



The Benefice of St Mary's Bocking & Panfield Church



Sunday 5th February 2023
The Third Sunday before Lent
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

Hymns

St Mary's, Bocking

Sunday 5th February

8am Said Mass
10am Sung Mass

Wednesday 8th February

9.30am Said Mass

Sunday 12th February

8am Said Mass
10am Sung Mass

Panfield Church

Sunday 5th February

11am Holy Communion

Tuesday 7th February

5pm Evening Prayer

Sunday 12th February

11am Morning Worship

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Great is thy faithfulness

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Gospel Acclamation

*I am the Light of the world,
says the Lord, whoever follows me
will have the light of life.*

NOTICES

Lent Soup - On Sunday February 26th following the main morning service there will be a Lent Soup in the Church Hall. Please can we encourage you to save the date. The sign up sheet is now at the back of the church so that we can get a clearer indication of numbers attending, thank you.

Thank you - We are pleased to say that the recent coffee morning raised £155, and the final total for The Children's Society raised primarily through the Christingle service is £435.15.

Funeral - Bernard Meech's funeral will take place on Tuesday 21st February 11.30am at Three Counties Crematorium. Jo and the family warmly invite you to join us them in celebrating Bernard's life.

Ash Wednesday - There will be services in both churches on Ash Wednesday, February 22nd. At St Mary's there will be the usual mid week Communion with the addition of the Imposition of Ashes at 9.30am. Panfield will mark Ash Wednesday at 7.30pm, please note no evening service at St Mary's.

Quiz Night - The Friends of St Mary's have arranged for a Quiz Night with Fish & Chip Supper on Saturday 4th March, 6.30 for 7pm in the Church Hall. Join us for a fantastic evening, with a £100 prize for the winning team! Tickets available from today only £12 including your food!

Quarterly Newsletter - The second issue of our Newsletter needs to go to the printers by Monday 20th February. If you have ideas for content, or areas of church life we could include, please speak to, or email Fr Rod. We won't be able to include them all, but we can make sure to do so through the year.

‘Out of this World’ - Across March 17th—19th we are hosting a space themed weekend. More details to follow soon, but plans are in place for an Indoor Planetarium and sessions with the North Essex Astronomical Society. The Sunday service will then be a special celebration with Felsted School Choir joining us to make it a very exciting Mothering Sunday indeed! Mark your diaries now!

Fellowship - The next session will be Thursday February 16th from 12.30pm in the Church Hall. Our speakers Mary and Graham Brace will be talking about India. All welcome.

A Warm Place this Winter - Every Friday until March 10th we will be opening St Mary’s Church Hall from 11.30am to 2pm as a warm place. Along with being a friendly space, there will be refreshments and a simple soup lunch, all of which will be free. Why not bring a friend and come along yourself.

Junior Church - Please let people know that through the first part of 2023, Junior Church will be running on the last Sunday of each month, so the forthcoming dates are February 26th, March 26th and April 30th. Continuing and new members always welcome.

Prayers - We keep in our prayers Jean Goodwin, Sue, Jackie, Roger, Frances, Margaret, Peter, Jenifer, Jo, June Blackwood, 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, we pray for the families of Henry Philips, Amy Edwards, Christine Vaizey, Les Horsley, Christina Hartland, Thomas Dunstone, Joan Bull, Maurice Hutchins, Joan Agate, Keith Stevens, Madeleine White, Thomas Cooper, Catherine Scott, John Smith, Mark Heksel, Cyril Cook, and William McFadden.

The Collect for The Third Sunday before Lent

Almighty God, who alone can bring order
to the unruly wills and passions of sinful humanity:
give your people grace, so to love what you command
and to desire what you promise,
that, among the many changes of this world,
our hearts may surely there be fixed
where true joys are to be found;
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 - 1 Corinthians 2:1-12

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God. Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. But we speak God’s wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him’— these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God’s except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 5:13-20

'You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. 'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Address

I wonder, do you ever feel like technology just passes you by?

I mean yes, I have a mobile phone, and quite happily use a laptop and iPad but that is where it ends. Even my new mobile phone has caused problems, as I started getting 'who is this?' messages from people I was texting including my own daughter. You are thinking he's got a new number to go with his new phone. However, I changed over my old number at the same time I got the new phone, so it should all have been nice and smooth. Instead, for some bizarre reason for several people I message it seems to come from a whole new number! I can't and probably won't fathom it! Just as well then I steer clear of other bits of technology that would clearly be beyond my grasp entirely. Last week, I went to lunch with someone, they paid, always good, and instead of getting cash out, or a card, or even his phone, he held his watch over the card reader, it beeped, and all done, from his watch!

Like it or not, technology really is quite the commodity today, and often an expensive one at that.

Back in the context of our Scriptures, there was an equally pricey commodity, that of salt!

In fact, it was such a commodity that at times, Roman Soldiers would be paid in it, those payments of salt were called *salarium*, from where we get the word salary today! So back then it was a necessity of life and great value was attributed to it.

Well today it is still a necessity of life, we need salt in our diet but it is no longer of great value, in fact quite the opposite, it is very cheap and readily available to buy! The thing we all know about salt today is that too much of it is bad for us, although I am sure that will change by tomorrow. But it is a useful seasoning to food, especially if that food is cod and chips!

In the Bible, salt is mentioned over 50 times. For example, in Leviticus where we are told to season all food with salt, so that's why the Scots put salt on porridge, and yes they do!

And then in the reading today which also appears in Mark's gospel. 'You are the salt of the earth', Jesus says to his followers, his disciples, and what an honour he bestows upon them. For we have already said what a pricey commodity salt was, so to refer to his followers as salt of the earth was a great compliment conferring them great dignity.

So what about us as we hear those familiar words. Well, let's look at two of those words from that sentence in more detail.

The first two, You Are.

If we take 'You' first, this is one of those occasions when we need to turn to the King James Version, to get a fuller meaning. Because you might ask who is this 'you', well the King James helps us as it says 'Ye are', which means 'You all'. So in its fullest understanding Jesus is saying to all those who follow him that they are salt. You, here are salt of the earth.

So if we are salt, the next question from many would be what do we need to do to be salt? Well, that is the point, because Jesus uses the indicative you ARE, not an imperative to BE salt. We have not got to strive to BE salt, we already ARE!

So now that we have that, the big question is what does it mean that we are salt? Well scholars have found at least 14 characteristics of salt that resonate for us as disciples and followers. I won't go through them all but Jesus himself says salt is refined, inviting us to become more like him, to shed those bad habits from our lives. He also says salt creates thirst, reminding us that through us, and how we live our lives others become attracted to it, and want to have what we have as Christians.

Undoubtedly, salt brings flavour too, encouraging us to be an addition to people's lives, a sense of zestiness if you like. It can also be used to preserve and protect.

We also mustn't forget that as salt, we are precious. We spoke of its value earlier, and so to God we are a precious commodity, and we must remember our worth and inherent value.

I am sure there are more salt like analogies, if you think of them you can let me know but in summary Jesus says in effect to all of us here today, "Recognise, what you already are!" You, as the collective body of Jesus Christ, are the salt of this earth, of this church, this community, in this culture wherein we find ourselves.

Doctor Rod, that has a nice ring! Might say too much salt is a bad thing for us. Fr Rod says we are already salt, our reading offers us a mouthwatering challenge, to rediscover what that means.

The technology of today will change, as a commodity it will lose its appeal, something else will become flavour of the times.

Within the church, salt will always be precious, life giving, thirst inducing and so much more. You are that precious commodity.

Let us rediscover again that salt within in us, and in doing so what it means to live it out, day by day. Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

Merciful Father,
who gave Jesus Christ to be for us the bread of life,
that those who come to him should never hunger:
draw us to the Lord in faith and love,
that we may eat and drink with him
at his table in the kingdom,
where he is alive and reigns, now and for ever. Amen.