



Anglican Catholic Church



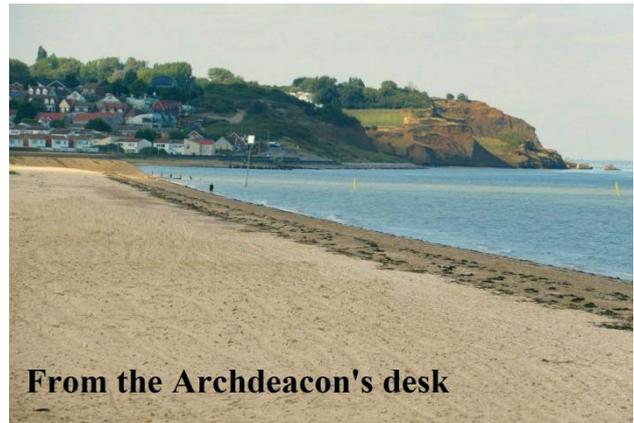
Diocese of the United Kingdom

Catholic Faith † Orthodox Worship † Apostolic Order

October 2019

My dear friends and colleagues,

Keats' "season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" is upon us, and while we might sometimes complain about the fickleness and unpredictability of our British climate, we should remember those for whom lack of rain and crop failure are a regular occurrence. We think especially of the dire situation in drought-stricken or war-torn lands. We are very blessed in these isles and tend to take our blessings for granted as we have looked out of our car windows over the last few weeks and seen the toiling combine harvesters, and all being "safely gathered in". We should also thank God that we live in a comparatively peaceful and stable land, unlike so many places where corruption and greed cause so much misery and genuine hardship and hunger. Natural disasters, too, mostly pass us by, so we have a great deal to be thankful for. Let's not forget all these things when we sing "Come ye thankful people, come".



From the Archdeacon's desk

October and November are always a busy time in the Diocese, with so many festivals and commemorations. Traditionally around the beginning of October we give thanks for the fruits of the earth in the harvest. The last Sunday in the month is the feast of Christ the King, and there are various patronal festivals in between. In November we observe both the wonderful festival of All Saints and the Commemoration of All Souls during the first week, and Remembrance Sunday this year is on the 10th with its usual poignant silence at 11.00.

November is traditionally known as "the month of souls", and is a time of reflection. During that month there are plenty of reminders that we are duty-bound to pray for all the faithful departed, as we trust they pray for us within the Communion of Saints, which is that great fellowship of believers that spans the bridge between this world and the next. November ends by leading us out of the long period of Trinitytide and into Advent, as we prepare once again to celebrate the feast of the Incarnation.



With every blessing

Fr. Raymond Thompson

Archdeacon



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The Walsingham Story

The Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham is the most renowned sanctuary of the Mother of Our Lord in the whole of the British Isles.

Walsingham itself is a village in a remote part of East Anglia some 125 miles from London. Here in 1061 Richeldis, Lady of the Manor, received a vision in the fields near her home. The Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to her and carried her in spirit to Nazareth. There, Our Lady showed her the little house where the Annunciation took place, and directed her to construct an exact copy. In confirmation of this vision, a spring of water suddenly appeared at Richeldis' feet.



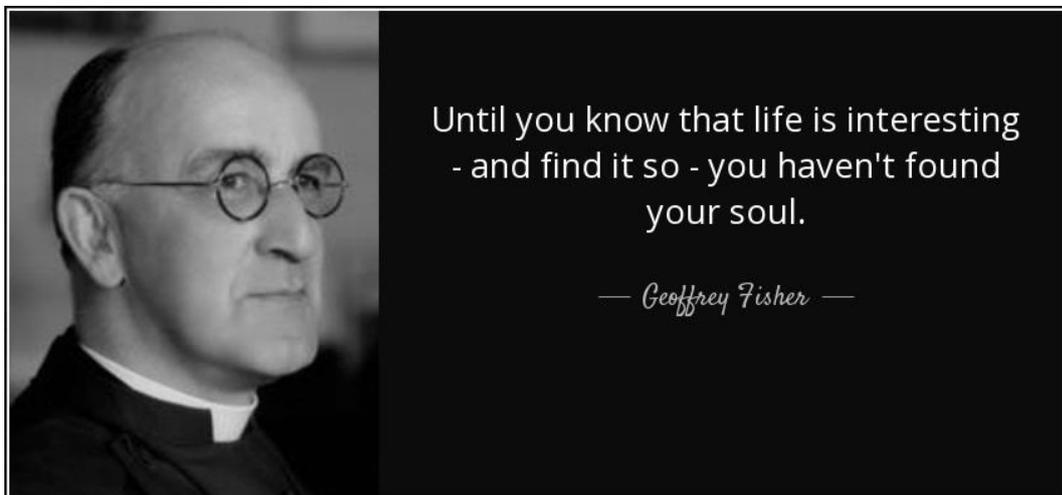
The original seal of the Shrine

Richeldis obeyed, and so a chapel, after the model of the Holy House at Nazareth, was built beside the spring in honour of the mystery of the Incarnation. By God's blessing Walsingham grew into a great centre of prayer. Pilgrims came not only from distant parts of Britain but from all over Europe, to pray before the venerable image of God's Mother in the Holy House, and to drink from the waters of the spring. England's Nazareth, as it was called, became famous for miracles of healing.

In 1538, during the Reformation under King Henry VIII, the Shrine was closed by force and destroyed. The image of Our Lady was publicly burnt at Chelsea and the Holy Well blocked up with rubbish. The Shrine Church's destruction and disappearance was so complete that its exact site was forgotten.

Then, after four centuries of neglect, the Shrine was restored once more, largely through the dedicated efforts of one man – the Anglican Vicar of Walsingham, Father Alfred Hope Patten (1885–1958). In 1921 he placed in his parish church an image of Our Lady, a copy of the ancient one that stood formerly in the Holy House. Ten years later a piece of land was acquired in the village, and the Holy House was rebuilt. When the workmen were clearing the ground for the foundations, they unearthed an ancient well, together with some medieval foundations, corresponding closely to the measurements of the Holy House built by Richeldis. So it seems that Father Hope Patten and his helpers were guided by God to rebuild the Holy House on exactly the same spot as that on which it once stood. On 15 October 1931 the image of the Mother of the Lord was transferred from the parish church to the restored Holy House, and it has remained there ever since.

Our Rochester parish celebrates its co-Patron, Our Lady of Walsingham, each year around the feast day, 15 October.



(As a small self-indulgence I will often use as a "desk picture" some Isle of Sheppey scenes photographed from my desk, from the garden, or within a few minutes of it!)