



The Benefice of St Mary's Bocking & Panfield Church



Sunday 2nd October 2022
The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity
Staying in Contact

The Very Revd Rod Reid - Incumbent (*usual rest day Monday*)

Email: bockingchurch@gmail.com Call: (01376) 324887 www.stmarys-bocking.com
or on Facebook, search for 'St Mary's Church, Bocking', or 'Panfield Church'

Forthcoming Services

St Mary's, Bocking

Sunday 2nd October

8am Said Mass
10am Sung Mass

Wednesday 5th October

9.30am Said Mass

Sunday 9th October

8am Said Mass
10am Sung Mass

Panfield Church

Sunday 2nd October

11am Holy Communion

Tuesday 4th October

5pm Evening Prayer

Sunday 9th October

11am All Age Worship

Hymns

204

243

428

170

Gospel Acclamation

*I call you friends, says the Lord, because I
have made known to you everything
that I have learnt from my Father.*

NOTICES

Harvest Supper - Thank you to all that attended last Saturday we had a great evening. Thanks also go to the Friends Committee as well as all who helped by preparing food or offering their time. We are really pleased to say the event raised £500, which is a terrific result.

London Marathon - Fr Rod is running the Marathon TODAY to raise funds for the Helen Rollason Cancer Charity. There is a Sponsorship Form in both churches, and if you would prefer to give online then go to www.justgiving.com/fundraising/rod-reid

Coffee Morning - As part of the fundraising in preparation for next year's Flower Festival, we hold a number of coffee mornings through the year. The next one will be on **Friday October 7th from 10.30am** in St Mary's Church Hall, we would love to see you there, all welcome.

Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Appeal - It would be really helpful if all knitting, stationery, toiletries (no creams/liquids) was in by the end of October, thank you.

MacMillan Coffee Morning - Panfield Village Hall, Saturday Oct 8th from 10.30am onwards. Home-made scones and cakes for sale, with a drink for £3. Other cakes on sale, as well as a tombola, games, bric-a-brac and crafts. Please support this worthwhile cause, you never know when you might need this.

Going Green! - Over the next few months you will be hearing more about our drive to become an Eco-Church. In partnership with A Rocha, an environmental charity, we are hoping to work towards the various awards beginning with bronze. There will be opportunities for all to get involved as we progress,

including our younger ones as Eco-Church will be theme for the next Junior Church, Sun October 16th.

Christmas Fair and Christmas Tree Festival - A few early dates for your diary! Our new Christmas Fair will be on SATURDAY NOVEMBER 19TH this will just be for stall holders and we hope by holding it a little earlier, more will come along. Then the Christmas Tree Festival weekend will be Dec 10th/11th with performances, raffle, tombola, pound presents, refreshments on SATURDAY 10TH DECEMBER, Father Christmas may even put an appearance in for that. Hopefully this will mean both events can thrive.

Bishop of Chelmsford - Bishop Guli will be leading and preaching at St Mary's Bocking on Sunday 6th November. It would be wonderful to see as many of you as possible, so that we can fully welcome her to the Benefice. Please do mark it in your diaries and join us for what will be a special occasion.

Years Mind - Please see an updated list at the back of the church. While a few amendments have been made not all of the additional names appear. Since Covid, any updates have been added to the weekly Notice Sheet but not necessarily the Years Mind list. Please do then take the time to make sure any loved ones who you wish to be remembered are on the list and if they are not please add a short note to the side with their name and date of death. In a few weeks time, I shall gather all those and make any further amendments. Thank you.

Prayers - We keep in our prayers Jean Goodwin, Sue, Jackie, Roger Hurford, Frances, Margaret, Peter, Jenifer, Jo, Bernard, and Margaret Everitt. We also remember our care homes Millard House, Fern Lodge, Aspen Grange, Larchwood, The New Deanery & St Mary's Court. In our Years Mind for this week, we pray for the families of Marjorie Lake, Cressy Adams, Joyce Brown, Brian Comfort, Mary Williams, Neville Sibley, Teresa Farrow and Edward Francis.

The Collect for the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity

O Lord, we beseech you mercifully to hear the prayers
of your people who call upon you;
and grant that they may both perceive and know
what things they ought to do,
and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Epistle Reading - 2 Timothy 1:1-14

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have

entrusted to him. Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

Gospel Reading - Luke 17:5-10

The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!' The Lord replied, 'If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, "Be uprooted and planted in the sea", and it would obey you. 'Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from ploughing or tending sheep in the field, "Come here at once and take your place at the table"? Would you not rather say to him, "Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink"? Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, "We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!"'

Address

Let me tell you a story: Once upon a time a fierce wolf appeared in the countryside around the city of Gubbio in Italy. It attacked both livestock and humans. It lingered outside the city gates waiting to devour anyone who dared pass through them. No weapon seemed to be able to hurt the wolf and anyone who tried to kill it faced certain death.

Eventually a holy man announced that he was going to leave the city and meet the wolf. Taking with him a small group of followers, and making the sign of the cross as he walked, he approached the wolf's lair. The beast rushed at him with its jaws open, but on being commanded in the name of God to cease its attacks, it trotted up to him, lay down docilely and put its head in his hands. The holy man then said: "Brother wolf, you have done much evil in this land, destroying and killing the creatures of God without his permission. You have not only destroyed animals, but also men and women made after the image of God. For doing this you should be put to death like a robber and a murderer. All men cry out against you, the dogs pursue you, and all the inhabitants of this city are your enemies. I will make peace between them and you, O brother wolf. If you offend them no more, they will forgive you all your past offences, and neither men nor dogs will pursue you any more".

The wolf submitted and the holy man continued, "As you are willing to make this peace, I promise that you will be fed every day by the inhabitants of this land so long as you live among them. You will no longer be hungry, as it is hunger which has made you do so much evil. If I obtain all this for you, you must promise never again to attack any animal or any human being. Will you promise this?"

The wolf agreed and returned to the city with the holy man. The people of the city were astonished to see the wolf behaving like a pet animal. The wolf lived for a further two years, being fed by the citizens and no longer attacking them.

I expect some of you will have known, or have been able to guess, the name of the holy man. It was of course St Francis of Assisi. How much of the story you choose to believe is for each of us to decide, but the underlying message of what we might now think of as the integrity of the created order and the inter-dependence of living beings has a very modern feel to it.

I have chosen to reflect on St Francis in today's sermon for a number of reasons. First, the passage from St Luke's Gospel which I have just read, and particularly the opening sentences, did not strike me as very good sermon material. I do not have any wish to tell a mulberry tree to uproot itself and be planted in the sea. I like mulberry trees and think they should be left where they are so that they will bear fruit. More seriously, this sort of passage can be read as implying that if we ask something of God and do not (or think we do not) obtain it, then the fault lies in our inadequacy and lack of faith. That is not an encouraging message and indeed can be quite damaging. It would need more than a ten minute sermon to explore what we think we are doing when we ask something of God and how we respond to the answer or lack of an answer. There are big questions here, more suited to unpacking in a study group or house group than a sermon. However, given the story of the wolf with which I started this sermon, I suspect St Francis might have had the faith to move the tree. I doubt, however, that he would have wanted to do so!

Secondly the feast day of St Francis falls on 4th October, which is this coming Tuesday. He is possibly the favourite saint of many people, particularly remembered for his love of the created order. We sang his Canticle of the Sun only last Sunday in the form of the hymn, All Creatures of our God and King. But there is more to Francis than a concern for animals. He was born in 1181 and was the son of a wealthy merchant draper. He is said to have had what we might now call a 'misspent youth' but was steadied by his experience of civil war and of illness. While in the church of San Damiano he had a vision of Christ saying to him, 'Francis, repair my falling house'. Taking this literally, and being of a somewhat impetuous nature, he took some goods from his father's warehouse, sold them and used the money to repair the church. He had, however, not obtained his father's permission and was promptly disinherited.

Over time, however, Francis came to realise that his call was to renew the church by returning it to the simplicity of the first believers. In 1210, Pope Innocent III authorised him and eleven companions to be Roving Preachers of Christ in simplicity and lowliness. From that small beginning sprang the order of Franciscan friars which had, and still has, considerable influence within Christianity. St Francis had a great gift for making the Christian message accessible to ordinary people. He is credited, for example, with introducing the devotional practice of having a Christmas crib representing the presumed scene at the birth of Jesus. A year or two before his death in 1226 he is said to have received the stigmata, the visible signs on his body of the wounds suffered by Jesus.

Thirdly, in 1979 Pope John Paul II declared St Francis to be the 'Patron Saint of Ecology'. Whatever we may make of the legend of the wolf of Gubbio, it is clear that St Francis had a special affinity with not just the beasts of the field and the birds of the air – though there is a delightful story of him preaching to the birds – but with the created order as a whole. There has arguably been a tendency in some parts of the Christian church to take a bit too literally the words of Genesis 1.28: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' Having 'dominion over' can easily become a justification for exploiting the earth's resources in a way that is not sustainable in the long term. I think most of us know that there have to be changes in how each of us lives if the consequences of runaway climate change and the loss of biodiversity are to be avoided. Precisely what any individual can do is more challenging. St Mary's is committed to the concept of being an Eco Church and has already made considerable progress towards this. I am sure we will hear much more about this in the months ahead and hope that this corporate action will inspire each of us to do what we can to live in ways that do as little damage as possible to the planet we all share.

The society in which St Francis lived and taught was very different from the one that we all inhabit. But I believe we can still learn from him. In particular, his emphasis on keeping things simple is a warning against the tendency of institutions to make things more complicated than they need to be. He may have had no great talent for organisation or rule making, but he knew how to speak directly to the hearts of ordinary people. Above all, his understanding of the inter-connectedness of the created order makes him a true prophet for our increasingly environmentally aware age. Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

Almighty God,
you have taught us through your Son
that love is the fulfilling of the law:
grant that we may love you with our whole heart
and our neighbours as ourselves;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.