

The Six Holy Habits (6) Join a Support-Group

Bishop Philip writes...

In the last Pastoral Letters, I have been encouraging everyone in the Diocese to adopt The Six Holy Habits: (1) Sunday Mass; (2) daily prayer; (3) Friday penance and works of charity; (4) fortnightly visit to the Blessed Sacrament; (5) monthly Confession; and (6) to join a small support-group. This week we consider the sixth Holy Habit: to join a small group for formation, prayer and fellowship, where you can share with others your own experience and hear what God is doing in the lives of others.



In the old days – whenever they were! – many people in a parish would belong to a sodality such as the Scouts, the St. Vincent de Paul Society for visiting the poor, the Legion of Mary for street visiting, or the union of Catholic Mothers (UCM), with its responsibilities within the parish. Such groups revolved around prayers in common, a task or service to be done, and the fun and friendship they developed. My father had lots of friends because our home parish had a Men's Cycling Club and even into his eighties he would meet with surviving mem-



bers for a pint at the pub. Our Catholic faith expresses love for God and love for neighbour and as disciples of Christ within His Body the Church we are naturally not lone rangers. We are part of the mystical Body of Christ. We belong to one another and so it is natural to form small groups that exist for service and praise.

We need to rediscover this dimension of faith today, not least to reinvigorate and further the mission of our parish communities. Many people today, living busy lives, become isolated and the elderly, the sick and the lonely can feel cut off. As Catholics and as Christians, there is a real need to support one another in our faith and to share with others the joy of our faith and what God is doing for us. Parishes are often too large for the kind of deeper conversations on faith matters, or even to get to know others in the community well. So belonging to a small support-group would be a huge help and encouragement.

Most parishes have a range of groups you can

belong to: those that serve in some way (the poor and needy) or those that are there for growth in prayer and in faith (such as the RCIA or a prayer-group). In the picture, I am with a group of the Knights of St. Columba. Your parish might even have small cell-groups. Whatever group you join, make sure the group includes time for prayer and formation alongside its designated activity, as well as the chance to get to know some new friends. Indeed, groups that already exist ought to think about how open they are to new members and also to ensure that all the components for a Catholic sodality are in place, especially appropriate time for faith-formation and prayer.

Eyesight To The Blind

God's ways of seeing are not our ways, we hear in today's First Reading. Jesus illustrates this in the Gospel as the blind man comes to see and the Pharisees are made blind.



The blind man stands for all humanity. "Born totally in sin," he is made a new creation by the saving power of Christ. As God fashioned the first man from the clay of the earth (see Genesis 2:7), Jesus gives the blind man new life by anointing his eyes with clay (see John

9:11). As God breathed the spirit of life into the first man, the blind man is not healed until he washes in the waters of Siloam, a name that means "Sent."

Jesus is the One "sent" by the Father to do the Father's will (see John 9:4; 12:44). He is the new source of life-giving water: the Holy Spirit who rushes upon us in Baptism (see John 4:10; 7:38–39). This is the Spirit that rushes upon God's chosen king David in today's First Reading. A shepherd like Moses before him (see Exodus 3:1; Psalm 78:70–71), David is also a sign pointing to the good shepherd and king to come—Jesus (see John 10:11).

The Lord is our shepherd, as we sing in today's Psalm. By His death and Resurrection He has made a path for us through the dark valley of sin and death, leading us to the verdant pastures of the kingdom of life, the Church.

In the restful waters of Baptism He has refreshed our souls. He has anointed our heads with the oil of Confirmation and spread the Eucharistic table before us, filling our cups to overflowing. With the once-blind man we enter His house to give God the praise, to renew our vow: "I do believe, Lord."

"The Lord looks into the heart," we hear today. Let Him find us, as Paul advises in today's Epistle, living as "children of light," trying always to learn what is pleasing to our Father.

By Scott Hahn



English Martyrs
Vale of White Horse
Pastoral Area

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ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST, Wallingford

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT, YEAR A (Psalter WK IV)

Entrance Antiphon Cf. Ps 24:15-16

My eyes are always on the Lord, for he rescues my feet from the snare. Turn to me and have mercy on me, for I am alone and poor.

First Reading: 1 Samuel 16:1, 6–7, 10–13

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 23:1–6

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Second Reading: Ephesians 5:8-14

Gospel Acclamation: Cf. Jn 8:12

Praise to you, O Christ, King of Eternal Glory!

I am the light of the world, says the Lord; anyone who follows me will have the light of life.

Praise to you, O Christ, King of Eternal Glory!

Gospel: John 9:1-41

Communion Antiphon: Cf. Jn 9:11, 38

The Lord anointed my eyes: I went, I washed, I saw and I believed in God.

SATURDAY 18th March

9:30 No Mass at English Martyrs, Didcot...St Cyril of JerusalemNO MASS.....NO MASS

4:30pm Adoration & Confessions will take place prior to the Vigil Mass at St John's Wallingford

5.00pm Vigil Mass St John's - Our deceased priests and deacons

5.50pm Adoration before Vigil Mass at English Martyrs, Didcot

6.30pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs, Didcot - Annie Furlong's intention (A. Johns)

SUNDAY 19th March Fourth Sunday of Lent Laetare Sunday

9:00am Mass English Martyrs, Didcot - All Mothers

11:00noon Mass St John's, Wallingford - Thanksgiving (Canonical Erection) --The Blessed Marie Eugene (Armelle Bellher)

TUESDAY 21st March

6.00.am English Martyrs, Didcot.....Separated Parents

11:30am St John's, Wallingford, Stations of the Cross

12:00noon Mass St John's, Wallingford, - Candidates in training for the service of the altar.

WEDNESDAY 22nd March -

9:30am English Martyrs, Didcot—Fr Philip Harris

THURSDAY 23rd March - St. Turibius Mogrovejo

6.00.am English Martyrs, Didcot... First Holy Communion candidates, parents and catechists

9:30am Mass at St John's Wallingford—James Neville-O'Brian RIP (Mary Braithwaite)

FRIDAY 24th March -

9:30am Mass, English Martyrs, Didcot - Dr Donald Langride RIP (A. Johns) ..Stations of the Cross....6.p.m

SATURDAY 25th March THE ANNOUNCIATION OF THE LORD

9:30 Mass at English Martyrs, Didcot....Pellin Marffy RIP (Edward Acton)

4:30pm Adoration & Confessions will take place prior to the Vigil Mass at St John's Wallingford

5.00pm Vigil Mass St John's - Fr Philip Harris

5.50pm Adoration before Vigil Mass at English Martyrs, Didcot

6.30pm Vigil Mass English Martyrs, Didcot—The Sick of the parish

SUNDAY 26th March Fifth Sunday of Lent

9:00am Mass English Martyrs, Didcot -

11:00noon Mass St John's, Wallingford

In your prayers, please remember: Jenny Evans, Mary Guinan, Maureen & John Logan Ann Tomline, Joan Walker, Terry Appleyard, Joan Russell, Joan Turner, Nina Oakes, Jacob Oakes, Jidechi Ejiofor, Pat McLoughlin, Margaret Healy, Barry Molloy, David Woodley, Annie Furlong, Regina Papadopolus, Fr Philip Harris, all the sick and housebound.



Welcome Bishop Philip Egan

The Parish of The English Martyrs Didcot and St John the Evangelist, Wallingford joyfully welcome Bishop Philip who is visiting us this weekend. We rejoice that he will celebrate the holy mass at 9:00 am (English Martyrs) and the 11:00 am (St John the Evangelist). Welcome to his Secretary, Father Anthony Fyk.

Join Our Music Group in Wallingford

If you are able to play a musical instrument and/or sing in tune we would be delighted if you could join us. We are a very informal and friendly group and meet for practice every Friday evening at 7.15 pm in the church hall, St John's Wallingford.



It may be that you cannot commit to weekly involvement but please do not let that deter you - just come and sing/play - any instrument including organ would be wonderful! "He who sings," said St. Augustine, "prays twice. I look forward to hearing from you or seeing you after Mass on a Sunday. Please call Sue Hunt 07484712377.



Free First Holy Communion Dress

A free First Holy Communion dress in a very good condition is available for anyone interested. It is 38" (97cm) long, plus all accessories. If interested, please contact Anke (Watson) on 01491835141. Thank you!

Are You Registered In The Parish?

When you register or fill out the parish membership form, you gain a sense of belonging and identity in the parish community. It is a commitment to practice your faith.
 *Registration enables the parish priest and staff to get to know you better, to welcome you and to minister to you. This is especially important during a time of crisis so that the pastoral staff can attend to your spiritual needs and the needs of your family.
 *Registration helps you stay connected with your parish and helps your parish stay connected with you. Providing your contact information is important so that parishes provide you timely updates via email, direct mail, phone, etc. Also, if you use offertory envelopes, online giving or the digital plate, the parish may be able to claim 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you give, if you are registered tax payer. Once you are registered, please notify the parish office of any changes in address or phone number. Your date is SAFE.
 *Registered active members are eligible for sponsor/godparent validation.
 *Registered active members are sometimes eligible to rent parish facilities.
 Census numbers may determine how many priests are assigned to a parish and how many Masses and enrichment programs are planned and scheduled. Culled and adapted from Saint Anne Catholic Church Rock-Hill website.

Świąconka—The Blessing of Easter Baskets

The blessing of the Easter baskets is one of the most enduring and beloved Polish traditions on Holy Saturday. It is called Świąconka. This special event takes place in many of our parishes across the diocese because of our Polish families who enrich our parish and liturgy. Are you Polish? Do you want to organize or be part of those to organise it on Holy Saturday, April 8th at 11.a.m? Speak or write to Father Dominic.



MISSION BOXES

We can thank you enough for helping missionaries all over the world with Missio Red Box. You can never imagine the peoples and places you have impacted by this. Please can these be brought into churches as soon as possible or before end of Easter. If difficult please let Parish Office know, and collection can be arranged. MANY THANKS AND GOD BLESS. Charles



Clergy Assistance Fund

Our Second Collection this weekend 18th/19th March is for the Clergy Assistance Fund, which resources the invaluable work of the Department for Clergy Team. The Team of four is responsible for looking after the welfare, ongoing formation and personal support of our clergy, from the early days of ordination all the way into retirement. It organises retreats, ministerial formation days, courses, and sabbaticals. It is the principal mechanism through which the Bishop looks after the wellbeing of the clergy.



As a Diocese, we are responsible for supporting the seventy-diocesan clergy in active ministry, forty-seven from religious orders, the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham or overseas, and forty-two in retirement, who with dedication and care serve our parishes, chaplaincies, schools, outreach and mission: bringing people closer to Jesus Christ through His Church.

We rely on your commitment and generosity to do this. If you would like to give a gift to this collection, parishioners can donate using their gift aid envelopes or online at <https://donate.giveasyoulive.com/campaign/clergy-assistance-fund-second-collection-2023>. This collection will close on 4th April. Thank you for your support.

Chrism Mass Is On Tuesday 4th April, 2023



The Chrism Mass this year is on Tuesday 4th April 2023 at 11am in the Cathedral. The Mass is the special Liturgy in Holy Week during which the Bishop blesses the three Holy Oils for use in the Sacraments: the Oil of the Blessing of the Sick, the Oil of Catechumens and the Oil of Chrism. The blessing of the Holy Oils is one of the most ancient ceremonies of the Church and it's always celebrated in the Cathedral with the priests, deacons, religious and lay people of the diocese. The Mass is one of the main diocesan events of the year and during it, all the priests make a renewal of their commitment to priestly service, "manifesting their communion with the Bishop" (Roman Missal). It is always a wonderful manifestation of the Church in our Diocese of Portsmouth and an opportunity to thank God for our Catholic faith. You are invited to join this great celebration. Please save the date in our diary!

Didcot Choral Society's Spring Concert

The Didcot Choral Society's Spring Concert is on Saturday 25 March at 7.30pm at St Matthew's Church, Harwell.
 The programme celebrates 400 years of the music of William Byrd. Byrd was a devout Catholic and lived at the same time as most of the English Martyrs to whom our church is dedicated. His music was sung in secret Catholic Masses as well as for Queen Elizabeth I - she loved his music so much he was protected from the worst excesses of Catholic persecution. He is considered one of England's greatest composers though few have heard of him.
 Tickets are on sale £10 (School age children go in free). For tickets and further information, please contact Carolyn Fishwick or John Sutter.

Home for Ukraine Matching Service

Caritas Social Action Network, in partnership with St. John of God Hospitaller Services, an international Catholic charity with many services for the vulnerable in the UK and Ireland, are matching Ukrainian people displaced by the brutal war in their country with people in the Catholic Community willing to host them in their homes for six months. If you have room in your home and in your heart to consider welcoming a stranger displaced by war, then we'd love to hear from you. Please visit <https://sjog-homesforukraine.uk/> for more information.



Parish Safeguarding Rep

Our Safety Officer for all adult and child safeguarding issues is **Stefania Harford**, please contact Stefania via the parish office on **01235 812338**, if there is no response and in an emergency then dial 999.

Our Church, the English Martyrs Didcot will be open daily for private prayers between 8am and 5pm.