

Christian Faith in Malta

by Canon Paul Miller

I was fortunate enough to spend half term week in Malta. It is a lovely Mediterranean island and the summer sun was the perfect tonic as I continued my recovery from a hernia operation. On holiday I am a bit of an addict at reading the newspapers from cover to cover and I found myself reading every morning the Malta Independent.

The obituary columns were interesting! Every recorded death spoke of the deceased person either having gone to meet the Risen Lord or having died with the comfort of the Holy Church. There was in every one of them a distinctive Christian emphasis.

The island clearly has a stable economy which is being well managed. And there is a great emphasis on family and the sanctity of Sunday. For many families going to church was an important ingredient of their family life, often followed by fun and family activity. Christianity and strong family life have a very real connection. Christianity and church worship has never set out to exclude fun, and it was interesting to see how the Maltese embrace both.

There are apparently 366 churches on Malta, the highest

number per square mile in the World (is that true?) and one for every day of the year (leap years!). It certainly made me realise the great quality of their living and the significance of faith as a part of it.

Malta celebrates many Christian Festivals. The climate is conducive to outdoor festivals which connect Saints' Days with celebration. St. Paul was shipwrecked off Malta and today their greatest festival commemorates that event. But his shipwreck brought Christianity to Malta. How interesting that a disaster brought about a significant new chapter in their history and transformed their outlook.

This month we shall be celebrating Christmas. Many in Shortlands will embrace the festival in their Christmas holiday. May I encourage you to include a visit to Church and to remember the reason for the season. A warm St. Mary's welcome awaits you.



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Highfield Infants' School Head Teacher moving on



David Payne, who for the past 6 years, has been Head Teacher at Highfield Infants' School, is leaving at the end of this term to take up the post of Head Teacher at Biggin Hill Primary School.

Whilst looking forward to the challenge, David is warm in his appreciation of Highfield Infants' School. See Page 3 for some thoughts of his time at Highfield.

We wish David much success in his new appointment.

A little Retreat for the soul!

On 2 February 2008, there will be a Quiet Day at St. Mary's. The theme will be looking back and looking forward - an opportunity for assessing what our lives have been so far and what we hope they may be in the future. There will be periods for quiet reflection using poetry, art and the Bible and lunch with a glass of wine: a time for friendship and 'being Church' before Lent begins.

Special Events and Services in December

Saturday, 1st December

2pm to 4pm - St. Mary's Christmas Fayre
Come and enjoy the fun of the festival! Proceeds will be given to Bromley Welfare and St. Mary's, Shortlands.

Sunday, 2nd December

10.30am - Toy Service
You are invited to bring one new, unwrapped toy, which will become a gift for a local child in need of support.

6.30pm - Advent Carol Service

Including music by Carter, Fleming, Gibbons, How, Redford and Stainer, as well as popular congregational carols.
Organist and Director of Music - Frank Roddy
Assistant Organist - Claire Tillotson

Sunday, 9th December

3.00pm - Christmas Concert by the XBY Concert Band

Thursday, 13th December

12 noon - St. Mary's Toddler Group Christmas Service

Friday, 14th December

10.00am - Highfield Infants' School Nativity Play

Sunday, 16th December

6.30pm - The Christingle Carol Service
Come and see the children's faces glowing in the light of the candles, and support the work of the Children's Society.

Tuesday, 18th December

11.00am - St. Mary's Pre-School Christmas Service

Thursday, 20th December

10.00am - Highfield Junior School Carol Service

Sunday, 23rd December

6.30pm - The Traditional Service of Nine Lessons and Carols for Christmas with music by Archer, Pettmann, Rutter, Walker and Woodward.
Organist and Director of Music - Frank Roddy
Assistant Organist - Claire Tillotson

Christmas Eve: Monday, 24th December

3.30pm - Nativity Play and Crib Service
led by Reverend Alison Newman and Children's Church leaders. All children and adults are welcome to take part, and if you wish, come dressed as angels, shepherds or wise men.

11.30pm - Procession by Candlelight, Midnight Mass of the Nativity of Our Lord and Carols for Christmas
The Choir will be singing carols from 11.15pm to welcome you.

Christmas Day: Tuesday, 25th December

9.00am - Holy Communion
10.30am - Family Communion for Christmas Day
You are invited to bring a newly opened present!

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL OUR READERS !



From the Registers

Holy Matrimony

We congratulate
20th Oct Hannah Anthony and
Mark Whetren

At Rest

We extend our sympathy to those
who loved:

16th Oct Bill Beechman, aged 86
29th Oct Derrick Fisher, aged 81

Interment of Ashes

21st Oct Marjorie Sisman
4th Nov Arthur Clegg



Remembering

Bill Beechman

Bill was born in Germany and came to live in Bromley in 1935. He was educated in Bishops Stortford after which he read Business Studies at the London School of Economics. After the breakout of the Second World War he served in the 8th Armoured Division of the Desert Rats.

Professionally he joined the family export business which specialised in links with Spain and the Canary Islands. He was a keen tennis player and met his wife to be, Pat, at Sundridge Park Tennis Club. They married at St. Mary's, Bromley. His interests included history, current affairs, politics and 'Arsenal'.

A Service of Thanksgiving conducted by Canon Paul Miller, took place at Beckenham Crematorium, at which Pat, his wife, Gill and Brian, his children, and family and friends gave thanks for a long and full life.

SPAN THANKS

We record our thanks for donations during the month of November of £3.00

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Dennis Runcorn



Vicar of Shortlands 1967 - 1980

Dennis was born in 1922 and was ordained priest in 1950. He was a man with a deep spirituality and love of Christ which meant so much to so many; a man of humility, patience and kindness. Dennis was a deeply sincere person in all he did. He was kind to all in difficult times, and when he met new people he remembered them and their names. He gave wisdom and encouragement to those in ministry and helped with the training of Readers. His great gift was preaching - he was a valued member of the College of Preachers; an intellectual who could reach the common man and through his teaching he led many to a profound faith. Dennis had a wicked sense of humour which was apparent in his sermons, and the visual aids in the family services, which he introduced to St. Mary's, were a joy.

Dennis served as Rural Dean of Beckenham for 7 years and was made Honorary Canon of Rochester Cathedral from 1978 until his retirement in 1987. He led three groups to the Holy Land and another group "In the steps of St. Paul."

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Dennis was a man of vision who inspired many to become involved in parish mission. He introduced women as Churchwardens and foresaw the future participation of women in the ministry. At his funeral Dennis's talent for making long lasting friendships was borne out by the presence of representatives of all his ministries both home and abroad. He was lovingly supported by his wife Heather who, at his funeral, gave a moving tribute to her beloved husband; a testimony to a shared life in the service of our Lord. At the end of his sermon based on Isaiah chapter 42, the Reverend Andy Ward, Vicar of St. Augustine's, Derby where Dennis ministered for years in retirement, concluded "Farewell thou good and faithful servant, well done".



The annual Christingle service is advertised on Page 1, the proceeds of which are donated to the Children's Society.

The Children's Society is driven by the belief that every child deserves a good childhood. Their resources are targeted to four priority areas of work:

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Each year in the UK 100,000 children run away from home, and many resort to begging, stealing and prostitution to survive. The Children's Society helps them find solutions to their problems at their point of greatest need.

John Westropp

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A good number of families attended the Annual Pet and Animal Welfare Service held at St. Mary's in October. Families brought their pets which ranged from tortoises, hamsters, cats, dogs and snails! Pictured above are some of the families and their pets accompanied by Canon Paul Miller and the Reverend Alison Newman who conducted the service.

David Payne - thoughts on leaving Highfield Infants' School...

"After 6 years as Headteacher of Highfield Infants' School, there is so much to say, so many wonderful memories – I could write for pages. However, since copy space is limited, I shall confine myself to a few well-chosen words and try to cover some of the highlights!

I have often read remarks where Headteachers have referred to their staff and somehow, it has always read to me as sounding contrived or predictable. I am not sure how to convey my thanks to my team and how to avoid those pitfalls, but I am absolutely certain of the fact that none of the plaudits, the accolades, the awards, the Ofsted report would have been possible without the excellence of all of them. They are an outstanding collection of people, all committed to the Highfield cause. The children too are wonderful. They are all eager to learn and respectful of others. They create the atmosphere in the school, which is at times calm, at times busy and bustling; but always purposeful, always full of learning, often full of fun, always safe and caring – it rocks! The ethos of the school is pervasive. The Golden Rules are evident because no one is heard to

shout at a child, there isn't any need – and everyone understands that it just doesn't work to do so. The really nice thing is that I know that when I'm gone, all of this will carry on – it's embedded.

On another tack, I find it difficult to put into words the immense satisfaction I glean from being able to walk around our new facilities. Our Year 1 learning and teaching area now encompasses 3 classes, without one (almost literally) being left 'out in the cold'. This has provided not just a better quality of physical provision for these children but also an improved continuity of experience in terms of their curriculum entitlement. It is the same for Year 2, which now centres around a busy shared area where Teaching Assistants, used to being relegated to some drafty cubby-hole somewhere, are able to work with focus groups in modern, light and spacious surroundings. The three classrooms themselves are a delight. All with a superb aspect and all fostering a collegiate pride in their surroundings that quite simply couldn't exist before. Again, words are not enough to convey this, but I must pay tribute to the Governing

Body for never losing sight of the vision, the end goal and for never accepting that the mobiles were an insoluble problem. Span's readers will not know about the endless hours of meetings, the 'phone calls, emails, letters, the pleading and the not taking 'no' for an answer that has resulted in what we now have. I am quite sure that if it were not for the solidarity of all of these efforts on the part of Carol Collins and Tony Chase in particular, coupled with my own tenacity, we would still have 120 children learning in an environment more akin to the developing world than to a flagship school at the beginning of the 21st century.

The curriculum has developed substantially during the last 6 years, most notably in terms of the embracing of a Foundation Stage curriculum for children in Reception but in many other ways too. Included in this is the incredible commitment of the school to the use of new technologies to enhance learning, backed up by the most superb FHS committee and the ever-increasing range of extra curricular opportunities on offer to our young pupils.

Finally, to our parents. As an open school, a welcoming school, the type of school that doesn't recoil when a parent has an issue with some aspect of school life, I believe we have fostered a partnership with parents that is enviable. On a personal level, I have felt the most amazing and consistent support from parents – never better epitomised than by the army of helpers required to run the Saturday morning football club! Reflected too in the numbers who regularly come into school to help teachers and children. I talk to our prospective parents about the level of contact between home and school, the fact that their Headteacher is accessible – as are all of the staff – and I often wonder if they really believe me. Those parents that have children already at the school know it to be the case. It is something of which I feel tremendously proud.

Lastly I pay tribute to the wider Shortlands community. I have valued your support over these last 6 years and made many friends. I wish you all the very best for the future and hope to see many of you again."

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of St. Mary,
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- 10.30 Family Communion, except the first Sunday in the month in term time. During term time there are separate groups in the Church Hall for children aged 4-14.
- 10.30 All Age Eucharist or Parade Service (1st Sunday in the month, term time).
- 18.30 Evening Service

Every Monday

- 17.00 Evening Prayers

Every Wednesday

- 10.00 Holy Communion

Further information about all services can be obtained from the Parish Office.

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