

THE THREE PARISHES MAGAZINE



NEWS & VIEWS OF THE STEVENAGE ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISHES OF:
THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD, ST JOSEPH'S AND ST HILDA'S



Church of the Transfiguration of Our Lord, Old Town, 1914

Celebrating its Centenary Year in 2014 !

- A welcome from Fr Michael
- Fr Michael Doherty SDS; a Biography
- Rome: Off The Beaten Track: *Simon Williams*
- My Journey to Priesthood: *Nicholas Crowe OP*
- An Anniversary Celebration: *John Amess*
- Pope John's Testament: *Michael Downing*
- Parish Organisations
- Children's page
- Stevenage Parishes Information

A Welcome from Fr Michael

I feel very proud to mark the publication of this first issue of the new Parish Magazine for the three combined Stevenage Parishes. It is a great opportunity to share and celebrate our Catholic spirit, and to express our ideas and hopes as a community. My grateful thanks, and the gratitude of all Parishioners, to those who have worked tirelessly over the last few months to produce this wonderful Magazine.

The past year has been a difficult one for Catholics in Stevenage and for me. I have felt and shared the sadness of so many with the closure of the Catholic presence in the shared Churches of All Saints and Christ the King. The need to consolidate the three Churches in the face of lack of vocations to the Priesthood has been hard for you, for me, and also for our Diocese. We now move forward in building and strengthening our three Church communities and finding new ways to share ecumenically with other Churches and other faiths.

Our Catholic community in Stevenage has many great strengths which must be encouraged and celebrated. As Parish Priest, the highlight of the year for me was the Pride of Stevenage award to Mary Cawley, from St Joseph's Parish. Her joyful spirit and boundless energy epitomises what is best in our faith and we are proud that one of our Parishioners has been so signally honoured by our Borough Council. I know I speak on behalf of Fr Vincent and Fr Fred and all Catholics in saying how much we appreciate all those like Mary who make our Parishes so vibrant and so strong.

A message from the Editorial and Production Team

This new magazine for all three Stevenage parishes is intended to become a regular quarterly publication. We hope you like it, but we would welcome your feedback. But, for the magazine to continue, your help is needed – particularly in submitting interesting articles, letters, personal observations, memories of your parish in earlier years or perhaps a favourite recipe to share. We leave it to your imagination and enthusiasm!

Or possibly, you can help with editing and production? If you would like to contribute in any way, please tell your parish secretary. For our next issue in **March**, contributions will be required by **14 February**. We take this opportunity to express our great appreciation to Fr Michael for his support to us in this new venture.

Fr Michael Doherty SDS – a Biography

The SDS stands for the Society of the Divine Saviour, otherwise known as the Salvatorians, the religious Order to which Fr Michael belongs. Fr Michael was born in 1953 in Donegal on the Northwest coast of Ireland. He came to England as a child and as a teenager in Chester went to the local Salvatorian College and later to a school run by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Colwyn Bay, North Wales.

It was his early experience with Salvatorian community life which nourished his vocation to the religious life. He went on to University taking degrees in Psychology and Biology and then working for a few years in biological research. During this time he kept up his involvement with the Salvatorians in their prayer life, apostolates and missions. He joined the Order as a Novice at the age of 26 and, after five years of studies in philosophy and theology in London at Allen Hall and Heythrop College, he was ordained Priest at the Salvatorians main community and Parish of St Joseph's at Harrow Weald. His first 4 years of Priesthood were spent in training Salvatorian Students for the Order at their Formation House in Southwark, Central London. He was then appointed back to his Parish of Ordination, St Joseph's Harrow Weald, a large North London Parish, where he spent the next 24 years, first as assistant Priest and then as Parish Priest and Superior of the community. Last year he had a nine month sabbatical, a time of prayer and reading, which, he says, was "to recharge his spiritual batteries."

It was during this time that the Salvatorians were approached by Westminster Diocese and asked to help with the combining of the three Stevenage Parishes. Fr Michael gladly came and has now completed one year with us, "a challenging year", he admits, "but a year in which everyone made me feel welcome and at home, and I was sustained by the wonderful spirit of Stevenage, which is found at its best, I believe, in our three catholic parishes."

Finally when asked to briefly sum up the spirit of his Order, the Salvatorians, Fr Michael quoted from their rule of life "***to make known the goodness and kindness of the Saviour by all ways and means which the love of God inspires.***"

Rome; off the beaten track – *Simon Williams*

As someone who visits Rome regularly both for work and pleasure, when it was suggested that I contribute a piece for this magazine I was happy to oblige. However, rather than wax lyrical over St Peter's, the Sistine Chapel and the Colosseum I thought it worth sharing with you three of my favourite areas, two of them certainly not on the usual tourist itinerary.

As many will know Rome is built on seven hills. South of the main sights is the Aventine hill. Here in the streets of the Piazza della Bocca della Verità you will find three gems; the Churches of Santa Maria in Cosmedin (pictured below), San Giorgio in Velabro and the Temples of the Forum Boarium. For those of you who like St Peter's and all things Baroque these are very different. Two of the earliest Churches in Rome dating originally from the 6th and 7th centuries AD they are in stark



contrast to the gaudy Churches of much of Rome. A short walk away are the miraculously preserved twin Temples of Portunus and Hercules, two of the oldest in Rome dating from the 2nd century BC.

Close to the Colosseum in the Lateran district is my favourite Church, San Clemente. At ground level it dates to the 12th century, below lies the original 4th century basilica and below that a real gem; the Roman buildings which includes a Mithraeum, a shrine of the Eastern cult widely adopted in the Roman army. If you want to see the development of Rome in one building this is it! Within an easy walk of San Clemente is the Roman Forum, the centre of ancient Rome's political, commercial and judicial life. To walk through here is to follow the history of Rome from Julius Caesar to the Renaissance.

I called this "off the beaten track", and my final destination takes you out of Rome itself. South of Rome runs the Via Appia, or Appian Way, the road started in 312BC to link Rome with the south of Italy. You can still

walk stretches of it on original Roman paving stones and look at the tombs and mausoleums which line the route. For Christians the main interest in the area are the Catacombs, the huge underground cemeteries used both for worship and burial. These include those of Domitilla, San Sebastiano and San Callisto, all in close proximity. A trip to one of the Catacombs and a walk down part of the Via Appia is a very different experience to the hustle and bustle of the centre of Rome.

CAFOD

The Catholic Agency for Overseas Development is currently working with many other organisations in the Philippines to help victims of the recent typhoon. Just as important, it works throughout the year with many of the small organisations for a fairer distribution of the world's resources and for an end to avoidable poverty. If you want to help contact CAFOD on 0207 733 7900 or visit www.cafod.org.uk/



FAIRTRADE

The Transfiguration has recently joined St Joseph's and St Hilda's in becoming a '**Fairtrade**' parish. This involves a commitment in purchasing, **Fairtrade** products (especially food and drink) to ensure that third-world producers get a fair price for their work. It is a simple and practical way to work for justice.

Please Note: Volunteers are required at the Transfiguration church to help launch the sale of **Fairtrade** products at the church. If interested, please contact Michael Downing 01438 213870

For more information visit www.fairtrade.org.uk

Adam and Eve had an ideal marriage. He didn't have to hear about all the men she could have married and she didn't have to hear about the way his mother cooked

A Centenary Celebration – *John Amess*

January 25th 2014 will mark the 100th anniversary of the opening of the church of *The Transfiguration of Our Lord*, Grove Road*.

As the Stevenage Roman Catholic community grew towards the end of the 19th century, so did the need for a local Mass centre, and in December 1911 a mission chapel, dedicated to St Martin, was opened in an outbuilding in Albert Street. The priest-in-charge compared this '*humble shed*' with the stable where Christ was born.

The foundation stone for the new church, laid in October 1913 '*in the name of unity*', included sacred writings and a copy of the Hertfordshire Express. The finished building comprised a simple box shape room with the altar at the north end, as seen in the photograph. Facilities were primitive compared with our modernised church. There was an earth closet (toilet) on the outside of the building that was emptied once a month, and water and gas supplies were not connected until some time after the church was opened.

Fr Howard, who gave the sermon at the opening service, advised the Roman Catholics of Stevenage not to be downhearted at the smallness of their number (probably less than 50) but by their prayers and example become efficient in spreading the faith.

**(Watch out for announcements about the anniversary celebrations)*

For further information, please visit the 'Parish History' section of the Transfiguration church website



A rabbi, a priest and a minister walk into a bar. The bartender looks up and says, "What is this, a joke?"

When she saw her first strands of grey hair, she thought she'd dye.

My Journey to Priesthood – *Nicholas Crowe OP*

I was brought up a Catholic and as a child and teenager attended mass with my family every week at St. Joseph's, Bedwell. Unfortunately, like so many people, I drifted away from the faith when I left home. Initially sheer laziness was to blame, but over time I simply stopped believing.

A second year lecture course at University shook me out of my complacency. For the first time I began to critically examine the assumptions on which I based my life and an uncomfortable thought lodged itself in the back of my mind: Why lead a good life? Why not lead a bad one? It occurred to me that if God did not exist then, to borrow an idea from Dostoyevsky, everything is permitted. If God did not exist, then the morality society presented seemed to me to be just someone else's opinion, an opinion that I was free to reject. This got me thinking: How should I live? And beyond that I found a deeper question: What do I want?

Fortunately, I was at this time living with some Christians. Through a combination of their embodiment of gospel values and my own thought and reflect on I slowly realized that deep down what I really wanted was to love, to love people but also (to my surprise) to love God. I realized that I had been lying to myself and that in fact I did believe. I uncovered a craving for a relationship with Christ, but all I seemed to have at this time was a cold intellectual assent to the 'God hypothesis' and a sense of incompleteness. On the advice of my Christian friends I began to pray for faith. For nine months I prayed the rosary everyday: nothing happened. I was beginning to get frustrated when my parents suggested that what I really needed was a retreat- so I booked myself in for a young adults' weekend at Worth Abbey.

That weekend at Worth had a profound effect on me. I was deeply impressed by the monks, by the totality of their commitment to Christ, by the peace and stillness of their monastery. Towards the end of the retreat I went to confession and after I received absolution something inside me changed. My abstract belief in God moved from my head to my heart and became a living faith.

From this point onwards I was seriously entertaining the prospect of joining a religious order. Initially I was drawn to monasticism and after graduating from university I joined a lay Benedictine community in

Brighton for a year with a view to perhaps entering a monastery at the end of it. However, over the course of that year the many pastoral projects that I became involved in demonstrated that, for me at least, God was to be found in engaging with the world rather than fleeing from it. A monastic vocation is a beautiful gift, but it was not the gift God was offering me.

I turned my attention to the Dominicans, whom I had met as a student at Cambridge and whose spirituality seemed to be an attractive blend of prayer, community life, study, and mission. I visited some of the priories in England and felt at home. This encouraged me to talk seriously with the vocations director about joining the Order. He suggested that I spend some time living and working as a volunteer in a Dominican house in the Philippines to try and absorb something of the spirit of the institution. Here I grew to love the Order and I returned to England bursting with enthusiasm and eager to sign up! The English Province accepted my application, and I was clothed in the habit in September 2008. In September 2012 I took solemn or life vows, and in July 2013 I was ordained deacon. I am currently in my last year of studies at Blackfriars Oxford, the Dominican house of studies in the UK. Once my studies are completed I will, God willing, be ordained priest.

Mummy, is it true that we come from dust and go back to dust when we die? “Yes dear it is”

“Well, there's someone under my bed, but I can't tell whether they're coming or going!”

- *A bicycle can't stand alone; it's two tired.*
- *When a clock is hungry, it goes back four seconds*
- *A man who stole a calendar got twelve months*

In the days of the Latin mass, the Fr Leo asked the children

“What's the only part of the mass all in Greek?”

“The ‘Kyrie’ was the expected answer

There was silence, then “When you give your sermon, Father”!

Pope John's Testament 50 Years On - Michael Downing

Catholic Social Teaching has suddenly become fashionable. "We owe this to Rome," said Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Wellby explaining his opposition to Government Welfare policy. Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat politicians fall over themselves trying to explain their enthusiasm. But how many people, and how many Catholics, can say what this teaching amounts to? It is more often invoked than actually read.

It is fifty years since the publication of Pope John 23rd's last important message to the Church and the world, his letter '*Pacem in Terris*' (Peace on Earth). It was not, of course, the beginning of Catholic Social Teaching, but it marked a new direction. Earlier papal letters seem to belong to a distant world, as obsessed with the apparent Socialist threat to private property as with workers, rights or taking their inspiration from Mussolini's theories.

'*Pacem in Terris*' was different.' It still reads freshly and relevantly today. No earlier papal document, or any since until recent statements from Pope Francis, has so clearly and forthrightly dealt with issues that still resonate - war and the arms race, civil rights and social justice, mass migration and the rights of minorities, the changing position of women in society and many others. What above all gave it vitality was the way in which, while drawing on tradition, it urged us to engage with the modern world and change it.

How can we do this in Stevenage in 2013? We live in a world where poverty and injustice still blight too many people's lives and where war and violence remain. Contributing to SCIMP or the local food bank may be helpful but not enough. To change the world we must tackle the causes of poverty, injustice and war. Catholic Social Teaching will not tell you how to vote or set out a detailed policy programme, but it provides a framework, grounded in the teaching of Christ, for action and change.

If you want to help with a Justice and Peace group in Stevenage contact me on 01438 213870 or mdcrantock@gmail.com

"I am not a saint, unless you think of a saint as a sinner who keeps on trying"

"It always seems impossible until it's done"

Nelson Mandela

Active Organisations and Societies in our three Parishes

Here we list only the main organisations/societies, and the persons to contact for more information. Further details about each will be given in subsequent editions of the magazine.

CAFOD (Catholic Fund for Overseas Development)

The Official Catholic Aid Agency operating wherever needed in the world.

- **Contact: Michael Downing 01438 213870**

Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP)

An international voluntary organisation of lay Christians whose objective is to alleviate poverty in the world.

- Bedwell & Old Town Combined Conference
Contact: Mark Cranny 01438 743207
- Shephall Conference:
Contact: Pat Farrell 01438 721959

The Knights of St Columba : Hitchin & Stevenage Council 616

A fraternity of practicing Catholic men of 16 years or older dedicated to supporting the mission and social teaching of the Church.

- **Contact: Mike Polack 01438 352075**

The Ascent Group

The group meets weekly at Transfiguration and has members from all three parishes. It aims to develop the spiritual life of men and women in their later years.

- **Contact: Colin Blagden 01438 216247**

SCIMP

(Stevenage Churches Inter-denominational Missionary Project)

SCIMP members from various Christian churches in Stevenage work together to provide direct help to needy people in developing countries.

- **Contact: Cris Beale 01438 237117**

Food Bank

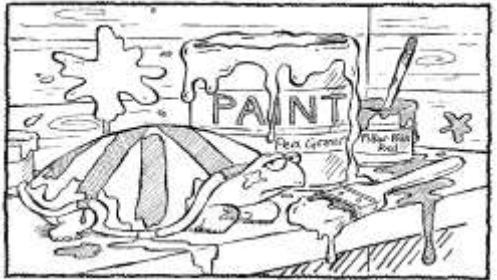
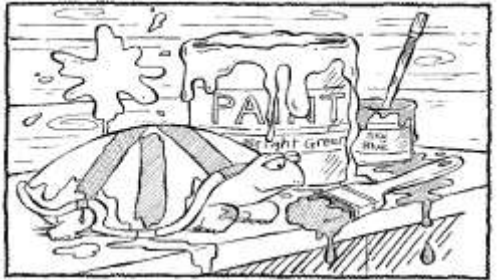
All three parishes support the Community Food Bank organised by the Stevenage Borough Council to provide food for the hungry.

Website : www.thestevenagecommunityfoodbank.com

Children's Page

A teacher was watching her classroom of children while they drew. As she got to one girl who was working hard, she asked what the drawing was. The girl replied "I'm drawing God". The teacher paused and said "but no one knows what God looks like", without looking up the girl replied "they will in a minute".

Can you spot 20 differences between these pictures?



Moses' first and last day as a lifeguard.



Christmas Santa Word Search

X Z D S T O C K I N G S W S Z
 U E H P O J G H M T E N Z A P
 R B R A R D X X R J O L U N J
 K S T C V E E H B I N B T M
 D N T C Z G S C F T S E S A T
 Y W J A A T P E E F R T S C A
 X B Z S R N X U N M S E M L Y
 B M G X Z M D F V T B L E A W
 F I G O W Z Q Y Y L S E A U S
 P S L E I G H S G B B W R S O

Christmas Presents Santa Claus Sleigh Tree Red
 December Star Candy Stockings

A Sunday school Teacher asked her class why Joseph and Mary took Jesus with them to Jerusalem. A small child replied "they couldn't get a babysitter!"

COMPETITION!!

We are inviting all children **under 12** to submit an article of no more than 50 words about St Hilda **or** St Joseph, or the Transfiguration of Our Lord for publication in our next magazine. The winner will receive a £10.00 gift voucher! **Closing date 30th January 2014.**

Stevenage Parishes Information

St Joseph's

Fr Michael Doherty SDS (Parish Priest)

Fr Vincent Dike (Priest in residence)

Sunday Mass: (Sat, 6pm), 10am, 12noon, 6pm

Weekday Mass: Mon, Thurs, Fri, 9.15am, Wed; 7.00pm

Holyday Mass: 9.15am

Confession: Sat. 10.00am, 5.30pm

Rosary/Benedicn Fri. 6.00pm

St Hilda's

Fr Michael Doherty SDS Parish Priest (Resident)

Sunday Mass: (Sat 6.30pm), 9.30am (sung), 11.00am

Weekday Mass: Mon, Tues, Fri, Sat 9.30am; Wed 7.0pm; Thu 8.0pm

Holyday Mass: 9.30am; 8pm

Exposition: Thurs 7-8pm, Fri 10-11am (with Benediction)

Confession: Sat. 10.00am, 6.00pm

Transfiguration

Fr Michael Doherty SDS (Parish Priest)

Fr Fred de L'Orme (Priest in residence)

Sunday Mass; (Sat 6.00pm), 11.00am

Weekday Mass: Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs, Fri 9.30am

Holyday Mass: 9.30am

Confession: Sat. 5.15pm

Contact information

St Joseph's: Bedwell Crescent, SG1 1NJ Tel.01438 351243

email: stevenagebedwell@rcdow.org.uk

Website: www.rcdow.org.uk/stevenage

St Hilda's: 9 Breakspear, SG2 9SQ Tel.01438 352182

email: stevenageshephall@rcdow.org.uk

Website: www.rcdow.org.uk/stevenageshephall

Transfiguration: 4 Basils Road, SG1 3PX Tel. 01438 226857

email: stevenageoldtown@rcdow.org.uk

Website: www.parish.rcdow.org.uk/stevenagetransfiguration