

ST. MARY OF NAZARETH /ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM

23rd April 2023: 3rd Sunday of Easter/St George's Day

Hazel writes:

Today we celebrate St George. I wonder how much you know about him, and other people or places associated with him. There are some questions to test your knowledge at the end of this pew sheet: answers will be provided next week. Putting this together illustrated how little knowledge we have about St George himself, which is probably why so many myths have arisen about him.

This week we have Holy Communion services celebrating St George at 8am in St Francis' Church, at 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church.

Next **Sunday 30th April**, we will have Holy Communion services at 8am and 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church.

Morning Prayer is held each week in St Francis' Church on Wednesday morning at 9.30am, followed by the church being **open for private prayer** from 10.30-11.30am. It is also held in St Mary's Church on Thursday morning at 9am.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – Each week our service is livestreamed on YouTube at 10am or before. All other files for this week have been combined and included in this pew sheet which will be sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line.

Peter Tilling's funeral service will be at Beckenham Crematorium on Wednesday 26th April at 2.45pm.

The **West Wickham Village Day** in Blake Park is on Monday 1st May. If you can help with setting up marquees early in the day or interacting with families during the day in our Messy Church space, please sign up on the sheets in the church buildings.

We are hosting a **fundraising concert** on Friday 12th May in St Francis' Church. The show begins at 7.45pm and will feature performers from current West End shows raising money for Christian Aid and their DEC Turkey-Syria Earthquake Appeal. Doors open at 7pm. There will be a bar and a raffle with a chance to win two tickets to a West End show.

Tickets at £15 from: <https://stjohnsww.churchsuite.com/events/msbi17vmc>.

Mike East's funeral service will be on Thursday 11th May at 11am in St Francis' Church. More details to follow.

Coronation Celebration Get-together Sunday 7th May at St. Mary's. This will take place at about 12 noon following drinks after the joint service at 10.00 a.m. on 7th May. The cost will be £10 a head (£5 for children under 14). All food, tea, coffee and soft drinks will be provided but please bring along your own alcoholic drinks. Contact Beryl Bolton 0208 289 8097 or berylbolton@hotmail.com for a ticket if you hope to come along and £10 must be made at time of booking. Numbers must be in by **Monday 1st May** in order to allow time for organising amounts of food etc.

There will be signup sheets in the vestibule at St. Marys from this week asking for help with decorating and setting up the hall at **2.00 p.m. on Saturday 6th May** for the coronation lunch, and also for Sunday for help during and after the lunch. Thank you.

Piano Recital and Afternoon Tea – Saturday 20th May

We are hosting a piano recital with Nicholas Austin followed by afternoon tea at St. Francis Church, Ravenswood Avenue, West Wickham on Saturday 20th May. Timings are: 2.00 - 2.45 pm piano recital with Nicholas Austin and afternoon tea from 2.45 pm - 4.00 pm. Tickets are £6 and if you would like to come along, please email Nicky Nightingale on nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk to reserve a ticket. Many thanks.

From Wednesday April 5th our **Warm Space at St Francis'** will only be opening on the 1st Wednesday of the month from 10.30am-1pm. Thank you to Marion and Theresa for volunteering to do this. If anyone else is willing and available to take on regularly opening the Warm Space on another Wednesday of the month from 10.30am-1pm please get in touch with Kate (katedyer41@hotmail.com or 07808 468591) or with Marion Barry (whitelandm@yahoo.com or 020 87771470).

St. Mary's Garden Party is on Saturday 17th June. Please would all gardeners start to sow seeds/cuttings etc. This would be much appreciated. Thanks.

We are clearing out some cupboards in the **choir vestry at St Francis'** prior to refurbishing the space, so that this is more usable as a community meeting room. There are many copies of the **Book of Common Prayer**, which are now on one of the window-sills in the church. Please take as many as you would like to have.

In 2023, the **Bishop of Southwark's Lent Call** is raising money for projects that work to improve mental health and well-being. Our offertory on Easter Sunday went towards the appeal, but if you would still like to donate, you can do so via the Diocese of Southwark website at www.southwark.anglican.org/lentcall. There is also more information on the projects in both of the churches if you do not have access to the

internet. **If you haven't already donated to the appeal and cannot do so on-line please give today via the boxes in both churches.**

From Easter Sunday we are asked to **pray for the Coronation of King Charles III** and there are still a few booklets available to use for this in both churches. These include daily prayers, as well as background information about the coronation and would make a great gift for others. Donations for these resources will be gratefully received when you take a copy of the booklet. If you would like a large print copy, but these have disappeared, please let Hazel know.

St. Mary's are needing someone to take over **hall bookings** from Jackie Greatorex as she wishes to retire from the post after 13 years. If you think you might be able to help with this, please get in touch with Jackie on jackiegreatorex@googlemail.com as soon as possible to find out more what is required. Jackie is still prepared to do any purchasing for the hall but needs to hand over the administration of all hall bookings. **This is 95% of the time a home based position working with the computer. There is a team of volunteers to do locking and unlocking of the hall. Please give this serious thought as this is a very important position for our church as the hall provides much needed finances.**

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they require desserts, squash/cordial, cooking sauce, cold meats, shampoo/conditioner, and fruit juice. Please do not bring any fresh or frozen food, or baby milk as the foodbank cannot pass this on. You can also donate financially here:

<https://bromleyborough.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money>. Thank you for your continuing support.

If anyone would like a pedestal at either church in memory of a loved one or to commemorate a special anniversary etc., please contact Merri Womack (8777 8772) for St Mary's (or there is a list to sign in the vestibule at St. Mary's) or Nicky Nightingale (nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk or 8916 9855) for St Francis'.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl berylbolton@hotmail.com and items for the websites to brian.griff19@btinternet.com or Gifty office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk

Collect

God of hosts, who so kindled the flame of love in the heart of your servant George that he bore witness to the risen Lord by his life and by his death: give us the same faith and power of love that we who rejoice in his triumphs may come to share with him the fullness of the resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

First Reading:

2 Timothy 2: 3-13

³ Share in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No one serving in the army gets entangled in everyday affairs; the soldier's aim is to please the enlisting officer. ⁵ And in the case of an athlete, no one is crowned without competing according to the rules.

⁶ It is the farmer who does the work who ought to have the first share of the crops. ⁷ Think over what I say, for the Lord

will give you understanding in all things.

⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David—that is my gospel, ⁹ for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. ¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

¹¹ The saying is sure: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; ¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; ¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.

Gospel Reading:

John 15: 18-21

¹⁸ 'If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If

you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you.

²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you, "Servants are not greater than their master." If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. ²¹ But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

Post Communion Prayer

Living God, your Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: open the eyes of our faith, that we may see him in all his redeeming work; who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

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REFLECTION – Hazel O’Sullivan

I wonder how much you know about St George. It may be no more than his place as the Patron Saint of England, the Scouts and soldiers. However, none of these patronages represent the reason why I thought it would be good to include a celebration of St George on this day – 23rd April – his feast day.

Yes, we do have a very successful scout group attached to our churches and it’s great when they join with us to celebrate scouting at a St George’s day parade, but this year they are joining with the district scouts for this purpose. However, I do think it’s significant that their new group of Squirrels is meeting for the first time on St George’s day – do pray that this new venture will go well for them.

Yes, our churches are situated in England, but to celebrate this saint and not those representing other nationalities of our members is not very inclusive. In any case, the English have always had a complicated relationship with their patron saint.

Unlike St Andrew’s Day in Scotland and St Patrick’s Day in Ireland, St George’s Day is not a bank holiday in England.

St George was not English, but was born in Turkey. Actually, not many countries across Europe *are* represented by an indigenous saint: Scotland’s St Andrew was one of Jesus’ disciples, as was Spain’s St James. St Nicholas (patron saint in Russia and Greece) also came from Turkey. Ireland’s St Patrick came from mainland Britain. And Portugal, Malta, Georgia and Lithuania all have St George as their patron saint. He could be said to be the most cosmopolitan of all patron saints. St David (the Patron Saint of Wales) is very rare in being a saint who actually came from the region of which he now is patron.

Some argue that not being English actually gave George an advantage over other saints, as it meant that he wasn't associated with any particular region of the country. There would be no regional rivalry, and so everyone in England could unite behind St George.

And finally, being the patron saint of soldiers: is that why we’re celebrating St George? Well, no. Even though this was an important part of why he was adopted as the patron saint of England.

The choice of St George in this post was largely down to one man, King Edward III, who reigned from 1327 to 1377. When he ascended the throne, at the age of fourteen, England was in a terrible state, having suffered years of floods, famine and civil war.

Edward III ousted the man running the country at the time and set about creating a new style of kingship which included the development of England's military potential. His regular use of St George in his war-cries, banners and religion was just one part of a strategy which made England the most powerful nation in Europe by 1350 after he marched across northern France, purposefully encountering a much larger French force in a full-scale battle and destroying it.

But if St George is associated with military might, that's not exactly a very loving thing to be celebrating, is it?

So, it's not his role as a soldier, or his position as a national patron saint, or his association with the scouts that we're celebrating today. It is what he stands for – the message of his life – which is important. All the other patron saints listed above were martyred in connection with converting people to Christianity. St George may have converted others to Christianity, but this wasn't through his sharing of the gospel. It was through his deeds, his characteristics, his behaviours and the way that he lived his life.

We know very little about St George, but it is thought that he died in 303 when he was serving as a Roman soldier. This was before the Roman Emperor Constantine was formally converted to Christianity in 312 and went on to establish Christianity as the dominant religion in the Roman Empire. So, it was likely that George's persecution and martyrdom stemmed from his active practice of a Christian faith, which he refused to denounce. He would worship only God and he shunned pagan practices that the other soldiers would have followed.

It is this following of a minority faith and his courage in doing so that marks him out. The triumph of good over evil, through courage. You may say that this isn't really relevant to us here in West Wickham today. But what's happened to the Christian faith in this country? Well, the 2021 census statistics tell us that we are now a minority faith - less than half of the UK population (46% or 27.5 million people) describe themselves as "Christian". And those who would say that they are a member of a church are even fewer.

Courage is relevant to many more situations than military ones and while we do not live the life of a soldier, St Paul does liken us to one. In our first reading, St Paul is writing to a young man, Timothy. He tells Timothy that he should live like a soldier: a soldier of Christ. In those times a soldier's main aim was to please the enlisting officer.

If Timothy was to be a soldier of Christ therefore, he will do all that he can to please Christ.

St George was also a soldier of Christ and, at that point where being a soldier of Christ diverged from what he was being asked to do as a soldier of the Roman Empire, he chose to follow Christ. No matter that this meant facing up to a difficult situation. No matter that this meant disobeying his army superiors, being arrested, and killed, he would do that. By the way, this is the spirit in which the mythological fight against a dragon was derived – that courage which St George showed in facing adversity.

Being a soldier of Christ does mean that we will come across situations where others in the world question us – more so today than in the recent past. Elsewhere in the world, this questioning becomes persecution. This is what Jesus himself predicted would happen to his own disciples in our gospel reading today. But anyone like St George will stand up to this questioning, this persecution, because they are a soldier of Christ.

So, how about you? Does being a Christian and a soldier of Christ mark you out from the rest of the world? Can you tell that you are a Christian by the way you behave? And does it sometimes take courage to behave in this way?

Let's be clear, celebrating St George is nothing to do with national pride and celebrating England over any other country. It's all to do with how we live our lives. And the reason why we live with courage and celebrate people like St George is that we want to please Christ. He died for us and now we celebrate his rising from the dead during this Easter season, not by denying him, but by living as he lived and remaining faithful in all circumstances, knowing that our prize is that full and eternal life that he offers.

Amen

Prayer Pointers

Pray for those who are excluded because of their faith in God. Pray especially for those who feel they cannot speak about their faith in the workplace for fear of ridicule. Pray for boldness to stand up for our faith when we are challenged.

In our benefice give thanks for our choirs and for Geoff Mussard our musical director. Thank God especially for the beautiful music that enhanced our worship over Holy Week and the Easter services.

In the Southwark Diocesan Prayer Cycle, pray for the congregation of St Leonard, Streatham – their Rector, Anna Norman-Walker; their clergy Haley Argles-Grant, Neil Dawson; Stephen Hance, Richard Jenkins, David Tomlinson, and Eileen Turner; their Reader, Marion Gray and their Pastoral Auxiliary, Oona Emerson.

Hold before God places in the world where there is conflict. This week we pray especially for the people of Sudan, and people in the USA where there have been gun crimes again this week. We continue to remember Ukraine, Yemen, Syria, Turkey and Afghanistan.

Pray for the lonely, isolated and the housebound and for all who are carers, paid or unpaid; known or unknown. Pray especially for those caring at home for their loved ones who have dementia.

Pray for those people in our communities who are ill or in situations that are very difficult. In our congregations pray for these by name – Vicky Pearce, Jane Smith, Joan Burford, Graham Stone, Rowena Griffiths, Daphne Dack, John Dack, Barbara Goodchild, Joan Mountain and James Pitt-Payne – and those known to God alone.

Hold before God all those who have died in the faith of the Risen Jesus. Pray especially for Peter Tilling, Mike East and Pam Faull and their families. Hold before God those for whom it is a time of anniversary and those for whom the pain never seems to get any better.

Offer our own personal prayers and thanksgivings. Help us always to remember that Jesus will be with us, beside us, within us and his love will guide us on the way forward.

St George's Quiz

1. What is St George's nationality? A – Turkish; B – Maltese; C – British
2. Which Shakespeare play is the following quote from: *"Follow your spirit; and upon this charge, cry – God for Harry! England and Saint George!"*?
A – King Henry VI, Part 1; B - King Henry V; C – King Henry IV, Part 2
3. Which other country (amongst many others) shares St George as their Patron Saint? A – Syria; B – Lithuania; C – Armenia
4. What year was St George made a saint in? A – 303; B – 593; C – 494
5. St George is said to have died in Lydda (now called something else). Which country is this city in today? A – Israel; B – Turkey; C – Greece
6. Who was born and died on St George's Day? A – William Shakespeare; B – William Wordsworth; C – Boris Yeltsin
7. Where is there a cathedral dedicated to St George? A – Southwark; B – Salisbury; C – Liverpool
8. Which British monarch is not buried in St George's Chapel, Windsor?
A – Queen Elizabeth II; B – Queen Victoria; C – King George III