



St Mary
Magdalen
OXFORD

Parish Notes

September 2024

Current Services:

Sundays

Said Mass at 8 am
Solemn Mass at 10.30 am

Weekdays

Mass 12.15 pm
Morning Prayer 8.15 am

Confessions

Please speak to Fr Peter to arrange
Baptism, Confirmation and Marriage by
appointment with Fr Peter

Parish Clergy:

The Reverend Canon Dr Peter Groves
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Website

www.stmarymagdalenoxford.org.uk

Events

St Giles Fair

This year St Giles Fair takes place on Monday and Tuesday 9th and 10th September. As usual, we need people to contribute items for sale, and to volunteer to help with the stalls during the fair itself. Help will also be required on the days before and after the fair, in particular after Mass on Sunday 8th. Those willing to help on that day are advised to bring a packed lunch to church, and all are reminded of the powerful incentive that helping in advance of the fair gives one first pick of the items on offer!

Please speak to or email Nigel Speight (nigespeight@gmail.com) if you are able to help.

Blessing St Giles Fair

On Sunday 8th September, a service of blessing to mark the beginning of the fair, takes place. This will take place at 5pm in St Giles, just north of our churchyard.

There will be **no 5:30pm mass** at St Mary Magdalen's that evening.

During the fair, there will be **no evening celebration (6pm) on Monday or Tuesday.**

Ride and Stride

The annual Ride and Stride in aid of Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust takes place on Open Saturday 14th September. This is a great way to see some of the very many fascinating churches in our part of the world, while raising some money to preserve and maintain them at the same time. Half of any money raised by members of our congregation will come straight back to St Mary Magdalen's. Volunteers are also needed to be in church and welcome walkers and riders during the Saturday. Please contact Nigel (see above) for further details.

Scripture on Saturday

Our monthly Bible Study mornings continue on Saturday 7th September from 10.30am. We shall be continuing to look at Ephesians.

PCC

The Parochial Church Council meets on Tuesday, October 1st at 7.30pm in church.

Sermon for the Feast of the Assumption

St Mary Magdalen, Oxford by Mthr Esther Lay

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The prospectus for the masters in singing at the Royal Academy of Music, which I was on the brink of attending in 2009, used words like “stagecraft” and “acting” throughout. I was eager to be transformed into someone who knew what these terms actually meant, so I was a little taken aback to see that the first two days of term were all about “aural awareness”.

Part of this was a highly specialised hearing test in a little booth, in which technicians could identify what instrument you’d played as a child, based on the type of damage in your ears. But my favourite moment came during an “ear health and safety awareness” lecture. We were asked to give a show of hands to vote on which voice type was most dangerous. Was it soprano, mezzo, tenor, or baritone? Since we had all met tenors before, most of us voted for them. But the real answer surprised everyone. Your mezzo-soprano friends are most likely to do damage to your ears by singing near you. A real blow for feminism, I thought.

In the wider world, of course, women’s voices are almost never the loudest. Our best institutions recognise and seek to remedy this inequality, and we are lucky at Mary Mags that this is a place where women have successfully ministered and preached for many years; so many years that when someone from outside this church asks me, with a look of concern and pity, what it must be like to be a female priest in an Anglo-Catholic setting, I gape at them for a few seconds before remembering that they probably expect me to feel oppressed.

Our patron is a great help, of course, in creating a culture where we listen to women. We have the most biblically important of the female saints other than Mary as our example, the Apostle to the Apostles. She witnessed the resurrection and was the first to spread the good news. She is a superb example of the Christian Church’s celebration of a woman’s voice. But we also have a great devotion to Our Lady at Mary Mags, a devotion that we share with the entire western church, and it is on days such as the Assumption that we celebrate that devotion most intensely.

This is the grandest of all Marian feasts, with the grandest vision of Our Lady as heavenly queen. We sing of her being assumed bodily into heaven at the end of her life, a doctrine of the Church that developed long after her death, but was firmly established by the eighth century.

But the vision we have on this day of a queen ascending into heaven is in stark contrast to the central images of other Marian feast days, and the biblical stories that feature Mary: the quiet wonder of Christmas, when we see her kneeling over the newborn Jesus; the youthful disbelief and passionate reply of “yes” at the Annunciation, which is a really scene of a teenager confronting an unexpected pregnancy. And of course there is the Feast of the Visitation, in which we see two ordinary women, the cousins Mary

and Elizabeth, rejoicing over expecting children at the same time. It is all very fleshy stuff, not least that great yet hugely ordinary catering conundrum, in which Mary tells Jesus to just get on with it and make some more wine for the wedding at Cana.

In short, most Marian feasts celebrate stories recorded in scripture. But the Assumption elevates Our Lady from an important human participant in the life of Jesus to a heavenly queen. We see this in our non-gospel readings, which complement the idea of queenliness through stories of women in queenly situations: the gold garments of a royal marriage in psalm 45; the woman crowned with stars at the end of the world in Revelation. And this queenliness is found even in our anthem, in a new English translation in your pew sheet from the Latin by, you guessed it, the new Gender Advisor to Allied Maritime Command NATO, which includes the extraordinary words:

*Clad in the gleaming Sun,
You pound the moon with your heel;
And, girt about the temples with stars,
You shine within His court.*

And yet, in all of this grandeur, our gospel passage is one of two ordinary women rejoicing over their pregnancies, and one of them bursting spontaneously into song.

The readings for our Patronal Festival back in July showed Mary Magdalen as brave and sensible and extraordinarily human; and we heard her voice. Our gospel passage today, from Luke 1, is just such an account of a woman who is brave and sensible and extraordinarily human, and we hear her voice too - at length. She rejoices not only on her own, or in the presence of an angelic being, as she does at the Annunciation, but with another human woman, Elizabeth. The Magnificat is *collaboratively* joyful, and before a single disciple left his nets to follow Jesus, Mary's song looks an awful lot like a Christian celebration between two women.

As with the Annunciation, when Mary encounters the angel Gabriel, the gospel writer could easily have just described what happened, rather than recording her words. But we are given a magnificent song that closely references the song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2, a barren woman who learns she is to give birth to the prophet Samuel. Both are songs in the woman's own voice, celebrating good news, praising God both for his divine nature and for his overturning the social order, his protection of the poor and the humble, his fulfilment of his promise to Israel.

In a religion rather lacking in female protagonists, and a world where women's voices struggle to be heard, this is revolutionary. And at Mary Mags, a place of self-assuredly catholic tradition, we are bringing in the kingdom in a revolutionary way by having women at the altar and not finding that surprising. Women's voices and ministry are valuable not because we are angels, but because we are people: ordinary, and sensible, and human.

As Christians, we are called to imagine the impossible and make it ordinary; our faith is one of surprises and grace and generosity. An unmarried young woman in Palestine can respond with joyful obedience to the will of God, and become the mother of the Messiah. A single mother can *even* become your curate. And we can all meet Christ every time we approach the altar. We are all capable of receiving the extraordinary grace of God in our daily lives, because it is not in our gift. It is in his.

The Magnificat is good poetry: it gives me goosebumps every time I read it. But more than that, it is important, because it shows us what it means to say yes to God despite the risk and the uncertainty. It celebrates a woman's voice in a way that is so obvious and natural that we forget how extraordinary it really is. And it is not about acting or stagecraft. Mary's response is true and honest, the result of good and careful listening to God, trust in his promises, obedience to his will. And this is why her voice rings out as clear as a bell.

When I went through a change of heart about my own vocation many years ago, it had a lot to do with deciding I needed to see women at the altar. And for that, I came to St Mary Magdalen's. There was nowhere else that could have been better.

Thank you all for your love and encouragement over the last three years, and for never questioning the validity of women's voices. May we all be blessed with the courage to say yes to God, but most of all, to be collaboratively joyful in all things.

Amen.

Intercessions

Please pray for the long-term sick and those in special need, among them:

Jo Laity, Sr Mary Bernard, Sophie Brown, Pamela Rogers, Sophie, Adrian, Ann, Alison, Johanna Merz, Maggie, Michael, Gordon Scott, Michael Starford, Helen Bell, Jenny, Beryl Dryden, Susan Barnes, Roy Dicker, John O'Leary, Jennifer Larcombe, Bob Guthrie, Eleanor Jamison, Anna, Phoenix, Elwyn Knight, Andrew Linzey, Sancha Maya-Rai, Muhammad Sarwar, Vernon Porter.

Sunday readings

Sunday 1st September Deuteronomy 4.1-2, 6-9; James 1.17-27; Mark 7.1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Sunday 8th September: Isaiah 35: 4 – 7, James 2: 1 – 5, Mark 7: 31 - 37

Sunday 15th September: Isaiah 50: 5-9, James 2: 14-18, Mark 8: 27-35

Sunday 22nd September: Wisdom 2: 12, 17 – 20, James 3: 16 – 4: 3, Mark 9: 30 – 37

Sunday 29th September: Daniel 7: 9 – 10, 13 – 14; Revelation 12: 7 – 12; John 1.47-51

POEM OF THE MONTH

The Windhover by Gerard Manley Hopkins

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird, – the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Romantic poets were excited by birds as a symbol of freedom, but in May, 1877, Hopkins links a falcon with Christ and the crucifixion.

Not published until 1918, thirty years after his death. Hopkins wrote fine, regular sonnets, but others like this one burst at the seams, despite using just the one rhyme through its octet, because he has so many ideas and so much excitement to pack in, using three languages. Words get chopped - "achieve" is so much more dynamic than "achievement" - or split so "king-dom" becomes the sky, Heaven, the Father and the Son.

Then "Buckle" is a triple pun: Christ clasps together God and Man or Heaven and Earth, while Christ's body gives way on the cross and the armies of Good and Evil engage, with Good triumphant because of the Dominus, the Dauphin and chevalier Jesus Christ. A Victorian, late Romantic Jesuit then, who, suppressed but hardly monitored, could squeeze the pips out of languages like Joyce, who was being published at the same time.

September 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 22nd Sunday of the Year	2 Feria	3 Gregory B Dr	4 Birinus B	5 Feria	6 Feria	7 Feria
Parish community	St Giles Oxford	Steven our bishop	Oxford diocese		St Giles Oxford	Steven, our bishop
8 23rd Sunday of the Year	9 Feria	10 Feria	11 Feria	12 Feria	13 John Chrysostom B Dr	14 Holy Cross Day
Parish community	The St Giles Fair	Visitors to our church	Sacristans and servers	The Gatehouse	Preachers	Devotion to Christ Crucified
15 24th Sunday of the Year	16 Feria	17 Feria	18 Feria	19 Feria	20 Martyrs of Korea and the Pacific	21 Matthew Ap
Parish community	Church musicians	The Restoration and Development Trust		Ordinands in training	The persecuted church	Biblical scholars
22 25th Sunday of the Year	23 Feria	24 Our Lady of Walsingham	25 Feria	26 Cosmas and Damian Ms	27 Vincent de Paul pr	28 Feria
Parish Community	Evangelists	The shrine at Walsingham	Confessors		Clergy	St Michael at the Northgate
29 Michael and all Angels	30 Jerome					
Parish Community	Biblical translators					