

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, TIMBERHILL with ST JULIAN, NORWICH

April 2021



PARISH PEOPLE

Parish Priest

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

Churchwardens

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PCC Secretary

Liz Kilshaw

PCC Treasurer

Chris Bushnell

Gift Aid Secretary

Michael Watson

Organist

Keith Buxton

Head Server

John Foottit

Electoral Roll Secretary

Elizabeth Sutherland

Safeguarding Officer

Shirley Buxton

Deanery Synod representatives

Liz Kilshaw, Rhys Lewis

Parochial Church Council

Mary Barnes-Clay, Fr Peter Barnes-Clay, Andrew Knights, Susan Snasdell, Elizabeth Sutherland, Melissa Symes, Nigel Waller

Sidespeople

Garret Cronin, Barbara Donnelly, Andrew Knights (*Senior Sidesman*), Michael Rayner, Wendy Rayner, Nichola Rose, Diane Sheen, Susan Snasdell, Dorothy Tinkler, Richard Tinkler, Stuart Tinkler, John Woodrow

The Julian Centre Rouen Road, Norwich NR1 1QT
01603 767380 • www.julianofnorwich.org

The Centre is currently closed for refurbishment

His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh

10 June 1921 – 9 April 2021

As this Newsletter was going to press on Easter Friday, Buckingham Palace announced the death of HRH the Duke of Edinburgh at the age of 99. The Bishop of Norwich, the Rt Revd Graham Usher, said in a statement: 'There is deep sadness at the news of the death of His Royal Highness, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, particularly in this Diocese of Norwich in which he often stayed and spent many happy times. We offer our deepest condolences to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and all the Royal Family.

'The Duke of Edinburgh has been a tireless source of support and strength to the Queen through the 73 years of their marriage and the 69 years of her reign. He has also been an inspiration to very many people in this country and across the Commonwealth through his own charities and organisations.

'Over seven decades, millions of young lives have been helped and shaped through the establishment of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. I benefitted from the scheme as a young person and being a Gold Award holder set me up with many important skills for life.

'The Duke of Edinburgh had a great love of Sandringham and Norfolk and his commitment to the area meant that he was held in high esteem and affection by the people of this Diocese. We join with all those who will give thanks to God for such a full and distinguished life of service.'

We have scheduled a **Solemn Mass of Requiem** for Prince Philip
at St John's Timberhill on **Saturday 17 April at 12 noon.**

If the national timetable supersedes this arrangement, you can get up-to-date information on our website and social media, or by phoning the Rectory.

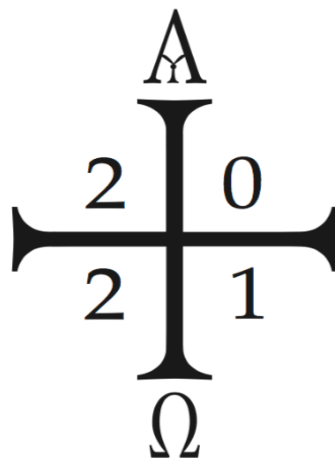
**Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord:
and let light perpetual shine upon him.**

Companions on the Way

Dear friends,

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

The Paschal Candle, which appears on the front of this Newsletter, dominates the sanctuary during the fifty days of Eastertide, from Easter Day until the Feast of Pentecost. Marked with five nails of incense which speak to us of the 'holy and glorious wounds' which Christ bore even in his Risen Life, it bears the date of the current year – **2021** – to remind us that the Sacrifice of Christ avails for all times and all places, for every situation and for every circumstance. As the celebrant marks it with the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet (*Alpha* and *Omega*) and the numerals of the year by the side of the crackling fire at the solemn opening of the Easter Vigil, he says, 'Christ yesterday and today, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega. All time belongs to him and all the ages. To him be glory and power through every age and for ever.' Thus we are invited to discover in the days of Eastertide the presence of the Living Christ, to whom all time belongs, in the joys and sorrows, the triumphs and complexities of our own experience, and to recognise him as the Lord who enters them with his gift of new life and peace, speaking to us (as he spoke to his apostles on the evening of the first Easter Day): **'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you'** (*St John 20.20*).



The response to that act of **sending** by the Risen Lord is set out for us in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, that book which immediately follows the four Gospels at the start of the New Testament. Picking up more-or-less where St Luke's Gospel has left off, it tells the story of the infant Church – the first men and women who, gathered around the Crucified and Risen Christ, accepted his commission to participate in the mission of love to the world. Passages from the Book of Acts are proclaimed as the first reading at the Sunday Mass throughout the weeks of Eastertide, and they should impress us

both with the vision and faith of the early community of believers – they were **‘united heart and soul... [and] continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power’** (we hear on Easter II, from *Acts 4*) – and also with the very familiar human experiences of tension, frustration, pressure and challenge both within and outside the community – on Easter V, the reading opens by telling us that **‘when Saul got to Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him: they could not believe he was really a disciple’** (*Acts 9.26*).

Each year, as we encounter the story of the early beginnings of the Church in our Easter worship (history read in the light of the Risen Christ), we’re invited to consider how the Paschal Mystery is to achieve concrete expression in our own lives, as surely as it did for those first men and women in Jerusalem and beyond who were to turn the world upside down with their faith and their proclamation, having become living witnesses to the power of the Resurrection. The excitement, vigour and vitality of those early days is evoked memorably in that lovely hymn by Bishop George Bell of Chichester, ‘Christ is the King, O friends rejoice’:

*The first Apostles round them drew
Thousands of faithful men and true,
Sharing a faith for ever new:*

Alleluya!

*O Christian women, Christian men,
All the world over, seek again
The Way disciples followed then:*

Alleluya!

In Eastertide, we seek that Way, which is simply the life of the Risen Christ animating and empowering us, both as individuals and as a Church Family – and, of course, there’s no real distinction between those two endeavours because we are redeemed not as individuals but as members of a living Body, so we **‘work out our own salvation with fear and trembling’** (as St Paul put it: *Philippians 2.12*) in the context of a believing community, and not as isolated units engaged in a solitary spiritual struggle. This is always true but perhaps comes home to us with particular power as we keep this second Eastertide under the shadow of the pandemic which has forced so many into atomised and lonely existences. The light, colour and beauty of our Easter worship and its resounding Alleluias should help us to understand that the

faith in which we were baptised is essentially relational, it requires our membership of and participation in the life of the believing community, and all this is brought to a climax for us by the great feasts which come in May: first Ascension Day with its vision of the Risen Lord ascended to the throne of heaven 'to prepare a place for us', then the Feast of Pentecost when we give thanks for the breath of the Spirit which has brought us to life and imbues us with the charisma of Christ, and then Trinity Sunday when we see the relations within the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each Person distinct and not confused, and yet only one God, extending to us his creatures his life and love, a share in the Divine Nature.



This Eastertide, coming as it does in the context of (we hope) gradually relaxing restrictions on our lives, is an invitation to understand what Christian 'togetherness' is all about, what it means to be the Church, the body of the Risen Christ. Support for one another through our regular prayer and worship together ('seven whole days, not one in seven'); our meeting together at the Eucharist to encourage each other as we hear the Scriptures and break the Bread; the glad acceptance of our responsibility for our brothers and sisters in need both at home and overseas (and we have particular opportunities to do this as we support the Additional Curates Society on Good Shepherd Sunday, April 25, and in Christian Aid Week, May 10 to 16); the welcome we offer to all through the generosity of our worship, our open churches and our non-judgemental hearts; the rebuilding of our communities in positive and creative ways after the damage and hurt of the past year – all these things are the practical tools by which we are to rediscover our identity as witnesses of the Resurrection. Then this Eastertide will indeed be a fresh experience of new life in Christ.

Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast!

Your friend and parish priest,

R. Richard

Some events in Eastertide

Sunday 11 April • Octave Day of Easter

11am Preacher at the High Mass: Fr John Fellows

Wednesday 14 April

7.30pm PCC meeting (following Low Mass at 7pm)

Saturday 17 April

12 noon Solemn Mass of Requiem for HRH The Duke of Edinburgh

Sunday 18 April • Third Sunday of Easter

11am Preacher at the Solemn Mass: The Parish Priest

5pm Stations of the Resurrection (*in St John's churchyard if fine*)
followed by Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament

6pm Low Mass

Friday 23 April • St George the Martyr, Patron of England

5pm Low Mass (*St Julian's*)

Sunday 25 April • Fourth Sunday of Easter

11am Preacher at the Solemn Mass: Fr Peter Barnes-Clay

Retiring collection for the Additional Curates Society

Monday 26 April • St Mark the Evangelist (tr.)

10am Low Mass (*St Julian's*) followed by the Rosary

Sunday 2 May • Fifth Sunday of Easter

11am Preacher at the Solemn Mass: The Parish Priest

Saturday 8 May • Feast of the Lady Julian of Norwich

10.30am High Mass (*St Julian's*) with the Bishop of Norwich:
attendance sadly restricted owing to physical distancing;

Mass will be livestreamed by the Friends of Julian of Norwich

3pm Julian Lecture (Professor Vincent Gillespie, University of Oxford)

Sunday 9 May • Sixth Sunday of Easter: Rogation Sunday

11am Preacher at the Solemn Mass: Edwin Wilton-Morgan, ordinand

Parish notes

Via Lucis

As we rejoice during Eastertide, there'll be **Stations of the Resurrection** at St John's (in the churchyard if fine) on **Sunday 18 April at 5pm**. In this *Via Lucis* (Way of Light), a counterpart to the more familiar Stations of the Cross (*Via Crucis* – Way of the Cross), we move from station to station, using the Lord's Resurrection appearances as a focus for prayer as we continue to celebrate the Paschal Mystery. Benediction will be given in the church at the end of the Stations, and Low Mass follows at 6pm.

Fr Richard on leave

Fr Richard will be taking a few days of leave **from Monday 19 April to Tuesday 27 April inclusive**. The usual schedule of services will continue throughout that time, thanks to the kindness of several priests who will be assisting us: please ensure that the attendance at the daily Mass is expressive of our thankfulness for their support! On Sunday 25 April, instead of the evening Low Mass at 6pm, there'll be **Evening Prayer** from the Book of Common Prayer led by our ordinand, Edwin Wilton-Morgan. It's particularly appropriate for us to have worship led by Edwin on that day, because it is...

Good Shepherd Sunday

The Fourth Sunday of Easter, which this year is **Sunday 25 April**, is 'Good Shepherd Sunday', when the readings at Mass present us with the beautiful picture of the Risen Lord as our Good Shepherd 'who laid down his life for his sheep' and who calls us by name. It's a day when we especially pray for vocations in the life of the Church, particularly but not only the call to serve the Lord in the ordained ministry and share in that way in his shepherding of his people. Fr Peter Barnes-Clay will be preaching at the 11am Solemn Mass. Everyone at Mass will receive a prayer card from the Additional Curates Society (ACS), for which there will also be a retiring collection, so do come ready to give in the special envelopes which will be available.



The purpose of the ACS is to ensure that the Christian Faith is proclaimed in poor and populous parishes. It does this by giving grants to parishes to help fund assistant priests, and it also encourages and fosters vocations to the priesthood through prayer and practical support. It has continued this work in the Church of England for over 180 years and has a particular role in supporting parishes of the Catholic tradition. We welcomed the General Secretary, Fr Darren Smith, to preach at St John's on the Feast of Christ the King in 2019.

In many parishes there is an ACS Secretary who has a few simple jobs including ensuring distribution of the Society's magazine *Good News* and helping to organise occasional collections, circulating prayer material and so on. If anybody would be interested in taking on this role in our parish, please have a word with Fr Richard.

A birthday surprise

There was a lovely surprise for Fr Richard at the end of the Solemn Mass on the Third Sunday of Lent, when to organ accompaniment an amazing biretta-shaped birthday cake appeared at the front of church ahead of his birthday the following Tuesday. The cake was the wonderful creation of our ordinand on attachment Edwin, who had also preached a powerful sermon at the Mass.

continued after the calendar >>>



April 2021

1	Thu	MAUNDY THURSDAY
2	Fri	GOOD FRIDAY
3	Sat	HOLY SATURDAY
4	Sun	EASTER DAY: THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD
5	Mon	Monday in the Octave of Easter
6	Tue	Tuesday in the Octave of Easter
7	Wed	Wednesday in the Octave of Easter
8	Thu	Thursday in the Octave of Easter
9	Fri	Friday in the Octave of Easter
10	Sat	Saturday in the Octave of Easter
11	Sun	THE OCTAVE DAY OF EASTER: EASTER II
12	Mon	Feria of Eastertide
13	Tue	Feria of Eastertide
14	Wed	Feria of Eastertide
15	Thu	Feria of Eastertide
16	Fri	Feria of Eastertide
17	Sat	Feria of Eastertide. 12 noon Solemn Requiem
18	Sun	The Third Sunday of Easter
19	Mon	St Alphege
20	Tue	Feria of Eastertide
21	Wed	St Anselm
22	Thu	Feria of Eastertide
23	Fri	St George the Martyr, Patron of England 5pm LM
24	Sat	Feria of Eastertide
25	Sun	The Fourth Sunday of Easter
26	Mon	St Mark the Evangelist (tr.) 10am LM
27	Tue	Feria of Eastertide
28	Wed	St Peter Chanel
29	Thu	St Catherine of Siena
30	Fri	Feria of Eastertide
1	Sat	St Joseph the Worker

Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us:

We pray for...

Thanksgiving for the new commandment	1
Thanksgiving for the Cross	2
The Departed	3
Our Parish and People: Thanksgiving for the Resurrection	4
Christ's Easter gift of peace	5
Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield	6
Thanksgiving for the Blessed Sacrament	7
Our witness to the Resurrection	8
The bereaved	9
Those newly-baptised this Easter	10
Our Parish and People	11
The schools of our parish	12
The departed: Year's Minds for April	13
Our Churchwardens and PCC	14
Norman and Graham, our Bishops	15
The homeless in our city	16
Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham	17
Our Parish and People	18
Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury	19
Persecuted Christians	20
Theologians	21
Norwich City Council	22
The conversion of England	23
The Additional Curates Society	24
Our Parish and People	25
Vocations to the Priesthood	26
Oratory of the Good Shepherd	27
Missionaries	28
The people of Europe	29
Preachers of the Good News	30
All who work in our parish	1

therefore let us keep the feast, alleluia!

Easter flowers

Our two churches were both magnificently and imaginatively decorated for Easter, with beautiful spring colours transforming them into fitting gardens of the Resurrection. Our warmest thanks to all whose labour and creativity made it so. Thanks too to everyone who gave so generously towards the cost of the Easter flowers and decorations. A total of £305 was given for both churches, and the remaining balance will be used for flowers as Eastertide continues.



Spring cleaning on all scales!

'Spring cleaning' projects large and small have been underway in the parish during Lent. At All Hallows House, new windows were fitted throughout the property in a three-day project at the start of Passion Week as the refurbishment finally gets underway; we now expect the builders to be on site before the end of April. On the same day as the team arrived to work on the windows, the carpets next door at St Julian's were professionally cleaned in readiness for Easter, while up the hill at St John's, the organ tuner visited to get the organ fit to proclaim the Resurrection. Gudrun and Jeremy Warren have spent hours washing years of incense and candle soot off the limewash in St John's, and have now moved on to tackling the lighting of St John's, where they fitted 62 LED bulbs on Holy Saturday, vastly reducing our energy consumption and increasing the efficiency of the system; Fr Peter Barnes-Clay has tackled various polishing projects and now panics when the Parish Priest



approaches clutching a piece of silver; Bev Standing has washed scores of pieces of linen in the last few weeks following a sort-out of the sacristy drawers, and she's now starting a new frontal for St John's Altar; Lucy McKitterick completed the new white and gold Lady Chapel curtains with interlocking red, blue and gold loops, and they appeared for Easter Day; Mary Barnes-Clay has done battle with the kitchen and the fridge; a number of generous volunteers came to vacuum, scrub and polish at St John's on the day before Palm Sunday and St Julian's on the Monday of Holy Week (where we were also able to tackle some much needed work outdoors); the small band of loyal volunteers continues to sanitise the churches at the end of each day – Keith Buxton, Shirley Buxton, Judy Hall, Denis Howard, Rhys Lewis, Elizabeth Sutherland, Gudrun Warren... and Susan Snasdell and Elizabeth also tackle St Julian's after the Rosary on Mondays. There have been many other projects underway as well. Many thanks to you ALL for your energy and time! It's all part of bringing our buildings up to a suitable standard, worthy of their sacred function and eloquent in their testimony to the seriousness of our welcome. If only it was so straightforward to spruce up our souls!



Our Church Family supports the Norwich

Foodbank. Current needs at the Foodbank include long life fruit juice, tinned sponge pudding, tinned custard, teabags, tinned fruit and nappies (sizes 6 and 7). Contributions may be brought to St John's or to the Rectory at any time.

In the twelve months to 28 February, Norwich Foodbank gave 15,059 food parcels to local people, including 5,319 children.

From the Parish Registers

Communicants and collections

	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Weekday</i>	<i>Collection</i>
<i>Week beginning</i> 7 March	54	39	£215.00
14 March	50	52	£100.00
21 March	55	58	£175.02
28 March	50	134	tbc

The collection figure above does not include the amount given by standing order, which averages £3,000 a month.

Election of Churchwardens and Annual Parochial Church Meeting

Saturday 22 May

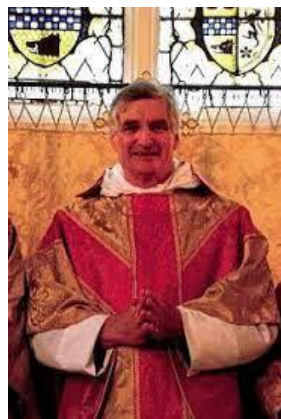
10.30am • St John's Timberhill
followed by Mass for the Vigil of Pentecost at 12 noon

Our Electoral Roll will be revised soon in preparation for the Annual Meetings. The Electoral Roll is the list of all who consider themselves members of our Church Family, and it's very important that it's kept carefully up-to-date. If you aren't on the Roll, or your details have changed, complete a simple Roll form (*available at the back of either church*) and return it as soon as possible either to the Rectory or to Elizabeth Sutherland, the Roll Secretary, no later than **Tuesday 4 May**.

**If you're on the Electoral Roll,
you're warmly encouraged to come to our Annual Meeting!**

At the Annual Meeting we will be electing new representatives for our PCC (Parochial Church Council): **three** members to serve for **three years**, **one** member to serve for **two years** and **one** member to serve for **one year**. A diverse and energetic PCC makes a huge difference to the life and wellbeing of any Church Family: might you be willing to serve? Nomination forms will be available soon.

On **Whitsunday**, the Feast of Pentecost, Sunday 23 May, we welcome as our guest preacher at the 11am High Mass **Canon Andrew Greany SSC**, Chantry Priest of the Guild of All Souls and formerly Vicar of Little St Mary's, Cambridge. Fr Greany ministers at the Guild Chapel in the gardens of the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, and also assists with the liturgical and pastoral ministry of the Shrine and parish. He was originally scheduled to be with us last November, but the pandemic intervened! We look forward to welcoming him – and the Holy Spirit, 'when the Day of Pentecost has fully come.'



Days of the Passion

'Having in remembrance his blessed passion, mighty resurrection, and glorious ascension, rendering unto thee most hearty thanks.' This is the daily activity of the Church whenever we gather – as we do day by day in this parish – to make Eucharist together, to 'proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.' But it achieves a clarity and a focus like no other once every year in Holy Week, when we 'go up to Jerusalem' as a Church Family to fully enter with heart and mind into the celebration of Christ's death and resurrection: the Paschal Mystery.

Many of the much-loved ceremonies of the week had to be adapted, of course, because of the restrictions presently in force, but nonetheless they were presented with compelling power as the *unity* of the week unfolded, and the restrictions also gave us a chance to 'think afresh' about what we do and why we do it.

After St John's had a good Saturday clean, Holy Week began with the Procession of Palms and Solemn Mass of the Passion. The Procession was indoors this year, with just the altar party participating in it while all the congregation held palm crosses and a cantor sang 'All glory, laud and honour'. Some very impressive new seven foot long palm branches gave the Procession in honour of Christ the King suitable gravitas and drama, before the mood of the Mass changed and we found ourselves in the dramatised Passion reading taking up the cry, 'Crucify him!' Fr Richard preached the first of his eight Holy Week addresses, and then the Stations of the Cross on Palm Sunday evening, led by Edwin our ordinand, offered another opportunity to accompany the Lord along the Way of Sorrows.

Attendance at Mass on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week is still not what we'd hope for but has improved on two years ago and those who are able to come on those days find their experience of the Week enriched and deepened by the liturgy. There was a sermon each evening and also daily opportunities for Confession, as well as livestreamed Chrism Masses from the Cathedral on Monday and from Walsingham on Wednesday.

Maundy Thursday found Lynton had at work decorating the Altar of Repose, moved this year to the gates of the Lady Chapel, with a fine curtain suspended behind it and many candles (including on top of the screen – a

‘first’, we’re told!) making it a suitable Garden in which to keep vigil with the Lord until midnight – as many people did, coming and going. Five of us were keeping watch when midnight arrived. Before that, the sanctuary was rearranged for the Mass of the Lord’s Supper with five concelebrants ranked in a semi-circle behind the altar, which was brought closer to the people. A choir of five singers enriched the services of the Triduum with lots of the traditional plainsong, as well as Merbecke’s setting of the Mass on Thursday evening and the *Missa de Angelis* at the Easter Vigil. With Keith’s sensitive accompaniment on the organ, their powerful singing of the *Pange lingua* during the candlelit Procession to the Altar of Repose was one of the highlights of the Triduum.

The stripped and desolate sanctuary confronts us on Good Friday with the ‘same mind that was in Christ Jesus, who... emptied himself.’ Eleven of us made the Way of the Cross in the morning, and in the afternoon the church was well filled for the Solemn Liturgy which included the traditional singing of the Passion to its haunting tone, as well as Victoria’s *Reproaches* while the Cross was venerated (this year with a bow or genuflection but no touch).

Although the Church watches and waits on Holy Saturday, practical exigencies mean that much of the day has to be spent in the preparation of the church for the Easter feast, and as Holy Saturday wore on the colour and scent of the flowers filling the church, the smell of wood polish and the many people coming and going engaged in practical tasks told us that the Resurrection Night was approaching. The important preparation of the Confessional was in progress, too – and how good it was this Holy Week that so many came to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, a personal encounter with Jesus crucified and risen.

We welcomed Fr Taylor Wilton-Morgan, curate of Thorpe St Andrew, as our deacon for the Easter Vigil, and he sang the great Exultet very finely in the presence of the Paschal Candle. As the Gloria of the Mass was intoned, bells rang out, the lights came on and we knew that Easter had arrived. ‘This is the night!’

Our warmest thanks to all whose love and labour contributed so much to our celebration of the Lord’s Passion and Resurrection: servers and sacristy team, church cleaners, flower arrangers, organist, musicians and cantors, assistant clergy, Churchwardens and sidespeople, readers and intercessors. Holy Week is an offering of love which we make together to our crucified and risen Lord: each year it renews us. Thanks be to God.

Bearing the weight

A Sermon preached by Fr Richard Stanton, Parish Priest,
at the High Mass on Easter Day:
4 April 2021

Lections Acts 10.34, 37-43: *We have eaten and drunk with him after his Resurrection*
Colossians 3.1-4: *You have been brought back to true life with Christ*
St John 20.1-18: *Mary Magdalene came to the tomb*

'You have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God.'
(*Colossians 1.3*)

Alleluia! *Christ is risen!* Yesterday afternoon our ordinand on attachment, Edwin Wilton-Morgan, and I were assembling the Easter garden in the church porch as a sign and witness of the Resurrection for all who enter this church during the coming days of Eastertide, to speak to them of our Easter hope and the risen life of Christ our Good Shepherd. I have to say when I agreed to take an ordinand on placement I wasn't expecting dry stone walling to be one of the activities we



we undertook, but this is a rounded parish which offers a rich diet and he took it in his stride with equanimity. He must be used to our ways by now. As we were trying different ways of constructing the tomb, with a great stone rolled away from the entrance, Edwin stepped back, looked at the tomb and said, 'I think that should be alright... Do you think the rolled-back stone will bear all the weight?'

'Do you think the rolled-back stone will bear all the weight?' The rolled-back stone is one of the great symbols of the Easter victory – it even appears in rather dramatic on the front cover of this week's *Spectator* – but is the rolled-back stone sufficient to bear all the weight of the hope we place

upon it? St Matthew, in his account of the Resurrection, tells us that 'the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door [of the tomb], and sat upon it' (*St Matthew 28.2*). I rather like that detail: the divine messenger planted himself firmly on the tombstone, holding it down, perhaps; as once another angel had been set to guard the way to the tree of life in Eden, so now an angel keeps the way open, keeps the tombstone rolled-back so that those who approach, as did Mary, and Peter, and the beloved disciple this morning, might see, and enter, and believe.

But the rolled-back stone is not enough on its own to bear the weight of all the hope we place upon it – the entire edifice of our faith which stands or falls on the Resurrection. 'If Christ has not been raised,' said St Paul to the Corinthians, 'then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain... For if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.... If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.' BUT (he goes on, with the great good news that the Church exists to proclaim) 'in fact *Christ has been raised from the dead*, the first fruits of those who have died' (*I Corinthians 15.13-20*). No light matter then, this question of whether or not Christ is risen, and is the rolled-back stone sufficient to bear the weight of that hope, that glory? The Revd Cally Hammond, a former spiritual director of mine, writing in the *Church Times* this week, described the empty tomb as 'a shell encasing earth and air, which proves nothing and suggests everything.'

The weight of our faith is borne not by the rolled-back stone, nor by any of the other wonderful instantiations of the power and goodness of God revealed in the holy Scriptures, instructive, edifying and strengthening though they are. The weight of our faith is borne by the one man, Jesus Christ, who was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; the one who (as we said in the psalm) is 'the stone which the builders rejected [who has] become the corner stone' (*Psalms 118.22*). On him and in him, the whole fabric of our faith and the structure of our believing community is built secure, and we are joined together, united by a baptism which bonds us together, to be a holy temple in the Lord, a place and a people where God himself may dwell.

This is the gift of the Resurrection at work within us, and the Paschal Mystery which we have been proclaiming through the days of the Passion and on this Resurrection Day anchors us in the new identity which is given to us in baptism, an identity which was recalled for us when the baptismal waters of Easter were sprinkled on us at the beginning of this Mass. We have been brought to life with our Risen Lord and therefore we are called – no, *compelled*

– always and everywhere to seek those things which are above, to settle for nothing in our manner of life, our treatment of others, our attitude towards ourselves, or the practice of our faith, hope and love which suggests that we are earth-bound anymore. Our thoughts, said St Paul, and indeed our words and deeds – ways in which so often we turn from God’s loving purposes for us – must ‘be on heavenly things, not on things that are on the earth, because you have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ is God’ (*Colossians 3.2-3*).

So we have become witnesses of the Resurrection, as we enacted with our garden act of witness earlier in this Mass, as surely as Mary of Magdala was sent from the garden on her apostolic mission to bring the gospel – the good news – to the apostles, initiating an unstoppable proclamation of the Easter message from that day to this, that chain of proclamation and Christian living by which you and I, through no merits of our own, have been brought into the household of faith and can set our faith and hope on the God who raised Jesus from the dead.

Our Easter Communion today vindicates the truth that Jesus lives, and when we stretch out our hands to receive the Easter Sacrament we know him, elusive though he so often is, as surely as Mary suddenly knew him in the garden, as surely as those disciples on the Emmaus way who recognised him moments before he vanished from their sight. In the Eucharist, Christian believers like you and me are just like those in the first reading who ‘have eaten and drunk with him after his Resurrection’ and so we have become witnesses who have received a divine commission to pass on, rarely with our preaching but always with our manner of life, the good news about Jesus.

The life we are living now is not our own, because ‘we have died, and our life is hidden with Christ in God.’ This life was made visible, once in Bethlehem, Nazareth and Galilee, in the triumph of last Sunday’s palms, in the judgement hall and all along the Way of Sorrows. The power which is made perfect in such weakness leads us up to Christ glorified, the source and meaning of everything that is or will be made, and leads us down to find him in his ceaseless giving of himself in word and sacrament, in prayer and communion. It is these which, in the power of the Spirit whom he breathes into us, bind us together into a living fellowship, active and eager to seek and to do the will of the Father. This Easter Day, let us roll back the stone which blocks the way to our hearts, and open wide the entrance for Christ, whom to know is eternal life, whom to serve is perfect freedom.

WORSHIP WITH US

We warmly welcome you.

Sundays	9am Low Mass	<i>St Julian's</i>
	11am Solemn Mass and Sermon	<i>St John's</i>
	6pm Low Mass and Benediction	<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>

<i>The Rosary</i>	Monday 10.30am	<i>St Julian's</i>
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Morning and Evening Prayer

The Daily Office is currently said privately in church, before opening and after closing

The Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession)

Physically-distanced 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 (except St John's which is currently closed on Mondays). 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.



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On the cover: The Paschal Candle at St John's before the High Mass on Easter Day. Photo: Jeremy Warren.