



## ***Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro***

### **“Memories and Thanksgiving” 2007-2021**

I have never lived anywhere in my life as long as I have lived here in Hoddesdon and been your Parish Priest at St Augustine’s. Even as a boy the longest I lived in one place was 10 yrs. So, living here amongst you and for you has been, and will remain, a highly significant period of my life. Maybe I will *never* live anywhere as long as I have lived here!

It is impossible to ‘sum up’ in one page everything that these 14 years have encompassed — but I will say a few things, and have to leave most of it, sadly, unsaid.

I hope that I have been able to make a real difference here to your lives in Christ. The great thing, as for any priest, is to have been able to accompany you spiritually through the events of life: offering to Christ for His divine blessing the lives of the new-born in Baptism, and the lives of the deceased in Funerals; the lives of those asking to be received into the Catholic faith later in life, and the lives of those setting out on a lifetime of Marriage; the young lives needing such closeness to Jesus as they grow up, through the great gifts of Confession, Holy Communion and Confirmation; and the constant ‘sacrifice of praise’ which is the Church’s daily offering of prayer, arising from His People.

I remember with especial fondness various trips and pilgrimages — to Walsingham, to Aylesford regularly each year; and to San Giovanni Rotondo in 2009, events of the Papal Visit in 2010, World Youth Day in Madrid in 2011, Rome in 2012, Fatima in 2017, World Youth Day in Kraków in 2016, and Kraków again in 2019.

There are so many people for me to thank — some no longer with us — and although this can be somewhat invidious, yet I feel it would be remiss of me not to attempt it:

- Firstly, our sterling parish secretary Dawn Bates, who welcomed me here in 2007, and who, *Deo gratias*, is still serving our parish wonderfully and caringly. It is with immense gratitude that I thank her for all the countless ways she has supported me and the work of our parish over all these years.
- Regina Zulu has likewise worked faithfully in the Presbytery over all my years, and for many years previously! The parish owes her a huge debt of gratitude for her determined service.
- All those who assisted me in the liturgy of the Church. Firstly the sacristans Ellen Bartlett and Filomena Mezzullo, each putting in many hours week-in, week-out. Also, for those who have led the music at Mass over the years: Andy Anderson and Martin Moxham (both now moved away); Keith Newell (RIP); Gabby Hanley, Anne Byrne, Kate Daynes, Alfie Gattuso, Scott Hextall, and Sarah Manners. And all those who have been altar servers down the years, particularly those who have resumed serving regularly since the disruption of the pandemic: James Kavanagh, Claire & Claudia Ojoh, Aloysius Githinji, Amelia & Sofia Johnson, and Aaliyah & Jazmyn Joseph.
- The team of flower arrangers, who use their talents in the floral decoration in the church, each week and especially at the great feasts and special ceremonies, and led ably by Monica Hunter (RIP) and Gemma Castle.

- In the area of catechetics, so many parishioners have assisted across the years with the First-Holy Communion children and the Confirmation group, but I would like especially to mention with thanks the help given by Cathy Anderson (now moved away), Tony & Linda Barrell, and David & Evelyn Mills, with the RCIA programme; and Vicky Lee-Lozone who put in many years co-ordinating the First-Holy-Communion programme.
- Likewise, many parishioners have served on the Finance Committee during my time, but in addition to those helping so much in that role at the present time, under the leadership of Matthew Morrissey, I wish to thank former Chair Teresa McCarthy; and also to remember three former members who each gave a lot of time to helping manage the finances of the parish, and who have since died: Richard Pyper, Bill Pollard, and Michael Sherman. RIP. I acknowledge also the tremendous assistance of parish bookkeepers over the years: Margaret Jewell, Michelle Stone, and Katie Moir-Porteous.
- The leadership of the Under-5s has continued throughout my years by Lynn O’Bryan, for which the parish is very grateful: it is a happy and wonderful part of our parish’s life and contribution to the local community. We remember with immense gratitude Kevin O’Bryan RIP whose many jobs around the church and crypt site, great and small, were so welcome.
- I happily thank Mary Briggs for the ways in which she has promoted the use of the Crypt and managed its upgrading — in due course, please God, we can return to using this improved facility on a regular basis.
- Drawing up the rotas for Readers, Ministers of Holy Communion — and also, during the worst of the pandemic, for Open-Church Supervisors and Mass Stewards — has been the unenviable but crucial task of Pat Kavanagh. He has always fulfilled this task of service with great patience and faithfulness.
- We have been ably served across the years by our Parish Safeguarding Reps., namely Steven Dale, Adam Tackley, Claire Hay & Rhian Hanson — it is sometimes an onerous task, and ‘behind the scenes,’ but all-important in keeping our parish a safe place.
- ... And all those who have led the other many & varied activities of the parish and its outreach over these years. I think of the Brownie Pack, the ‘All Saints Group,’ and the Winter Night Shelter, amongst other things.
- Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge the kindness and help given by Fr Joshy Philip, our resident Syro-Malabar-Rite priest. Living through the pandemic closures was made far less intolerable for me because of his company, and the prayer times and Masses we shared even when it was ‘just ourselves.’ He has been kind and unflappable throughout!

I am sorry that there were many things that I was unable to do, or never got round to doing, or didn’t see through to completion, but that is the way. I must leave all those things, now, to Fr Julian, and I pray that he will have the inspiration, initiative, and mostly your all-important help to continue the vital work of Christ in this parish.

So, my dear parishioners, as we part company in the flesh, though not in the Spirit — and as the title of this little piece says — “*Let us give thanks to the Lord our God*”! The heart of the Christian life is, through joys and trials, to “give thanks to the Lord our God,” most especially through the Holy Eucharist (Greek for ‘thanksgiving’). My greatest pleasure has always been in gathering with you, each and every day, at the altar of the Lord to offer that Most Holy Sacrifice which is the centrepiece of the priestly life, and for which I was ordained. May Jesus in the Holy Mass remain, all the days of your life, the One to whom you turn without fail, for He alone can guide you infallibly towards the happiness of His Sacred Banquet in heaven.

Thank you & God bless — *oremus pro invicem.*

Fr Philip Miller