

Saints ALIVE

The magazine of:
All Saints, Leighton Buzzard
St. Nicholas, Hockliffe
St. Michael's, Eggington
St. Michael and All Angels,
Billington
The Good Shepherd, Sandhills

November 2022

70p

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Light in the darkness

Br Rev'd Cate Irvine



November begins with All Saints and All Souls and ends as we begin Advent. The Advent theme of waiting in the darkness for God's light to shine has always been a powerful image. It reminds us of our great need for God to act, to bring change, to heal and save.

Whereas in Lent we search our souls in a very personal way even though we do so alongside one another, in Advent we think much more in terms of the needs of our world, indeed the whole universe. We long both for God to intervene now as we look to the birth of Christ and we lift our eyes to the fulfilment of God's promises as we wait for the final advent, the second coming of Jesus at the end of time.



At All Saints, our journey through Advent this year will explore saints and light. We are fortunate to have an amazing building to worship in with beautiful stained-glass windows filled with the saints that have gone before us, those whose lives of faith have inspired and encouraged others along the way. In the daytime the light shines through the images of those saints as we offer our own worship to God reminding us of all those who have gone before us in faith. But when the darkness falls, the light no longer shines inward, instead it shines out into the world.

This winter I'm sure that we are all very aware of the fragility of life and the needs of so many both in this country and around the world. It can be easy to lose heart, or to stop trying to engage with the issues of the places and people that God has given us to care for.

But both the saints and the season of Advent remind us that God's light shines all the brighter in the darkness. And of course, the light doesn't just shine through the windows of our buildings, through God's grace, it shines in our lives. We may not feel that we shine as brightly as the saints we name and remember, but we are all saints of God. The birth of Christ, the light coming into the world, that we all long to celebrate again in the midst of winter, is not just an event of the past.

As we open ourselves to God's love, we bring that same light into our lives and just like the light we will take and pass on in our carol services and Christingles, we find that every time we draw closer to God, and to each other, we make the world a brighter place.

So as we look towards Advent, we give thanks for light amidst the darkness; may we with God's saints shed light across the path of all those we meet; and may Christ the Sun of Righteousness shine upon you, scatter the darkness from before your path and make you ready to meet him when he comes in glory. Amen.



Mother Cate

Our present pattern of services across the Ouzel Valley Team

All Saints

Sundays:

Please note new times which allow for cleaning between services

8am Holy Communion

9.30am Parish Eucharist

11.30am

1st & 3rd Sundays: All Age Service

2nd & 4th Sunday Holy Baptism

6pm Evening Prayer

1st Sunday: Choral Evensong Plus

3rd Sunday: followed by Benediction

Weekdays:

Holy Communion

7.30pm Tuesday

(Service of Healing on 3rd Tuesday)

10.00am Thursday

9.00am Saturday

Morning Prayer: St. Hugh's Chapel

9.00am Tuesday – Friday

St. Barnabas, Linslade

Sundays:

8am Said Eucharist

10am Parish Eucharist

6pm Evensong

www.linslade-parish.org.uk

St. Leonard's, Heath & Reach

Sundays:

8am: Holy Communion

11am Holy Communion (in church & via Zoom)

1st Sundays: Family Service

Tuesdays: 7pm Holy Communion

Morning Prayer via Zoom:

9.00am Monday - Saturday

www.saintleonardschurch.com

St. Michael's, Eggington

9.30am 1st & 3rd Sundays: Holy Communion

St. Nicholas', Hockliffe

9.30am 2nd Sundays: Family Communion

4th Sundays: Holy Communion

St. Michael's and All Angels, Billington

11.15am Holy Communion

Good Shepherd, Astral Park Sports & Community Centre, Johnson Drive, Sandhills, LU7 4AY:

Sundays at 9.45am:

1st Sunday: Holy Communion & CGS Juniors

2nd Sunday: 'In the Community', at Astral Park

3rd Sunday: Family Service

4th Sunday: Bring and share breakfast and Holy Communion

Free pop-up café every Sunday from 9.45am

Sunday Saints: for age 3+ year olds, meets during 9.30am Sunday service at All Saints.

All Saints Toddler Time: All Saints every Wednesday during term time, at 9.30am & at 1.30pm. £1.50 per parent / carer & child; 50p extra per child; refreshments included.

ACTIVE: (Senior Youth Group for age 11+) **not meeting at present because of a lack of leaders. If you could help, please contact the office.**

Leighton Young Singers Club: for children in Years 2-6, meets on Fridays at 6.30 - 7.30pm.

Bereavement Café: a support group offering friendship and understanding.

1st Sunday of the month, 2.30-4pm The Spire Coffee Shop, All Saints

Choir Practice: Friday evenings, 6.45 trebles; 7.30 adults.

Bellringers: Practice on Monday, 7.30pm-9.30pm.

Spire Coffee Shop: Tuesday, Friday & Saturday 10am-2pm.

Contact Details on Page 2.



Worth a smile

More real-life notes left for milkmen...

- ❖ Please knock. My TV's broken down and I missed Coronation Street last night. Maybe we could talk about what happened over a cup of tea?
- ❖ My daughter says she wants a milkshake. Do you do this before you deliver, or do I have to shake it at my end?
- ❖ Please send me a form for cheap milk, as I have a baby two months old and did not know about it until a neighbour told me.
- ❖ Milk is needed for the baby. Father unable to supply it.
- ❖ Please leave no milk today. When I say today, I mean tomorrow, as I wrote this note yesterday.

Thanks to Frank Barnes of Little Billington for this letter to the Editors...

I read with interest your 'Milkmen's notes' article. I was a milkman with Express dairies for 8 years in the 70s and 80s in Wembley.

I remember a few that stuck in my mind.

- ❖ Dear milkman please don't leave milk on the 31st 32nd and 33rd of December.
- ❖ Dear milkman, Please don't!
- ❖ Milkman, you did not leave my orange juice on Monday please call early Thursday morning and give me one.
- ❖ Milkman, for money please ring both my balls.
- ❖ Half egg please.

These are all genuine, most of them were just bad spelling like '2 paints of meelk plese'

And finally – something for the pedants among you:

We know: most of you were learnt to write proper at skool, but here are some hints on

HOW TO WRITE GOOD

1. Avoid Alliteration. Always.
2. Prepositions are not words to end sentence with.
3. Avoid clichés like the plague. They're old hat.
4. Comparisons are as bad as clichés.
5. Be more or less specific.
6. Writers should never generalise.
- Seven: Be consistent.
8. Don't be redundant; don't use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
9. Who needs rhetorical questions?
10. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.

Parish Registers

Holy Matrimony, September:

3: Sam Girvan & Maryann Parsons at All Saints

'Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate'

Holy Baptism, September:

11: Delilah Katie Gibson, Arthur William Fahy, Maximus Xavier Glide; 25: Amelie June Emerton

'One Lord, one faith, one baptism'

R.I.P. September:

5: Raymond Fisher at All Saints; 9: Carina Wallace at Crownhill; 12: Evelyn Parris at All Saints; 13: Derek Twigg at All Saints; 14: Peter Holmes at St. Barnabas; 22: Barbara Kirby at All Saints; 28: Joan Pearson at Vandyke Road Chapel

'Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die'

Years Mind, November:

2: Doris Pughe, Margaret McLeod; 4: Laurie Thompson, Revd. Len Lack; 5: Alistair Grant; 8: Lloyd Burgess; 9: Charles Wallace; 10: Andrew Audas, Alistair Cursons, Geoffrey Stopford, Roger Swaby; 11: Harold Palmer, Margaret Prewett, Michael Turney; 13: Edith Palmer; 14: Leah Perrott, Harry Jones; 15: Michael Munford; 16: Winnie Rolls, Iain Smith; 17: Ray Croxford; 18: Eileen Sandifer; 19: Edith Deeley, Jim Jury, Snowie Mead; 20: Frederick Turner; 22: Ivan Davies; 23: Bessie Plummer, Brenda Beaumont, Revd. Peter Lymbery; 24: Margaret Thompson; 25: Ada Nash, Vera Hall; 26: Anthony Yates, Emily Kerbey; 28: Derek Dykes, William King; 29: Charles Gotzheim, Rose King



LEIGHTON BUZZARD MUSIC

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Saturday 26th November 2022 at 7.30pm

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- **Lewis Wood** ~ fiddle, vocals

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Please see links on the website, www.lbmusic.co.uk

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Pulford VA Lower School
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Office Manager: Mrs Alison Quick
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Website: www.pulfordschool.org

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a whole community



Experience Harvest 2022 10th -14th October



What a great few days!

This year's 'Experience Harvest' is well under way this week with over 200 children enjoying the trail around the church so far! Last year's 'Experience Christmas' was so well received and enjoyed post-pandemic and the All Saints and Pulford collaboration were raring to go for this autumn's Harvest trail. The church has once again been magnificently decorated to enhance the children's interactive and educational experience of this Christian festival.

By the end of the week, over 600 children will have explored many aspects of Harvest – how food is grown and who helps us harvest food on the land and how many countries suffer from drought and floods.

They also talk about their favourite fish, who helps us at sea, and how Christians believe that Jesus can calm the stormy seas in our lives. They get to try fruit juice and explore the orchard in the south transept, picking a 'fruit of the spirit' to put into action in their lives. Finally, they think deeply about the cycle of life, how things grow and die and come back to life again. Lighting a candle is always one of the most favourite activities for children at this area – peace, quiet and reflection.



Many thanks as always to all those who volunteer and contribute in so many ways to these wonderful trails, especially Lindsay Bevis. If you'd like to volunteer to help in any way for future trails – please get in touch! Help gratefully received.

lborrelli@pulfordschool.org

Luisa Borrelli, Experience Co-ordinator and Teacher





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01525 377384, or 07774 901293
email: eileennaples50@outlook.com

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On a musical note.....



St Cecilia - patron saint of musicians



If you are going to any concerts before Christmas, spare a thought for St Cecilia - the patron saint of musicians.

Cecilia is one of the most famous of the Roman martyrs of the 2nd century. As far as is known, she was born a noble lady of Rome who, despite her vow of virginity, was forced to marry an older pagan nobleman named Valerian. During the wedding, as the musicians played, Cecilia sat apart singing to God in her heart, and for that she was later declared the saint of musicians

When the time came for her marriage to be consummated, Cecilia told Valerian that watching over her was an angel of the Lord, who would punish him if he sexually violated her but would love him if he respected her virginity.

Understandably startled by this, Valerian then asked to see the angel for himself. Cecilia replied that to do so, he must go to the third milestone on the Via Appia and be baptised by the Bishop of Rome. Valerian seems to have been a good-natured husband, because the story goes that he followed her suggestion, was baptised a Christian, and sure enough, saw the angel protecting his wife.

Being a Christian in those days was dangerous, and when the next wave of Roman persecutions began, Valerian and Cecilia were among those arrested. It is said that they died at the hands of the Roman prefect Turcius Almachius, perhaps in Sicily sometime between 176 and 180 AD.

One story goes that Cecilia was struck on the neck with a sword, and as she lay dying, asked that her house be converted into a church. Certainly an early Roman Christian church, Santa Cecilia, was founded in the fourth century in the Trastevere section of Rome, reputedly on the site of the house in which she lived.

In the centuries since then, a number of musical compositions have been dedicated to her, and her feast day has become the occasion for many concerts and musical festivals.

St Cecilia is frequently depicted playing a viola, a small organ, or other musical instrument.

[Article courtesy of Parish Pump]

Calendar of Events

1st November

All Saints' Day Said Communion, All Saints 7.30pm

2nd November

Lunch Club All Saints 1pm



Commemoration of All Souls All Souls' Service, All Saints 7.30pm

6th November

All Saints' Sunday Services as usual including Messy Mass All Saints 11.30am

Bereavement Support Café Coffee Shop, All Saints 2.30pm – 4pm

Festal Evensong All Saints

NOTE THE SPECIAL TIME OF 5pm

followed by soup and fireworks



11th November

Armistice Day Schools Remembrance Service at the War Memorial 11am

13th November

Remembrance Sunday Services as usual including Remembrance Service All Saints 11am



18th November

Crafty Natter All Saints 1.30pm



19th November

Festive Fayre All Saints 10am-2pm

20th November

Services as usual including All Age Communion
All Saints 11.30am

27th November

Advent Sunday Services as usual including Advent Carol Service All Saints 6pm



Other events around and about ...

ALL SAINTS PARISH CHURCH
Coming Soon
FESTIVE FAYRE
Saturday 19th November - 10.00am to 2.00pm

WANTED

- ★ VOLUNTEERS TO RUN USUAL STALLS
- ★ HELPERS TO SET UP/ TIDY UP
- ★ SMALL LOCAL BUSINESSES TO RUN A STALL
- ★ FIRST TIME HELPERS AND NEW IDEAS WELCOME

YOU CAN SIGN UP ON THE BOARD IN CHURCH OR FOR ANY ENQUIRIES OR FURTHER DETAILS CONTACT RICHARD PARSONS
EMAIL - eparsons77@gmail.com

St. Barnabas Church Linslade

Christmas Fair

In the Church and Linslade Community Hall

SATURDAY 12th NOVEMBER
11.00am - 3.00pm
Free Admission
Grand Draw
Refreshments available all day

Books • Bric-a-brac • Cakes & Home Produce • Children's Toys & Games • Tombola
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subject to change

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Fri 18th-Sun 20th
10.30-4.30

Field View, Castle Street,
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Supporting Cancer Research UK

LEIGHTON BUZZARD
FESTIVAL SINGERS

Messiah
George Frideric Handel

Helly Summerly - Soprano
Anna Boucher - Mezzo Soprano
Benjamin Durrant - Tenor
Edward Price - Bass

Conductor - Philip Stopford
With the Aurelian Ensemble
All Saints' Church
Leighton Buzzard
26th November 7.30pm
Tickets £15 from Room 9, Selections and online
www.lbfs.org.uk

Picture © Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey

Around the Ouzel Valley Team

Eight churches, each special in their own way, but all being Christian witness to the whole community of Leighton Linlade & the villages of the Ouzel Valley



St. Barnabas is hoping for a more normal Christmas season this year – starting with their Christmas Fair on 19th November; followed by the magic of the Tree Festival during the first weekend in December.



This month, St Barnabas:

*Christmas Past - Stories for Christmas
And looking forward: Peace on Earth*



These pictures are from the last sensible Christmas we had – in December 2019. The theme that year was “Stories for Christmas”.

This year it’s Peace on Earth – we can all hope and pray for that.

St. Barnabas Church Linslade Christmas Tree Festival 'Peace on earth'

Friday 2nd December 1.30pm-6pm

Saturday 3rd December 10am-5pm

Sunday 4th December 2pm-4pm

Stalls* Refreshments* Car Parking
Musical Entertainment

Find us on
 Facebook



Good Shepherd, Sandhills

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Stuart Blofeld & Katharine Reedy



**CHURCH of the
GOOD SHEPHERD**

Following the call to lay ministry

Just over 3 years ago in September 2019, we embarked on lay ministry training with the Eastern Region Ministry Course, who run the courses for both ordinands and lay readers. What brought us to that point? We had been exploring our call for some time through a process of discernment. It's important to emphasise that neither of us view vocation and calling as something limited to church work; everyone can make a difference and be fruitful wherever they are.

The ability to be rooted in everyday life as well as in the church is one of the key contributions that lay ministers can offer. In our case, we are part of a new worshipping community, meeting each week at Astral Park Community Centre, and reaching out to the local community, particularly through our Sunday morning café that serves footballing families. A highlight of the three years was following the "pioneer reader" pathway, focusing on mission and new ways of connecting with those around us who may not relate easily to church.

Where next? Having been licensed in September (we are the couple on the right of the photograph) the journey is not over. We are looking forward to further regular training and are excited to be working alongside Rev'd Steve Marsh, to build the church and wider community on the new estates. Most importantly, we want to keep nurturing and developing a relationship with God out of which everything else flows. If you're exploring vocation and would like to have a chat, do get in touch.

Frank & Katharine Reedy



St. Nicholas, Hockliffe

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Churchwardens:

Brian Speller: 210565; Roger Spalding: 07451 877501



Coming from a rural background, the harvest hymn “We plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land” is one of my favourites. It’s not quite so relevant today as it was when it was written in 1782, when many countries were self-sufficient in food. But that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t give thanks for all that we have today, and the industries delivering life’s staples - water, food, warmth, light, or health. We sometimes forget the part we all play in this. So this hymn is all encompassing, giving thanks to God for all of those helping hands.

This year there is more uncertainty in the world than most of us have seen for generations. St Nicholas church is a constant which has stood looking down over the village for many hundreds of years. It is comforting, as you look up the hill, that it is still a place we all can visit to pray and be part of the Christian Community within the village. The church has held many harvest celebrations in those hundreds of years.

While harvest was celebrated in Great Britain as far back as pagan times, the church has always played its part in sharing amongst the poor with the church decorated with fruit and veg. In the early years this which was given out to the poor of the village. As times moved on the products were sold; today all of the gifts are given to the food bank and the collection then goes to the Bishop’s Appeal.

This year, the Bishop of St Albans’ Harvest Appeal will help change the lives of people in Mozambique who have been traumatised and displaced by conflict. Having fled to safety, life still isn’t easy, and many are losing hope. Your support will help on-the-ground, local church partners to reach the most vulnerable; helping to change lives, transform communities and show God’s love where it is needed most. Should you wish to know more about the Appeal, visit:

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/faith/bishops-annual-harvest-appeal>

St Nicholas continues to have a busy schedule of events. At the end of September, a family service was held for all those who have had children baptised in the past three years. It was held at Eggington Village hall, and it was lovely to welcome everyone.

On Sunday 9th of October, Harvest Festival was held followed by a traditional ploughman’s lunch, using some of the produce grown in the gardens of Hockliffe.

As we move towards Christmas we will be thinking about the annual events supported by the village: the St Nick’s Supper on 3rd December and the Carol service on 17th December at 7pm. We look forward to welcoming you all.

Rose Price

St. Michael & All Angels, Billington

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Sandra Brewin 373644;

Julia Haviland 850380



Unlike so many other parts of the world, in Billington all is peaceful apart from the sounds of hedge trimmers and mowers making their last noisy attacks of the summer. Sadly the apples in the orchards have been too abundant for villagers to cope with and many are strewn on the grass waiting to be eaten by blackbirds and other creatures, or are just being left to rot. Many in Billington have apple trees in their gardens so we would be happy to see those from further afield making use of the bountiful harvest.

We can't even use the apples for Harvest Festival which we celebrated on 3rd October. We are encouraged now to donate non-perishable foods which can be used by the Food Bank. The congregation were extremely generous with their gifts and a car load of tins, boxes and toiletries were taken to Dunstable Food Bank by Anne Lethridge Farmer.

We did have a few apples. Margaret Foskett who so beautifully decorates the font each year with flowers from hers and Denis's garden brought some large shiny red ones and placed them round the font.

If you have driven past Church Turn recently you will have seen our brand new notice board with a section displaying current services. It was not an easy task to remove the old one and replace it with the new but thanks to David Thompson and Karl Jeeves the job was accomplished.

We have cause to be thankful to the Herts and Beds Historic Churches Trust. For some time now the cast iron gutters round the church have been rusting away or falling off.

Now that we have been awarded a grant towards their repair we can go ahead with the work. None of us Biked or Hiked this year so we are particularly grateful to those who did.

Following her horrid accident several months ago our dear Dorothy Thompson is now at home again and continuing to gain strength. PTL.



Sandra Brewin

St. Michael's, Eggington

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Church Officers:

Carol Hart 384634

Paul Brown 751861



Remembrance Day

On Sunday 13th November at 2.30pm there will be a Remembrance service at St. Michaels Eggington followed by tea in the village hall.

"Lest we forget" is often said in association with these occasions of remembrance and thank goodness we don't forget.

My thoughts are with the families of those that were lost, many of them long gone themselves. As a mother of teenage boys I cannot possibly imagine what it was like to have no other option than to send them to war and possible death. I worry about the eldest heading off to university by himself and the youngest injuring himself on the football pitch. How must those mothers have felt? How did they survive? In truth we know that the majority of them would have done the only thing that they could do and that was to pray, day and night, for the safe return of their sons. I am fully aware that some women were also actively involved in the war effort but the majority of those on the front line would have been men and boys.

When we attended the Remembrance service last year, who of us could have imagined that in the coming months the men and boys of supposedly civilized nations would be facing the same fate? In these days of gender equality those born with XY chromosomes were denied the option of leaving Ukraine and had to stay in order to fight and quite possibly kill or be killed to defend their country.

Meanwhile, in Russia boys and men are being drafted to fight with option other than to face prison or worse if they do not join the war effort. Again, we feel helpless and wish there was more we could do as we try to imagine the pain these men and their families are suffering.



I take my hat off to those with the courage to enter war zones and I would recommend to anyone (particularly those with a strong stomach) to read *War Doctor* by David Nott from his experiences of surgery on the front line. What astounded me about this book was not just the incredible feats of surgery. At the beginning of each chapter he explains the background of the war zone he is entering and the reason behind the war in each case. I then read of the death and suffering that came as a result and nothing computes. It simply doesn't make sense.

So what can we do? We do what we can. We pray, day and night, that someone will see sense and that a resolution will be found to end this unnecessary suffering.

Hannah Johnston



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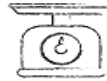


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Pécs Minor Basilica

Roger and Audrey Collor are in Hungary visiting their son and daughter-in-law and were able to send some stunning pictures from Budapest to Sandra Brewin, who goes on to say: *'It is so incredibly sad to think how close they are to a country where some such buildings, erected for the glory of God and to bring human beings together are being smashed to pieces.'*

The towers of the Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul rise above the city as prophetic signs. Its Romanesque gloom is lightened by the snow-clean whiteness of the southern facade. It is a special building, an emblem of the 1000 year continuity of Hungarians and a symbol of the continuous fight for Christianity and persistence. It was given the title "Basilica Minor" by Pope John Paul II, during his visit to Pécs.

*Text & photo below
from Danube Tourism.*





Encountering God in ...

... The Saints *by Rev'd Noel McGeeney*

*A series exploring some of the ways
we encounter God in the world and in our lives.*

Saint Martin de Porres was born in Lima, Peru on December 9th 1579. Martin was the illegitimate son of a Spanish gentleman and a freed slave from Panama of African or possibly Native American descent. At a young age Martin's father abandoned him, his mother, and his younger sister leaving Martin to grow up in deep poverty. After spending just two years in primary school, he was placed with a barber/surgeon where he would learn to cut hair and the medical arts.



As Martin grew older he experienced a great deal of ridicule for being mixed race. In Peru, by law, descendants of African or Indians were not allowed to become full members of religious orders. Martin, who spent long hours in prayer, found his only way into the community he longed for was to ask the Dominican Holy Rosary Priory in Lima to accept him as a volunteer, where he performed the most menial tasks in the monastery. In return, he was allowed to wear the habit and live with the religious community. When he was 15, he asked for admission into the Dominican Convent of the Rosary in Lima. He was received as a servant boy and eventually was moved up to the position of church officer in charge of distributing money to poor.

During his time in the convent, Martin took to his old trades of barbering and healing. He also worked in the kitchen, did laundry, and cleaned. After eight more years with the Holy Rosary, he was granted the privilege of taking his vows as a member of the third order of Saint Dominic and it was decided to disregard the law restricting him based upon race.

At the age of 24 Martin became a 'Little Brother'. He was assigned to work in the infirmary where he would remain in charge until his death. He became known for encompassing the virtues needed to carefully and patiently care for the sick even in the most difficult situations. He received praise for his unconditional care of all peoples, regardless of their race or wealth. He took care of everyone from Spanish nobles to African slaves. Martin did not care if a person was diseased or dirty. He would welcome them into his own home. He also founded an orphanage for abandoned children and slaves, and is known for raising dowries for young girls in short amount of time.

During an epidemic in Lima, many of the friars in the Convent of the Rosary became very ill. Though the rules of the convent were very strict, Martin was given full liberty to follow his heart of mercy and visit the sick everywhere he could.

In January 1639, at the age of 60, he became very ill with chills, fevers, and tremors, causing him agonising pain. He experienced almost a year full of illness until he passed away on November 3rd 1639. By the time he died he was widely known and accepted.

Talk of his miracles in medicine and caring for the sick were everywhere. After his death, the miracles received when he was invoked were so great that he was exhumed. 25 years after his death, his body exhaled a splendid fragrance and he was still intact. He was beatified in 1837 and eventually canonised in 1962. He has become the patron saint of people of mixed race, innkeepers, barbers, public health workers and more.

The title for this article is *“Encountering God in The Saints”*: a cursory reading of Martin’s life reflects a person who could have gone either way. He was illegitimate, black and abandoned by his father at a young age. He had very little schooling and when he did join the friars, he had to put up with a lot of ridicule and discrimination. All of this could have led him to be driven by anger and resentment.

We are invited to encounter Martin de Porres and discover the attributes that made him a saint. His focus from a young age was on God and not himself. This is the key: he became other-centred and not self-centred. He did not wallow in self-pity and blame others for his misfortune. He spent time in daily prayer and devotions. Seeking the will of God in his life led him from selfishness to selflessness. The core attribute out of which he lived was humility; not seeing himself as less than everyone else but seeing himself first as a child of God. This knowledge and awareness was the core of his spirituality. He was born to serve; his life belonged to God. After that, everything he said and did was an offering to God. No task or duty was beneath him. He spent years as a servant to the community of friars. If he had a motto it would be *“Laborare est Orare”*, *“to work is to pray”*.

Mark Twain once said, *“The two most important days in your life are the day you were born and the day you find out why.”*

Martin’s ‘why’ was not to moan at his misfortune but to seek ways to serve God. If the key to his spirituality is to be other-centred, then the next key is simplicity. He lived in community with a spirit of poverty, living out Acts 2.42:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

Most of all he was described as having a heart of mercy. We are invited to encounter Martin and discover the attributes to be a saint; Martin embraced humility, simplicity and mercy to guide his choices.

Fr. Noel McGeeney

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: A guide for parents

To follow on from my last article, here are some more ideas for helping those with little people to make positive choices to limit their impact on the environment.

Obviously some items may have to be new for safety reasons, but when it comes to clothes, equipment and toys for the first year at least, try to remember that babies are constantly growing and developing. What fits one week will be too small before you know it and you may be left wondering if an item spent longer in the laundry basket than on your little bundle of joy.

Try asking around your family and friends for advice on which items they found useful and also which they did not use, and why. You may have a different situation to them but their experience can be valuable in helping you decide what is necessary and they may even be generous enough to give you a loan for the 6 weeks or so that a product is really useful.

We don't need to have brand new everything so keep an eye out in charity shops as you can often find items that are as good as new for a fraction of the cost. You may use them constantly at that time but in a few weeks, when your child has moved on to the next milestone, you can take them back and buy the next "must have" with the money you have saved. This way you can save money and support a charity which needs your funds to help those less fortunate.

Children are our future and we can all play our part in leaving this world, at the very least, in no worse state than we found it; and pray for the next generation as they grow in the love of God's creation.

Do come and chat to me if you are interested to find out more.

Hannah Holbrook



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