



St Mary
Magdalen
OXFORD

Parish Notes

June 2026



Our new Vicar, Fr Jonathan Lewis-Jong was inducted in church by the Bishop of Oxford on Wednesday, May 27th.

INSIDE:

**“My Mags” – The story of Fr Jonathan’s connection with St Mary Mags
More pictures from his installation**

Fr. Jonathan’s first two sermons since his return

Poem of the Month – the first of Gerard Manly Hopkins’ “Dark Sonnets”

Services

Sundays

Eucharist at 8 am
Matins 10 am; High Mass at 10.30 am

Saturdays

Eucharist at 12.15 pm and 6.00 pm

Weekdays

Eucharist at 12.15 pm and 6.00 pm
Morning Prayer 8.15 am, Evening Prayer
5.40 pm

Confessions

Daily after the 12.15 pm Mass,
Wednesdays & Saturdays at 6.30 pm
Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage by
appointment with the Parish Priest.

Parish Clergy

Vicar

Fr. Jonathan Lewis-Jong
FrJonathan@stmarymagdalenoxford.org.uk
Whatsapp 07799 271913

Associate Priest

The Reverend Dr Mel Marshall
Telephone: 01865 436243
mthrmelanie@gmail.com

Administration

Parish office

Parish Administrator: Matthew Watts
admin@stmarymagdalenoxford.org.uk

Phone: 01865 246143

Website

www.stmarymagdalenoxford.org.uk

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Parish: @marymagsoxford

Choir: @magschoir

Facebook

stmarymagdalen.oxford

Safeguarding

The PCC is committed to making St Mary Magdalen's a safe environment for everyone and we have two Safeguarding Officers, Henry Jestico and Francesca Holloway. If you have any questions about safeguarding matters or wish to report a concern, please email: safeguarding@stmarymagdalenoxford.org.uk

Treasurer

"Mary Mags Oxford costs £470 per day to run and is supported by your generous donations. We have to be self-funding. This means that we do not receive any funds other than the income we raise through planned giving, fundraising, etc.

We are constantly aware how the cost of living is affecting every one of us differently. We want you to know that we appreciate every penny you give and do not take your generosity for granted.

If you would like to discuss giving options, please contact the Treasurer, Oscar Riba-Thompson – treasurer@stmarymagdalenoxford.org.uk

My Mary Mags

*Every month we highlight a feature of the Church (**Our Mary Mags**) or invite members of the community to describe how and why they hooked up with it (**My Mary Mags**). This month, our new Vicar but old friend, Fr. Jonathan Lewis-Jong, tells us his story:*



When I first arrived in Oxford in 2012, I normally went to Mass on Sundays at St Alban's in the parish of Cowley St John, but as Mary Mags was on my way to work, I habitually stopped by for Morning Prayer. But then came Holy Week: and I was hooked.

Mary Mags would be many things to me over the

next eight years. I arrived as an ordinand from the Diocese of Dunedin in the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia; and soon, I began training for the priesthood at Cuddesdon. Part-time seminary training being what it is in the Church of England, Mags was really my school of theology and liturgy, as well as my spiritual and social home. Coffee after Morning Prayer was an undergraduate seminar in disguise, with Fr Peter a tutor better-than-which-none-can-be-conceived. The sumptuous feast that is our liturgical diet here was fine spiritual food for a priest-in-training. Many of the people with whom I worshipped and prayed and served during those years have become lifelong friends. Several are now godparents to my children; I am godparent to some of theirs. And reader, I married one of them—Ella Mae and I met at Mags during my first Holy Week here, started courting five years later, and were wed before this High Altar in 2019.

Indeed, more than the beautiful liturgy and the rigorous preaching and the sublime music, and all the other famously wonderful things about Mary Mags, my Mary Mags is this font of friendship and love. Having moved to Oxford from halfway around the world, I wondered how long it would take to feel at home: at Mags, it took almost no time at all, such was the warmth with which newcomers are received here. Above all, this is the Mary Mags I want my children—Edith, now six, has been joined by Caspar, now three—to know. This is the Mary Mags that I want all newcomers to our city and university and church to know: this sign of God's generous and hospitable and kindly love, a community of believers that welcomes and embraces all who enter, so that they too may find a home deserving of the name.

More pictures from May 27th – all courtesy of Oscar Riba-Thompson







Sermons

There follow the first two sermons by Father Jonathan since his return. Note that Sermons from the St Mary Magdalen's pulpit are now available on Spotify and Apple Podcasts:

<https://open.spotify.com/show/4XxAshYMLSchKstPm0hux0...>

<https://podcasts.apple.com/.../oxford-st.../id1896857676...>

Trinity Sunday 2026

John 3.16-18

It is a matter of some awkwardness that although the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity falls always on the first Sunday after Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is conspicuously missing from our gospel reading this morning. *Sed contra*: the Holy Spirit is present in our reading after all, albeit implicitly, in its talk of love and gift, which happen to be St Augustine's names for the Third Person of the Trinity.¹ He arrives at his conclusions via what must seem to modern readers to be—shall we say—“creative” biblical exegesis. All the same, there is something theologically compelling about the move, which has shaped the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Western Church ever since.

The pairing of love and gift is obvious enough, as John 3.16 itself makes plain. Giving is what loving does. Perhaps even more than that: giving is what loving *is*, what it consists in, certainly when what is given is one's self. The Holy Spirit, so St Augustine tells us, is God's giving of Godself, is God's own outpouring, which the Church received at Pentecost, and continues to receive, and indeed must receive if she is to be the Spirit-filled Body of Christ.

But, just as the Father is not first *our* Father, but the Father of the Son; so the Holy Spirit is not first a gift of love to us, but within the triune life of God. The Holy Spirit is God's giving of Godself to God; is the mutual giving of love from Father to Son and Son to Father, whose eternal procession thus gives the pattern for the Father's giving of the Son to the world so beloved by God. The incarnation is the eternal Trinitarian life translated into the flesh and blood of creatureliness and humanity. Indeed, this is what Pentecost and Christmas have in common: both are the life of the Holy Trinity historicised; or perhaps better, both are occasions of history's encounter with and participation in God's eternal life.

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¹ *De Trinitate*, 15

There has, in recent years, been a revival of apophatic modes of Christian theology, at least among academic theologians. And this has, on the whole, been an important call towards intellectual humility before the divine mystery. In Trinitarian theology in particular, it is a response to what is perceived as too easy a relationship between theology and social-and-political policy, captured by the slogan “The Trinity is our social programme”. The worry here is that Trinitarian theology devolves into nothing more than the projection of our ideological fantasies; in other words, it becomes idolatry. This is a concern to be taken seriously, whether we are talking about God in God’s oneness or God’s threeness: it is very easy to slip into idolatry, to create God in our own image, or worse still, in whatever image that serves our cravings and cupidities.

And yet we must not buy our apophaticism on the cheap, any more than we should manufacture our political theology in the mould of our prior socio-economic preferences. The divine mystery is not an excuse for reticence to dare to speak about God for the sake of the world. It may well be that all our speaking will result in hallowed silence in the end, but this will not be the silence of refusal, but that of the exhaustion of words that finds its rest in the One whose Word we have been pursuing all along. This is our lot. Humanity’s vocation, as the speaking part of things, is to give voice on behalf of all things to our encounter with God: we are to tell of the good news of the God who is beyond all telling.

Even so, for many, the Trinity is a special case, before which apophaticism—even agnosticism—seems especially apt. But the absolute mystery of God applies not only to God’s Three-in-One-ness *per se*, but to God *in se*. Each of the Persons are themselves utterly mysterious too, as we remind ourselves whenever we recite the Athanasian Creed: the Father incomprehensible, and the Son and Spirit too. Christology and pneumatology are no easier than Trinitarian theology; or to put things more positively, we have as much access to the Trinity as we do to the Son who has been born and given to us, and the Spirit who has been sent to us.

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None of this is to say that we can directly derive government policy or political philosophy or even personal ethics from the doctrine of the Trinity. The critics are right to point out that monarchists and anarcho-communists alike can find ways of articulating trinitarian theologies to serve their own ideological interests. But the alternative is not to say nothing at all, or to say that the doctrine of the Trinity has nothing to offer to our moral and political lives. What the doctrine of the Trinity gives us, perhaps especially when we have just been thinking about the Holy Spirit, is the Christian understanding of love, which is that it is self-giving. The Holy Spirit, as the Love-Gift of the Trinitarian life, by whom the Father gives the Son for the sake of the world, means for us that to love is to

give; and more than that, to give of ourselves for the good and sake of those whom we love.

This can hardly be an unfamiliar idea to this congregation here present, nor even to our broader culture. In that great twenty-first century cultural text, Disney's 2014 animated motion picture, *Frozen* [look, I have had two children since I was last in this pulpit on a Sunday morning] one of the protagonists says "Love is putting someone else's needs before yours". That is really not bad as a summary of the foundation of Christian ethics. But it is very much not how the word "love" is used most of the time, which is to denote the desire to possess or to consume. This applies to consumer products, to be sure; but also to persons, as we can discern from the fact that the phrase "I love you, because" seems perfectly completable to us, and we readily fill in the blank with some fact and feature that is pleasing or useful or otherwise beneficial to us.

Now, to say that love is, in Christian terms, about self-giving is not to deny the validity of love as it is more widely and naturally understood. But it is to want to say that such love is incomplete; and it is to insist that we pursue a better and truer love, that we yearn and strive to participate in the love that belongs properly to God, but which has been given to us to be our own way of loving too.

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For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that we may, by the power of the Holy Spirit, receive true love and be received into the divine life of mutual self-giving love. This is, admittedly, neither an ethic nor a politics; but it is surely the only acceptable foundation for how Christians ought to want to live together - so help us God.

Corpus Christi 2026

Deuteronomy 8.2-3, 14-16; 1 Corinthians 10.16-17; John 6.51-58

We now say that the Feast of Corpus Christi falls on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, but this was not always so; not because the Feast has ever moved in our liturgical calendar—except to be transferred to the nearest Sunday—but because Corpus Christi predates Trinity Sunday by seven decades. In the papal bull *Transiturus de hoc mundo*, Pope Urban IV describes Corpus Christi as falling on the first Thursday after the octave of Pentecost. This makes it sound as if he wanted us to celebrate this great gift of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood just after Eastertide; which surely reminds us of yet another Thursday dedicated to the Lord's Supper, which of course occurs just before Eastertide. In other words, Eastertide is a Eucharistic sandwich; or maybe the Eucharist is an Eastertide sandwich—or both.

The liturgical location of Maundy Thursday makes the Eucharist a memorial of Christ's death and passion; that much is obvious. And the liturgical location of Corpus Christi—just on the other side of Eastertide—makes the Eucharist a celebration of Christ's resurrection. This is to say that, in the Eucharist, not only is the crucified Christ given to us, but also the risen and ascended Christ. In the Eucharist, the passion and death of Christ are made present to us, and also his resurrection and ascension.

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Much is made, though always and appropriately with circumspection, of the ways in which the resurrected body of Jesus was—is—simultaneously continuous and discontinuous with his earthly body. The risen Jesus eats and drinks; his wounds are still present and palpable. But he appears and vanishes, even in locked rooms; he is not recognised, until he is. Whatever it is, this body is an object of another world, and yet it is in this one. The same can therefore be said of the sacrament, which is, after all, that of the glorified Body and Blood of Christ. It too is an artefact of another world, which brings that world into ours, changing it from within, making it a new creation. And, in particular, making us a new creation, the Church, which is, after all, called also to be Christ's Body. And what that means for us is also signified by the Sacrament itself, in which Christ gives of himself to us so that we can be drawn into communion with him.

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It is most peculiar that, in our debates over eucharistic theology, “sacrifice” and “communion” are often seen as mutually exclusive terms of understanding the nature of the sacrament. And it is peculiar because, of course, communion requires sacrifice. This is true even in the most banal cases: the modern and utterly uncontroversial way of articulating this is to say that relationships require mutual compromise, that is to say, the at least partial setting aside of our own preferences to accommodate those of others. There is, admittedly, a strong disanalogy between this mundane truism and, say, the doctrine of the atonement that lies behind our eucharistic theology. The necessity of mutual compromise in human relationships assumes various kinds of parity between parties that do not apply in the relationship between us and God, the asymmetric relationship par excellence. If communion requires sacrifice, then in the case of divine-human relations, surely it is only we who must give up on our misaligned desires in conformity to the Absolute Good. And yet, this is not what happens in the Christian story. It is God who makes the necessary sacrifice on the cross, which is echoed in the Eucharist, wherein God, not content merely to come in our midst, goes further still in the indefatigable mission to be close to us, even to dwell within us, filling us with this unreasonable love.

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This, then, must be what it means to be the Church, what it means to be denizens of the New Creation, which has already been inaugurated in Christ, whose eucharistic Body nourishes the Church so that she may live as his ecclesial Body, the first fruits of this new world. It is to embody the communion of mutual self-sacrifice, in which we all put one another before ourselves, giving of ourselves for the betterment of others. This is, needless to say, not what the Church actually looks like; nor any particular instantiation of it in any local context, not even in such a wonderful, functional church like this one—he says, looking around to see if anyone is rolling their eyes. And perhaps this is to be expected, the Church also being a motley collection of ragamuffins, besides all this hifalutin stuff about the sacramentally-fed Body of Christ. But such an admission too quickly, too easily becomes an excuse for poor behaviour, and especially for refusing to try to live together as we know we ought. And this is a scandal. There is nothing especially difficult to believe in the idea that Christ is substantially present in the Eucharist under the species of bread and wine. Especially not for us who already believe in God and, furthermore, in the incarnation. The really incredible thing is to believe that the Church actually believes it, takes it seriously that our very food is the self-giving of God that makes communion possible between God and humanity, and us with each other. Precious little in the history of the Church provides evidence for this, and that is and should be a matter of Our great sorrow. Let our commitment not only be to mere doctrine, but also to what our beliefs entail for how we ought to live together as a Church. We, who Sunday after Sunday, ingest this sacrament of self-sacrifice for the good of others, who take it into our bellies, let us take it also into our hearts. Let us enter truly into the new world, this resurrection life, of which this sacrament is our sign and into which it calls us, draws us. In our baptism, we have died in Christ and are alive anew in him, not only a new life but a new kind of life. In the eucharist, we receive this new life's food, which must energise us into living it faithfully, enable us—all of us, mutually—to put ourselves aside, our preferences and privileges and gripes and grievances, for each other's sake. This is, of course, a tall order; it will take a miracle to even come close to fulfilling it—even the miracle of the Eucharist itself, the miracle of the resurrection.

Poem of the Month

“No worst, there is none...” by Gerard Manly Hopkins

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.
Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?
My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief-
Woe, wórd-sorrow; on an áge-old ánvil wince and síng —
Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked 'No ling-
Ering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief.'
O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,
Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

Hopkins himself described this poem as “written in blood.” Composed in May 1885, a month that had been full of winter weather, it is the first of his six “Dark Sonnets.” Prone to melancholy throughout his life, Hopkins felt himself to be very much an outcast in Ireland and complained to his friend Robert Bridges that he lived in “a coffin of weakness and dejection without even a hope of change.” He had recently disposed of letters and notebooks going back to his schooldays – “the beginnings of things, ever so many....ruins and wrecks.”

He was struggling to write anything. His letters from this time are full of apologies for not writing earlier or replying, so the activity of producing this regular sonnet may well have surprised the poet himself. What surprises the reader (given that this is Hopkins) is the absence of any Christianity or Catholicism. He pointedly declares that both Christ and Mary are absentees. His faith does battle with his despair in the later sonnets, to which we shall turn in the coming months, but here the only “comfort” is death. One of his “intimate Oxford friends” had recently drowned himself – the third one to do so – and other contemporaries had committed suicide, for some Catholics the only unforgivable sin. So he is clearly identifying more closely with the feelings of his dead friends than the prohibitions of his faith. If Hopkins realized that himself, it might have deepened his despair. No reader ignorant of its author would assume this is the poem of a Jesuit priest. “Comforter, where, where is your comforting?” could be the sarcastic sneer of an Atheist.

As so often with Hopkins, the various meanings of his puns all manage a deliciously tight grip. Take “Pitched past pitch of grief,” where he feels thrown beyond grief even though black and sticky with it after the death of his friend. With a touch of Victorian melodrama, his despair has global scale (“world-sorrow”), and the “anvil” on which he invites us to imagine him being hammered is “age-old”, spreading through space and time, as if his feelings represent all human suffering ever.

From the very first phrase, words seem to have gone awol, then bits go missing: “force” instead of “perforce.” Some words are new (“forepangs”) while others are freshly hyphenated, with some parts of speech deployed as if they were others. All this superbly dramatizes the pressure he is feeling, so ironically there is more clarity rather than less. Yet in some ways this is a simple statement. Four lines are entirely monosyllabic including the first and the last, with three more nearly so, and only at the very end does he relax into the simplistic.

Who can resist the rich texture of this poem? As Aldous Huxley said of it, “Never has the just man’s complaint against the universe been put more forcibly, worded more tersely and fiercely.” My apologies that it has come after so much joy in this edition!

Notices

Churchyard and railings

Our ironmongers Donkeywell Forge will be tackling the most awkward part of the scheme towards the end of this month – the Northeast corner. We would love for people to support the **churchyard project** in order to preserve this wonderful green space in the heart of Oxford. We have raised a substantial amount of money, but maintenance will be ongoing once Donkeywell are finished.

www.justgiving.com/campaign/smm-churchyard

St Giles Fair and Ride and Stride

Two of our main fundraisers are just three months away. If you are going down from Oxford this month, please consider donating books or clothes (or anything) you don’t want to take home to Mary Mags for sale here in September at the St Giles Fair. And if you are staying in Oxford, how about

a de-clutter to donate proceeds? Bric-a-brac, pictures, jewellery, CDs and DVDs are also welcome. We also do well selling home-made cakes, jams and chutneys, so contributions on that front would be welcome.

Riders or Striders can either cycle or walk around churches in Oxford and Oxon raising funds to be split 50/50 between Oxford Historic Churches Trust (who have been generous with several grants for our benefit) and Mary Mags. This is on Open Saturday, September 12th and it is an excellent way to discover churches in the city or County you do not know. There are some 400.

If you can donate or help with either of these, please contact nigespeight@gmail.com.

Event

Concert, Saturday June 13th in church at 7pm

For their twentieth concert, our regular visitor, the Chamber Choir, **Antiphon** is proud to present a very special **Best of British** concert, featuring our favourite composers -ancient and modern - from across the British Isles. They will be joined by renowned organist Julian Littlewood, to bring you some absolute classics of the choral repertoire, including Parry's famous **Blest Pair of Sirens** as the title piece. Other composers featured include Britten, Byrd, Purcell and Vaughan-Williams.

Sunday readings

Sunday 7th June: Hosea 6: 3-6. Romans 4: 18-25. Matthew 9: 9-13.

Sunday 14th June: Exodus 19: 2-6. 1 Rom 5: 1-8. Matthew 9: 36 – 10: 8.

Sunday 21st June: Jer. 20: 10-13. 1 Rom. 5: 12-15. Matthew 10: 26-33.

Sunday 28th June: Acts 12: 1-11; 2 Tim. 4: 6-8 & 17-18. Matt. 16: 13-19.

Intercessions

Please pray for the long-term sick and those in special need, among them:
Beryl Dryden, Joyce Day, Vernon Porter, Sophie Brown, Eleanor Sartain, Guy Westwood, Jill, Joanna Hickie, Ro, Ann Garfit, Alison Mundy.

If you would like any name added to this list (or removed from it, post recovery) ask admin@stmarymagdalenoxford.org.uk. Please note that unless we are advised that the illness could be protracted, names may be taken off after three months.

June 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Justin M	2 Feria	3 Feria	4 Corpus Christi	5 Boniface BM	6 Feria
	The persecuted church	Sarah our Archbishop	Sacristans and Servers	Thanksgiving for the Eucharist	Missionaries	Our choir
7 Corpus Christi	8 Feria	9 Columbia Ab	10 Feria	11 Feria	12 Sacred Heart of Jesus	13 Antony of Padua Pr Dr
Parish community	Those taking examinations	Religious communities	Christian Aid	St. Barnabas Jericho	The divine compassion	The lost
14 The 11th Sunday of the Year	15 Feria	16 Richard of Chichester B	17 Feria	18 Feria	19 Feria	20 Feria
Parish community	Famine relief	Bishops	Oxford City Council	Healing ministry. Anointing 12.15	Vocations	Thos leaving Oxford
21 The 12th Sunday of the Year	22 Alban M	23 Etheldreda Ab	24 Nativity of John the Baptism	25 Feria	26 Feria	27 Cyril of Alexandria
Parish Community	Pilgrims	Religious sisterhoods	Repentance	The homeless	World peace	Theologians
28 SS Peter and Paul	29 Feria	30 Feria				
Parish Community	Christian unity	Those newly ordained				

