. Those who felt that in order to carry out their engagement properly, required the need to study and to live in permanent Friaries, these Brothers became known as Friars Minor Cov (Conventuae) – being convenient to learn more. At this time Francis became an ordinary Brother and handed the reins over to Brother Ellias who became head of the order.

By now Francis was so ill that he went to live at St. Damian's where the Poor Clare's lived. As convention prevented him from living in the convent, Clare made him a shelter in her own garden, outside the confines of the convent. She and Brother Leo cared for him, but other Brothers regularly came to see him. It was in this garden shelter that Francis wrote the 'Canticle of the Sun' - sometimes known as the 'Canticle of the Creatures'. Francis always called all living things, the elements, and the heavens his brothers and sisters because he saw everything as created by God for human beings good. As we were all created by God, so they were viewed as his brothers and sisters. Francis cared deeply for the environment and realized everything had the right to live just as we have.

Francis dictated the words to Brother Leo who in turn wrote them down. One day one of the Brothers came to see Francis with the news that in the

city of Assisi the mayor had fallen out with the Bishop and vice versa. The row had escalated with both men making threats that would have had a huge impact on the city's people. Francis immediately dictated another verse to the canticle.

'My lord be praised by those who prove in free forgiveness their love,
nor shrink from tribulation.

Happy, who peaceably endure; With you Lord their reward is sure.

The Brothers went into the city and asked the Mayor to come to the Bishop's Palace with all the towns folk. When all were assembled – the brothers sung the canticle to the gathered crowd. When they got to the new verse the Mayor and Bishop realized their failings and sought forgiveness from each other which culminated in an embrace. The townspeople rejoiced that the disagreement had been resolved and they could now get back to normality.

Next time I will tell you about his death and what followed – that Francis would have hated.

Later I will tell you of another organization whose life started very much like St Francis and like the Friars, continues to carry on their good work even to this day.

Canticle of the Sun.

Most high, omnipotent, good lord,
To you be ceaseless praise outpoured
And blessing without pleasure;
From you alone all creatures came;
No one is worthy you to name.

My Lord be praised by Brother Sun,
Who through the skies his course does run,
And shine shines in brilliant splendour.
With brightness he does fill the day,
And signifies your boundless sway.



My Lord be praised by Sister Moon,
And all the stars that with her soon
Will point the glit'ring heavens.
Let wind and air and cloud and calm,
And weathers all repeat the psalm.

By Sister water then be blessed
Most humble, useful, precious, chaste
Be praised by Brother Fire;
Cheerful is he, robust and bright,
And strong to lighten all the night.

By Mother Earth my Lord be praised;
Governed by you, she had upraised
What for our life is needful
Sustained by you through every hour,
She brings forth fruit and herb and flower.

My Lord be praised by those who prove
In free forgivingness their love,
Nor shrink from tribulation.
Happy, who peaceably endure;
With you Lord their reward is sure.

By Death, our Sister praised be.
From who whom no one alive can flee,
Woe to the unprepared!
But blessed be those who do your will
And follow your commandments still.

Most High, omnipotent, good Lord
To you be ceaseless praise outpoured
And blessing without measure.
Let every creature thankful be
And serve in great humility.

(Note: The second from last verse was written by St Francis on his death-bed).

Final Thought.

Sir David Attenborough backs major new report on plastics from Tearfund

A new report has revealed for the first time that one person is dying every 30 seconds in developing countries from diseases and illnesses caused by plastic pollution and uncollected rubbish dumped or burnt near their homes.

The new figures were released in *No Time to Waste: Tackling the Plastic Pollution Crisis Before it's Too Late*, by international relief and development agency Tearfund, in collaboration with conservation charity Fauna & Flora International (FFI), the Institute of Development Studies and waste management charity WasteAid.

The report looks at the health impact of plastic pollution and rubbish on the world's poorest people for the first time.

It found that each year between 400,000 and a million people (at the upper end one person every 30 seconds) are



dying in developing countries from illnesses and diseases like diarrhoea, malaria and cancers caused by living near uncollected waste and plastic pollution.

The report calls on multinational companies to fundamentally change their business models by committing to reporting the number of single-use plastic items they distribute in developing countries by 2020, and halving this by 2025.

"This report is one of the first to highlight the impacts of plastic pollution not just on wildlife but also on the world's poorest people," Sir David, a vice president at Fauna & Flora International, said.

"It is high time we turn our attention fully to one of the most pressing problems of today – averting the plastic pollution crisis – not only for the health of our planet, but for the wellbeing of people around the world."

"We need leadership from those who are responsible for introducing plastic to countries where it cannot be adequately managed, and we need international action to support the communities and governments most acutely affected by this crisis."

Globally two billion people (one in four), don't have their rubbish collected. This often leads to disease and death. When rubbish isn't collected it often builds up in rivers and causes flooding, which can lead to diarrhoea and a host of infectious diseases.

Often the only other way to dispose of waste is to burn it in the streets, with the resulting fumes being extremely damaging to health as well as - in some countries - being the single largest source of carbon emissions, contributing to climate change.

Dr Ruth Valerio, Global Advocacy & Influencing Director at Tearfund said: "Tearfund's new Rubbish Campaign calls for urgent action from four multi-nationals - Coca-Cola, Nestlé, PepsiCo and Unilever.

"They sell billions of products in single-use plastic packaging in poorer countries where waste isn't collected, in the full knowledge that people will have no choice but to burn it, discard it in waterways or live among it.

Other key facts in the report:

Every second a double-decker busload of plastic waste is burned or dumped in developing countries.

Global plastic production emits 400 million tonnes of greenhouses gases each year – more than the UK's total carbon footprint.

An estimated 8 – 12.7 million tonnes of plastic is entering the oceans every year.

Every 30 seconds the UK throws away 2 double-decker busloads of plastic waste.

Living amongst plastic pollution and uncollected waste doubles the incidence of diarrhoeal disease.

To read the report log onto www.tearfund.org/notimetowaste

If you have any contributions for the next monthly edition of the 'Pew News' please send your material to Robin Keightley

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