



Postcard from Rome ...

Rome in springtime – a marvellous idea to celebrate our Ruby Wedding Anniversary! We did not imagine being there for the election of a new Pope when we booked our holiday back in January. What an experience!

We arrived on the morning of Monday 18th April (the opening day of the Conclave) and decided to see as many sights as we could, as quickly as we could. We thought it was unlikely for a Pope to be elected on the first vote on Monday evening. We were exhausted on Night One- dodging the mad Roman drivers and

motorbikes in particular.

Day Two, Tuesday, and we made St Peter’s Square by 10.00 a.m. The atmosphere was electric and crowds began to gather. 12 noon approximately and the black smoke appeared – twice to show the two morning votes had been inconclusive. No problems seeing the smoke on the TV screens in the Square.

Lunch was a relaxing event in a very pleasant restaurant close to the action. It then became clear that voting might take place earlier than anticipated in the afternoon. We were there close to the front and central to where

the Holy Father would appear.

At 5.45 p.m. more black smoke – or was it white? No, black ... or perhaps white? And then the 6 p.m. clock bell rang; clearly a false alarm. More waiting – but only a few minutes later the smoke came out white, and the hairs stood up on the backs of our necks. We had a new “Papa” and the bells

rang out across the whole of Rome.

It is difficult to describe our emotions and feelings at that time. The introduction of the new Pope Benedict XVI and listening to his words to the huge crowds, was something that we will never forget (even if it was in Italian, or was it Latin?).

We are so pleased that Our Lord enabled us to witness such a very special event both for our own spiritual experience and as a moment in the history of the Papacy. We wonder what our Golden Wedding anniversary might bring?

Alan and Ann Siddall
St Columba’s Parish



Habemus Papam: the new Pope appears on the Vatican balcony

Comment ...

“Catholic” means being broad-minded, not narrow minded

Everyone belongs to a parish. This is the strength of the Catholic Church at its grassroots. A parish gives a sense of local identity and of belonging. But we also belong to a Universal Church: 1.1 billion people – one sixth of the population of the planet. The images of Pope John Paul II’s funeral on television, the presence of all those world leaders and

the excitement over the election of Pope Benedict XVI have all reminded us of that.

There is, however, an anomaly. We know what parish we belong to, who our bishop is and who the Pope is. Often, though, we don’t know how many parishes there are in our own city!

We hope this new occasional newsletter will play some part in our getting to

know more about parish life across Chester and its rural surrounds. We aim to produce three issues per year: summer, autumn, spring.

The ten parishes of “Chester & district” are St. Werburgh’s, St. Francis, St. Columba’s, St. Theresa’s and St. Clare’s in Chester, plus St. Thomas Becket in Tarporley, St. Cuthbert’s in Mouldsworth, St. Joseph’s in Malpas, and St. Plegmund’s in Tattenhall - and now St. Anthony’s in Saltney.

One aim of the newsletter

is to counter a “parochial” attitude and realise that we are part of a wider Church!

There are plenty of good things going on in Chester which many ordinary Catholics in the parishes never hear about. This is the first edition of a “Chester & District” newsletter to share some of that good news.

If anyone would like to help writing articles, taking photos or responding to articles by letters to the editor, you are very welcome.

Contact details—page 4

John Plessington: A Chester Saint

John Plessington was the son of Robert and Alice Plessington of Dimples Hall near Garstang, Lancashire. He was educated by Jesuits at Scarisbrick Hall. After entering the Royal College of St Alban at Valladolid in Spain on 18th November 1660 he later received his minor orders and diaconate in the same city.

Later still he was ordained a priest in Segovia, Spain on 25th March 1662. He then returned to England and undertook his missionary work mainly in Holywell and around Chester, living with the Massey family in

Puddington Hall. There, during the agitation resulting from the discovery of the "Oates Conspiracy" against Parliament, he was accused in Chester of being a priest. Incarcerated for 9 weeks, he was then hung, drawn and quartered at Gallows Hill, Boughton on the outskirts of Chester on 19th July 1679. Afterwards, his dismembered body was sent back to Puddington Hall and he was finally laid to rest in the ceme-



Barrel Well Hill (Gallows Hill) Boughton: memorial both to the Protestant martyr George Marsh (1555) and the Catholic martyr John Plessington

In Memoriam

George Marsh, a Lutheran preacher, was executed for his faith on Gallows Hill in Boughton in 1555. In 1679 John Plessington was also executed there. In 1898 city Catholics staged protests at the erection of a memorial in Boughton as it was dedicated solely to George Marsh but it wasn't

until 1980 that John Plessington's name was finally inscribed on it.

In November 1985 John North, leader of St. Columba's scouts, died of a heart attack at that spot. Despite his Protestant upbringing he was given a Requiem Mass at St Columba's by Fr. Lennon who was joined on the altar by a Methodist

tery of Burton, Wirral.

Canonised by Pope Paul VI on 25th October 1970, his relics are kept at St Francis' in Chester where

his feast is celebrated each year on the 19th July by the Knights of St Columba.

*Bob Jones
St Francis' Parish*

minister and an Anglican priest, both having asked if they could take part.

As the son of John North I sometimes wonder if there wasn't a guiding hand - or two - behind this ecumenical coincidence. At the least I am glad that in my father's death the harsh distinc-

tions once drawn between Christians, often with their own blood, are shown to have finally been overcome.

*David North
St Clare's Parish*

CaFE Training Day

From the first moment we walked into the CaFE Training Day, both the style and the essence of the process were immediately obvious - not only a cup of coffee was offered but also plates of croissants and brioches.

This hospitality set the scene for our first lesson

about CaFE - Catholic Faith Exploration; a process in which trained parish teams, after prayerful preparation, use videos to inform and stimulate discussion in small groups in the relaxed atmosphere created by the sharing of food at each session.

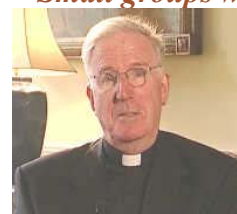
The various modules, on topics such as 'Knowing God

Better', 'Parents' Course' and the latest one for teenagers, have much to offer to our parish communities as we explore ways of deepening, strengthening and spreading our faith.

Look out for further information on forthcoming CaFE courses in the Deanery.

*Kate Hughes,
St Clare's Parish*

"Small groups will be a place of evangelisation and a hope for the Church."



Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor

Chester Parishes Celebrate Confirmation

"If you think Well, that's Confirmation finished with – back to normal now', then I have to tell you: you've got it terribly wrong."

This was the message of Bishop Brian Noble to

thirty-three young people (nineteen from St. Werburgh's and fourteen from St. Clare's) who came together to celebrate the sacrament on the evening of Thursday, 12th May at St. Werburgh's Church in Chester. The Bishop also talked of the danger of separating what we do in church from real life. His message

was that God is part of those things we do during the week – at school and at home. He urged the young people to understand that this was about their ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ.

Both parishes had spent some weeks preparing for the big evening. One Saturday they had teamed up and

gone in a coach to Savio House, Bollington – outside Macclesfield. Here they had engaged in different activities – ranging from being steered blindfolded through an obstacle course to a guided meditation, designed to get them to reflect on the qualities of the Holy Spirit.

Fr Nick Kern

St. Clare's: a Creative Solution

Five years ago the Diocese published a "Pastoral Review", foreseeing the time of fewer priests. At that time, Bishop Brian urged us not to be of the mind set "This is the Bishop's problem: he'll sort it out". No, we're all in this together. We have the local knowledge to come up with imaginative solutions for our own area.

St. Clare's is the smallest

parish in Chester—thus, first on the list to lose a resident priest. When we thought about it, we have most in common with St. Anthony's, just down the road in Saltney. Most of my older parishioners were involved at St. Anthony's before St. Clare's was built in 1960. St. Anthony's itself was in danger of losing a resident priest. The only problem was: it is in Wales

and a different diocese!

After chatting to our parishioners, Fr. Doyle (St. Anthony's) & myself wrote a joint letter to both bishops. The suggestion that we share a priest was included in the Chester Pastoral Plan at the time when several members of the Pastoral Council went to see Bishop Brian. It met with his approval and that of Bishop Edwin Regan

(Bishop of Wrexham).

The upshot is that this summer I am moving on to a parish elsewhere. Fr. Francis Doyle will continue to be Parish Priest of St. Anthony's, Saltney but he will also become Parish Priest of St. Clare's, appointed by and answerable to the Bishop of Shrewsbury.

Please keep both communities in your prayers— and especially Fr. Doyle!

Fr Nick Kern

50 Golden Years at Mouldsworth!

Thursday September 15th 1955 saw such pomp, ceremony and celebration in the quiet Cheshire village of Mouldsworth as rarely experienced either in the generations before or since.

Until, that is, September 16th 2005, when today's parishioners of will give thanks for the faith and fortitude of their forebears.

In 1955 Bishop John Murphy, assisted by forty clergy, opened and blessed

the church. About sixty parishioners were also present and those that couldn't



St Cuthbert's, Mouldsworth

get into the church listened to a commentary broadcast from within.

The story began in 1926 when Fred Spann became licensee of the Station Hotel Mouldsworth. He and his wife realised the spiritual need for a Mass centre. They offered the use of a large pavilion behind the hotel with Masses said by priests from St. Werburgh's in Chester.

Mrs Spann and many others worked tirelessly to raise money to build and furnish the church, a veritable gem set in the prettiest of countrysides. She purchased

the land from the brewery company and presented it to the diocese.

We will try to live up to their faith in our celebrations and would like to hear from any descendants of the Spann family; anyone with a story to tell (and hopefully, photographs) of those days. We hope to put together a short history of the church reflecting its life and development and supported by a display of photographs and other memorabilia.

Bill Cresswell

St Cuthbert's Parish

Chester Pastoral Council

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Copy deadline for October issue: 30th September.

The Chester Pastoral Council was set up in 2001 for the Clergy and lay people in the Catholic parishes of Chester to meet regularly as a group to give thought to the main issues likely to affect the working of our parishes over the next few years.

It meets four times a year, and since 2001 it has prepared an overall Pastoral plan for the Deanery, and set about improving arrangements for training in the numerous ministries that underpin a vibrant parish life.

The Pastoral Council knows of the need to improve communications between our ten parishes in Chester & District. Circulation of regular issues of "The Chester Catholic" is seen as one means of helping this.

Sunday Masses across the district: (from 13/ 14th Aug)

St. Anthony's, Saltney		Sun 11.00am
St. Clare's, Lache, Chester	Sat 6.00pm	Sun 9.30am
St. Columba's, Plas Newton, Chester	Sat 7.15pm	Sun 9.15 & 11.00am
St. Cuthbert's, Mouldsworth		Sun 9.00am
St Francis, Chester	Sat 6.30pm	Sun 8.00, 9.30 & 11.00am
St Joseph, Malpas (Saturday Vigil Mass is at Farndon URC)	Sat 4.30pm	Sun 9.00am
St Plegmund, Tattenhall		Sun 11.00am
St. Theresa's, Blacon, Chester	Sat 6.30pm	Sun 10.00am 5.30pm
St Thomas Becket, Tarporley	Sat 5.30pm	Sun 11.00am
St Werburgh, Chester		Sun 9.00 & 10.45am, 6.00pm

Goodbye Fr. Nick!

You will see from the item on St. Clare's on page three that Fr. Nick Kern will soon be leaving Chester. After a five-year spell at St. Clare's, Bishop Brian is moving him to St. Joseph's, Birkenhead.

Fr. Nick has brought tremendous energy to his work for the parish and the Deanery for which we are all very grateful. He will indeed be missed.

Godspeed Fr Nick!

Real Presence on the Roodee

On Sunday, 5 June, a Corpus Christi Procession was held on the Roodee in Chester—the first time that any Catholic event can have been held on this site (marked with a stone Cross or Rood from early Saxon times) since the Reformation.

It was initiated by the Capuchin parish of St Francis's in consultation with the other four Catholic parishes of the city. A delegation from St Anthony's at Saltney, who held a Corpus Christi Procession on the previous Sunday down the High Street, was also present. The reason for it all was to mark the Year of the Eucharist. The Procession (and a Quarant Ore or Forty Hours' Devotion, held from

11-13 July) was St Francis's contribution.

It is striking how, suddenly, Corpus Christi processions are being revived everywhere. There has been one in Oxford for the last few years, and Pope Benedict at the procession in Rome this year strongly praised this

carrying of Our Lord into public places as a proclamation of the Incarnation (God in the World) and Salvation.

The Procession began at the New Crane Street entrance of the Racecourse, processed across it under a canopy, placed the Blessed Sacrament on the old Cross



The Corpus Christi Procession approaches for Benediction at the Roodee stone

and stood in silent adoration for a while then there was a traditional Benediction service. The last section of the procession was graced by six girls throwing rose petals.

Over 200 attended the procession, some staying on for a picnic afterwards.

Fr Francis presided, accompanied by Rev Lawrence Hordley from St Columba's, and St Francis's choir led the singing. It felt like an act of public devotion and one that reminded us both of Chester's Catholic past and the responsibilities and opportunities of the present time.

It is hoped that this event will be a seed for future growth. Certainly it looks as though we will repeat it next year.

Bernard Beatty
St Francis's Parish