



The Benefice of St Mary's Bocking & Panfield Church

Sunday 5th May 2024
The Sixth Sunday of Easter
Staying in Contact



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

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or on Facebook, search for 'St Mary's Church, Bocking', or 'Panfield Church'

Forthcoming Services

Hymns

St Mary's, Bocking

Sunday May 5th	8am	Said Mass
Sunday May 5th	10am	Sung Mass
Wednesday May 8th	9.30am	Said Mass
Sunday May 12th	8am	Said Mass
Sunday May 12th	10am	Sung Mass

132

Joy to the World

577

309 (vv1-5)

Panfield Church

Sunday May 5th	11am	Holy Communion
Tuesday May 7th	5pm	Evening Prayer/Office Hour
Sunday May 12th	***Please note no service this week***	

Gospel Acclamation

*And God saw everything
that he had made, and behold it
was very good.*

NOTICES

Charity of the Month - In May, the monies given at Tea & Coffee after the main service at St Mary's will go to Christian Aid. The total raised for Roundwood last month will be announced soon, thank you!

Monday May 6th - It is almost May Day! Whatever the weather, this is our biggest fundraiser of the year and we hope plenty of people will support events here and across the village. Don't miss it.

Flower Festival - A huge thank you to all those involved in creating the 25 fabulous displays around St Mary's. The Festival will continue today and run until Tuesday. Do let friends and neighbours know as we would love to see lots of visitors.

Funeral - We would like to let you know that Sue Lord's funeral will take place on Friday May 17th at 2pm here in St Mary's Church. Wilson and Philip would be delighted to be see many of Sue's friends gather for a celebration of her life. Please feel free to share this date with others.

Annual Parochial Church Meetings - After the 10am service on Sunday May 19th, it will be St Mary's Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) and Fr Rod would be really pleased if many could plan to stay for that, hear about the last year, as well as ask any questions. Please note that tea and coffee will be in church on that Sunday.

Friendly Friday Cafe - The Café had paused for an Easter break, but we are pleased to say that it is now back up and running every Friday until the middle of July. Why not pop in and bring a friend too?

Men's Mental Health training - We have partnered with MIND Mid & North Essex to offer free training. It will take place in the Church Hall on Tuesday June 11th 1pm - 4.30pm. More details to follow.

Prayers - We keep in our prayers Noreen Watkinson, Brenda Dunstone, Barry and Janice Goody, Jean Goodwin, Sue, Roger, Frances, Jo Meech, and Tony & Ann. We remember our care homes Millard House, Larchwood, Fern Lodge, Aspen Grange, Braintree Mews, St Mary's Court and The New Deanery, and the following whose anniversary of their passing falls this week; Violet Radley, Elsie Sims, Jessie Roots, Philip Brewer, Gordon Strong, Thomas Fenner, Maurice Johnson, David Austin (Priest) Gertrude Ward, Marjorie Fuller and Betty Grice.

The Collect for the Sixth Sunday of Easter

God our redeemer,
you have delivered us from the power of darkness
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:
grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us
to eternal joy;
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 - Acts 10:44-end

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, 'Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

Gospel Reading - John 15:9-17

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Address

At a rough count, I estimate that during my lifetime I have had at least twelve different addresses at which I have lived for enough time for it to be worth giving details to friends and family. By contrast, my mother in her 81 years of life only had two, or possibly three, different addresses (her family may have moved from one house to another in the same street when she was a child). As I was making this estimate, I wondered how many of these addresses I would have regarded as 'home' rather than somewhere to live until either I found somewhere better or had to move because of a job change. The answer was around three-quarters.

Not all of these places may have been 'Home sweet home': a rather chilly one bedroom flat in a Victorian house in inner London was not the most comfortable of places, but it was undoubtedly 'home': a place where I belonged and felt part of the community as well as being able to entertain friends, both old and new. The phrase 'Home sweet home' can be traced back to an early nineteenth century opera, *Clari or the Maid of Milan* which became popular in the United States during the American Civil War of the 1860s, even if it was banned as being likely to encourage troops to desert.

Reflecting on popular sayings about 'home', I have a slight preference for 'home is where the heart is'. The phrase is attributed to the Roman naval commander Pliny the Elder who lived in the first century AD and died some fifty years after Jesus was crucified. It is possible to be very much 'at home' in what may appear on the surface to be rather unsatisfactory surroundings when these are shared with the person or people whom we love and who love us. Home is not just a physical location: it conveys a sense of security often associated with being alongside people whom we love and trust.

Jesus does not seem to have very much to say about 'home'. We perhaps assume, but don't actually know, that he was brought up in a loving family home in Nazareth shared with his mother, presumed father Joseph and brothers and sisters. Perhaps we picture the house as being filled with the laughter of children; the hammering and sawing of Joseph in his workshop; and his mother Mary supervising the household. It may well have been like that. However, according to St Mark, when Jesus' mother and siblings came looking for him as he was teaching, he said: "Who is my mother, or my brethren?" He then looked at the crowds round about him and said: "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and my mother" (Mark 3.3-35). As his ministry progressed, he could have been described in modern terms as being 'of no fixed abode'. His ministry was an itinerant one and he is recorded as saying, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head (Matthew 8.20).

On the other hand, however, we read towards the end of St John's Gospel that when Jesus was dying on the cross he commended his mother and the disciple whom he loved (presumably John) into the care of each other and that John took her into his own home. Given that other family members were also gathered at the cross this is somewhat puzzling, but may suggest that homes and families are constantly adapting to circumstances. Nor was Jesus without what might be perceived as a secure base. The household at Bethany comprising Lazarus, Martha and Mary can perhaps be seen as fulfilling that role. Being very close to Jerusalem it would have been readily accessible to Jesus during those last days and weeks of his life in a way that his family home at Nazareth some 90 miles away was not. Despite the tensions within that household, particularly between the two sisters, it may have been a place that provided Jesus with some respite and where he could briefly set aside the burden of his ministry and the foreboding of his final weeks.

Perhaps most of us need something similar. This may be our actual family home particularly if we share it with those whom we love and who love us. In those circumstances, it is where we feel safe; but also where that sense of security enables us to take chances and grasp opportunities. If this is the case then this weekend with its theme of homes is a chance to celebrate and give thanks for our actual home.

Not everyone is so fortunate. People may live alone, either through choice or because the person or people they used to share a home with have moved out and moved on; or indeed are no longer with us in this life. Others may live in homes that do not feel safe but rather are places of conflict and anxiety. If so it can be important to have some other place that can act as a substitute for home. This may perhaps be achieved through friendships or through membership of some organisation where people have shared interests. It could indeed be the church, particularly if there is a strong sense of

community and mutual support. Home may have many meanings.

As I have already indicated, one important function of home, whatever that may be, is to provide a secure base from which to explore that which may not feel so safe. Personal growth often involves moving out of one's comfort zone and taking risks. It may only be possible to do that if we have a home, whatever shape or form that may take, that provides an ultimate sense of security. Religious faith can do this, but often does it more effectively when experienced as part of a fellowship rather than trying to go it alone. For some people church is very much the place where they feel most at home.

How might this relate to St Mary's? One of the great strengths of our parish church is that is firmly rooted in a particular tradition. We are Anglo-Catholic (what many simply call 'High Church'). We value continuity with the past, not just in terms of the history of this particular place but also in being connected to the living tradition of Christianity from its earliest times; we place considerable emphasis on ritual and on doing things properly; and are perhaps a little uneasy with spontaneous free expression departing from set order of service. I appreciate much of this particularly having in the past experienced worship which, because it tried to encourage participation by everyone whether or not they wanted to participate or indeed had the skills to do so, simply became a chaotic mess. If you are going to experiment you need a secure base – you need in a sense to feel at home.

St Mary's has all this. And because it does, perhaps there is more scope than we sometimes realise for taking a few risks. I'm not suggesting we change any of the fundamentals. But just as feeling secure at home might enable a bit of risk-taking in our personal lives, could feeling secure here provide that firm base from which, on occasion, to experiment? Could we sometimes worship in a way that is more relaxed and more accessible to occasional church goers? Are there potentially creative ways of using occasional Sunday evenings or perhaps something on an occasional midweek evening?

The flower festival theme of 'Home sweet home' has the potential to be creative not just for the weekend but also for the future. Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

God our Father,
whose Son Jesus Christ gives the water of eternal life:
may we thirst for you,
the spring of life and source of goodness,
through him who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.
Amen.

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