

Into 2009!



by Canon Paul Miller

Many of you will know of my love for the city of Jerusalem. It is an amazing place, not least because it hosts the three great monotheistic faiths – Christianity, Judaism and Islam. In the Bible we read of pilgrims going up to Jerusalem. In the Psalms we discover what are called Psalms of Ascent, songs of trust in God as people travelled to the city.

A favourite of mine is Psalm 121 – it has been described as a song of hope – here it is:

**I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.**

**He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.**

**The LORD is your keeper;
the LORD is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.**

**The LORD will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
The LORD will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and for evermore.**

In this song, or Psalm, God is portrayed as someone who watches over us. Not like a strict headmaster, but a loving parent who protects us on our journey through life. In it God teaches us that troubles we might face in our lives are part of human experience but not a sign of the absence of God. 2008 reminds us of the mess humanity can create through terrorism and poor handling of financial institutions and economies. This Psalm assures us of God's presence and protection in times of trouble....'My help comes from the Lord'.

In it God reminds us He loves us (God will 'keep you' is mentioned six times) and that He is not detached from human situations.... 'The Lord watches over you.'

The Psalm does not say that God will remove difficulties or setbacks (God doesn't work like that). But we do know that whatever will happen to us that we will be embraced in his love. 'The Lord will keep you from all evil' does not imply a cushioned life ...but a well armed life.

In 2009 may God go with you, and may you be able to trust him for all that lies ahead.

New Year's Message from Douai

The fighting between monks at the Holy Sepulchre which was broadcast on the news on Sunday 9th November bordered on irreverent comedy. It showed, however, the sad reality of the constant tension between Christian communities in the Middle East, even at the very place where Christ was buried. In contrast, our friendship through the twinning has developed and deepened over the years between Christians whose churches have been divided for centuries by the politics of the past. This remains something very precious which we should treasure. We want it to continue to flourish, even if we don't feature on international television. I think it is good for us to share what causes our joys and sorrows in our different beliefs, so we can encourage each other to strive for what is best for us. This is sometimes easier for other people to see than it is for ourselves. On our visit last year with you to Hever

Castle we were fascinated to see the origins of the Church of England. The deliberations of the great Lambeth Conference, more recently, have not passed us by, although we cannot fully understand them. The news of your parish which we read in Span shows it is to be active, sporting and joyful, close to its children and young people. We also send our best wishes to Reverend Alison who is now responsible for the Church of St. Nicholas in Farnborough. We will not forget her fine and powerful preaching.

In France Catholic communities are being asked to consider how they can best help people of all ages and widely differing circumstances in their journey of faith. A painstaking exercise to review the teaching of the Catechism. We look forward to welcoming the group from your parish who will be visiting Douai at the beginning of May. I am sure you will be happy to find out more about our

town and what is going on in its Christian communities.

To you all, parishioners and readers of Span, we send our very best wishes for 2009. With warm regards, Michel Rimaux, Priest of St Francis, Douai.



To detox or not detox...?

Have you overdone the feasting and drinking? Feel as queasy as you look? Wondering whether a detox diet might be the only thing that will save you now?

Nonsense, it is all a rip-off. So says a senior scientist at the Food Standards Agency (FSA). Ignore the fad diets and the supplements market, which rake in millions of pounds each year. Your body does not need them to rid itself of toxins; it already has an excellent built-in mechanism: your liver (or what is left of it!)

Instead, follow these cheap and easy steps back to health:

- drink a glass or two of tap water (just as good as bottled)
- take some exercise - if only a walk in the park
- enjoy some simple home-cooked food
- eat some fruit and vegetables
- avoid processed meats, smoked, cured, or salted.

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS!



From the Registers

Holy Baptism

We welcome into God's family:

- 23 Nov Annabelle Leonard
Ralph Stimpson
- 30 Nov Michael Banks
Jack Helm
Zachary Scott

At Rest

We extend our sympathy to those who loved:

- 4 Dec Ethel Edwards, aged 76
5 Dec Joan Kemp, aged 84
6 Dec John Edwards, aged 82
9 Dec Audrey Loder, aged 81

Interment of Ashes

- 30 Nov Jenny Loades

SPAN THANKS

We record our thanks for donations during November of £6.

Epiphany

On 6 January we celebrate Epiphany - the visit of the wise men to the baby Jesus.

But who were these wise men? No one knows for sure. Matthew calls them 'Magi', and that was the name of an ancient caste of a priestly kind from Persia. It wasn't until the third century that they were they called kings - by a church father, Tertullian. Another church father, Origin, assumed there were three - to correspond with the gifts given.

Later Christian interpretation came to understand gold as a symbol of wisdom and wealth, incense as a symbol of worship and sacrifice, and myrrh as a symbol of healing - and even embalming. Certainly Jesus challenged and set aright the way in which the world handled all three of these things.

Since the eighth century, the magi have had the names Balthasar, Caspar and Melchior.

Toy Service Bonanza!



The Annual Toy Service brought almost 400 people to St. Mary's to kick off the Advent Season and to prepare for Christmas by supporting children in need through the work of Bromley Welcare. Photographs show some of the children with some of the toys!



Garden Birdwatch 2009



If you love wild birds, here is your chance to join the RSPB's 30th Big Garden Birdwatch, which will be held on 24 and 25 of January. The RSPB are hoping to make it the biggest Garden Birdwatch yet.

Taking part is very simple - simply spend an hour that weekend counting the birds that you see in your garden or in a local park. Record the highest number of each species seen (not flying over) at any one time.

It's important you don't count all the birds you see because some birds will return to your garden many times in the hour. For example, seeing the same blue tit come back 10 times does not make for 10 blue tits!

The RSPB provide a downloadable counting sheet, and offer an online form to help you send in your results easily. Please visit: www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch/2009/index.asp for details.

Let Sleeping Dogs Lie

An old, tired-looking dog wandered into my garden one day. I could tell from his collar and well-fed tummy that he had a home and was well taken care of. Calmly, he came over to me, and then followed me into my house. Slowly he walked down the hall, into the sitting room, curled up on the hearthrug, and fell asleep.

An hour or so later he went to the door, and I let him out. The next day he was back, greeted me in my garden, walked by me into the house, and again slept for an hour or so in the sitting room.

This daily visit with a nap continued off and on for several weeks. Curious, I finally pinned a note to his collar: "I would like to find out who the owner of this wonderful sweet dog is, and ask if you are aware that almost every afternoon your dog comes to my house for a nap."

The next day he arrived for his nap, with a different note pinned to his collar: "He lives in a home with six children, two under the age of three - he's trying to catch up on his sleep. Can I come with him tomorrow?"

Advent Dinner and Dance



The St. Mary's Advent Dinner and Dance at the Bromley Court Hotel raised £350 through the raffle for the Rochester Cathedral 604 Appeal. Many thanks to all who supported the event and to the local businesses who donated raffle prizes: Aqua Dry Cleaners, Bloxhams Florists, Bromley Court Hotel, Andy Speller, Wellingtons Electrical & Wine Rack. Pictured are The Venerable Paul Wright (Archdeacon of Bromley & Bexley), Lynne Miller, Gill Newman, The Very Reverend Adrian Newman (Dean of Rochester Cathedral), Jill Wright and Canon Paul Miller.

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Mission of the Month



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The Leprosy Mission (TLM) is a leading Christian organisation active in over 50 countries with a vision for a world without leprosy and a passion to eradicate the causes and consequences of leprosy.

The total number of people affected by leprosy, including those who have completed their treatment and have a disability or are stigmatised, remains very high, at around 3 million.

The fear of the disease often causes rejection and exclusion from homes and community and can often do more damage than from the disease itself. TLM's work helps with physical and social rehabilitation, working with disabled people to enable them to once again make valued contributions to family and community.

TLM has over 2000 national and international staff and works in partnership with communities, churches and national governments and is responsible for over 200 projects in 28 leprosy affected countries.

St. Mary's has a long record of supporting this charity which is our Mission for the month of January, and further information is available from the display which is featured at the back of the Church throughout January.

Fun at the Fayre

St. Mary's Annual Christmas Fayre took place in early December and as usual was well supported by the Community. Over £2,000 was raised to support St. Mary's and the work of Bromley Welcare.

The photos show some of those who attended.



Canon Paul enjoys a cake with members of the Mothers' Union at their cake stall.



Friday Guides held a sweet tombola.



Tea and refreshments were served from the kitchen.



One of the many children visiting the Fayre.



Fiona Bratt, Junior Church Co-ordinator, in a seasonal hat!



The Choir Club sang Christmas Carols.



Churchwarden Ann Parks with a little Father Christmas.



Patrice Cooper and Colin Walklin at the Choir Raffle stall.



Patricia White and Marion Westropp enjoy a laugh!



Jean Jackson and Christine Perzyna at the Tie and Scarf stall



David Green and Judy Rambridge at the Friends of St. Mary's Tombola.



The St. Mary's Pre-School Staff at the Red and Green stall.



Lynne Miller meets Jane Peters at the Bric-a-brac stall.



and finally.....
Claire Tillotson and Richard Vickers in unusual headgear!!

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of St. Mary,
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WORSHIP

Every Sunday

08.00 Holy Communion
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 2½-14.
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.

PARISH DIRECTORY

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SPAN

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