See how the flowers in the fields grow. King Solomon was not dressed as beautifully as one of these! Matthew 6:29
**RECTORIAL BENEFICE OF PONTYPOOL**

Rector: Revd Canon Brian R Pippen: Tel/Fax 01495 762228.
Email: brian.pippen@btconnect.com

Team Vicar: Revd. Malcolm Warren Tele: 01495 741879
Email: malcolm.warren296@btinternet.com

Associate Priest: Revd. Sister Anita Woodwell SGS  Tel: 01495 753195
Email: awoodwell@yahoo.com

Editor: The Rector The Vicarage Trevethin Pontypool Torfaen NP4 8JF

Rectorial Wardens: Mrs P. Griffiths  Mrs. M. Vale

Treasurer: Mr. G. Jenkins. Secretary Mr. H. Cole. Minute Secretary Mrs M. Vale

Wardens: St Cadoc’s Mr. G. Howden. Mrs E. Herbert.

St John’s Mrs J. Butler. Mrs S. Baldwin. St Matthew’s Mrs. P. Griffiths and Mrs M. Vale

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**Sunday Service Times:**

St. Matthew’s: 9.30am    Holy Eucharist
St. Cadoc’s: 11.00am    Holy Eucharist     St John’s: 11.00am.

**Weekdays:**

Crane Street Church—Every Wednesday @ 10.00am
St. Matthew’s: Thursday Reflective Eucharist  @ 10.00am

*We have special services from time to time - see the weekly Church notices for details.*

**Organisations:**

Sunday Junior Youth Group (SYG) 4pm-6pm
@Trevethin contact Rhian Jones 758740
St. Cadoc’s After School Club  (term Time)
for 5-8year olds  Monday 3.30pm -4.30pm
St. John’s Junior Church Craft Club Thursday 3.30pm—5.30pm
Rectorial Mother’s Union  1st Thursday of month @ St. Matthew’s Hall
Leader : Pam Humphreys   756522

Boys’ Brigade, Trevethin.  Friday Evening  Leader: Elizabeth Herbert 758740
St. Cadoc’s Bell Ringers: Contact : Douglas Warren 01633 422405

FOOD BANK Contact : Pat Taylor  750312

Follow us on Facebook: Pontypool Anglican Parish
www.parish.churchinwales.org.uk/m706

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**Gateway Credit Union**

Head Office - 21 Commercial St.
Monday,Tuesday,Wednesday &Friday 10.00am-4.30pm
Thursday 10.30 –4.30pm

Trevethin - Social Action Centre  2 Church Avenue
Tuesdays 9.00am-12.00midday

Gateway Credit Union offers real and valuable benefits to all its members:
Low cost loans with no hidden charges  The opportunity to save
FREE Loans insurance
Join for just £2.00 and make your money go a lot further.

Enquiries: 01495 742500  www.gatewaycu.co.uk
ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT MAGAZINE NEED TO BE WITH THE RECTOR BY 9.00AM ON
Monday 25th July
THEY CAN BE WRITTEN BY ANYBODY ABOUT ANYTHING. THE EDITOR RESERVES THE RIGHT NOT TO PUB-
LISH! WHAT IS PUBLISHED IS NOT THE EDITOR’S POINT OF VIEW OR OPINION.

Dates for your diary and special events

RECTORIAL DIARY
For the regular organization meetings please see the inside cover

St John’s
Pontypool Carnival—9th July—The Children's Crafty Church will be running a Tombola stall.
Sunday 18th September—Harvest Festival.

St Matthew’s
Each Tuesday afternoon 2-4.pm.
Craft and Chatter
First Friday of each month 10.30-12.30.pm
Coffee Morning. All are welcome.
Saturday 2nd July 2.pm. Summer Fete.
Saturday 30th July Trip to Barry—cancelled.
Saturday 10th Sept. Sponsored Walk.
Saturday 18th Sept. Harvest/Gift Day.
Friday 7th October Coffee Morning 10.30.am.
In aid of R.D.M.
St Cadoc’s
July 2nd—TFC Concert 7.00pm
Music for a Summer’s Evening
Every second Thursday of the month 10.30.am. Coffee Mornings.

Services at the Nursing & Residential Homes
PLEASE CONTACT GRACE TUCK
Regency House
21st July Communion 2.pm
Plasygarn
19th July Communion 2.pm
Ty Ceirios

Churches Together in Pontypool
Most events supported by Churches Together in Pontypool have already taken place, they centred on Lent, Holy Week, Christian Aid eek and Pente- cost. A successful Coffee morning held at St Matthew's raised in excess of £110 and a similar event at Crane Street Church during Christian Aid Week also raised around £100.

The Lent Lunches were enjoyable but numbers were low throughout the season.

The next planned event is a “Summer Supper and Song Evening at Crane Street Church on Monday 18th July with the Spirit Choir in attendance. The cost will be £3.00, more details later.

The A.G.M. Takes place on Wednesday 21st September at Crane Street Church.

Howard Cole.

Music for a Summer’s Evening
Featuring: Mackenzie Paget & Blaenavon Town Band
Venue : St. Cadoc’s Church Trevethin
When : Saturday July 2nd 7pm
Tickets/pay at the door £5.00
(Children under 16 years free)
Orderline: Trevethin Vicarage - 01495 762228
brian.pippen@btconnect.com

Confirmation Registration
Monday July 4th at 6.00pm

There are number of people both young people and adults who have already indicated a desire to be confirmed or who wish to investigate the possibility of being confirmed.

The above meeting will be an opportunity to register for the classes which will begin in September and to discuss the best time for the group or groups to meet. Rector
Dear Friends,

One of the pleasures of summer is the sight of the new flowers in the garden and the reminder that they are a part of the beauty of God’s world. Well today, as I write this article it is June 21st and Midsummer’s Day—the longest day of the year—and like many children my grandson Max has grown a sunflower and has been proud to show off the photo of the blooming plant, which is now taller than he is!

I am not the greatest gardener in the world but I was however thrilled this morning when I noticed that we have for the first time this year spotted the flowering buds on the Agapanthus. The mystery is whether they are the white or the blue. These we have had for years and we are careful to put them in the shed at the first sign of frost and we don’t get them out until the fear of frost has passed.

Now you gardeners out there are having a little chuckle to yourselves and thinking how pathetic my efforts are and how the small things are pleasing the small mind—well that may well be the case but it’s one of God’s gifts to us humans—the ability to take a bit of pleasure in his creation, and there’s no better time to do that than at this point in the year when so much is beautiful—and the mystery of the summer Solstice catches the imagination of so many. I hope that we will all have that thrill at God’s creation and turn to give him thanks.

**Farewell and thank you.**

Another cause for thanksgiving is the ministry of Malcolm. Malcolm will be reaching the maximum retirement age at the end of June and will be retiring from stipendiary ministry on June 29th. There was a wonderful evening at St. Matthew’s when there was a speech or two and a presentation. We will now all gather at the Rectorial Eucharist on July 10th. at 11.00am at St. Cadoc’s.

Malcolm was Licensed as a Team Vicar in January 2010—after a failed attempt because of the snow—the Bishop could not get out of Newport and we were in the depths of it as well. The Archdeacon therefore came along on the next Sunday. So started Malcolm’s ministry which has been fruitful and consistent over the last six and a half years. He has had the opportunity to minister in the traditional ways, concluding his long ministry of almost 40 years which began as a curate in Newport, and continued with an appointment as a curate in Risca, a Vicar on the outskirts of Cardiff and various industrial chaplaincy ministries, ending in Avonmouth. From there he moved back to his homeland and the diocese where his vocation was nurtured—being a person brought up in Ebbw Vale. We have enjoyed the years of Malcolm’s service here and we wish him and Carol a long and happy retirement—though I believe Carol will be continuing in her career and work for the foreseeable future. They will not be far away as they have a house in Pontllanfraith. We look forward to seeing a good crowd for their send off!!

With Kind regards,
M.U. Diary for 2015

For any further information ring our leader Pam Humphreys on 01495 756522.

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Mother’s Union Report June Meeting

This service was held on 2nd June and held in St Matthew’s Church, conducted by Rev Malcolm Warren. It was well attended and it was his last M.U. Service before his retirement the end of June. I am sure that I speak on behalf of everyone when I wish him a very long, happy and well deserved retirement. This service was followed by refreshments in the hall.

M.U VISIT TO MALVERN.

It was a beautiful sunny and warm summer’s day that the Pontypool Branch of the Mother’s Union visited the Labels store near Monmouth and then went on to visit Colwall Village, near Malvern. The village lies at the foot of the Malvern hills, just within the Herefordshire boundary and the Church where Mary Sumner married, the Church of St James the Great located about a mile from the village centre. She had lived there as a child and teenager having moved there from Swinton, Manchester in 1832. It was a beautiful Church, where, at the age of 19, Mary Heywood married George Sumner on 26th July 1848.

Afterwards we visited the newly restored Ale-house and we were treated to a lovely tea prepared by members of the Colwall M.U. It is hoped that this building will become the new meeting place of the Colwall Branch of the Mother’s Union for many years to come. Thank you Pamela for all the hard work you put in for us to enjoy such a lovely visit.

Congratulations to the Pontypool M.U. For the recent award for all your craft work for the Royal Gwent Hospital.

R. Howell.

Volunteering- Compassion in Action

Pam Humphries invited me as her guest to the Aneurin Bevan Health board awards night at the Christchurch Centre in Newport. The evening was to acknowledge all the work of volunteers in the hospitals. We went to represent Mother’s Union and there was a display of all we do as soon as we walked into the hall.

The interesting evening began with the profoundly deaf choir, who wore white gloves and signed to the music- a very moving experience for all and we raised our hands to clap so that they would see us.

The exciting part was the award ceremony, just like the Oscars with the sealed envelopes. Mother's Union were the overall winners with “Small things can make a big difference.” The Senior nurse for dementia was seated at our table and she was thrilled with our fiddle pinneys and twiddle muffs. When a patient becomes agitated they give them their fiddle pinney and they calm down. They need more and more, especially for men. Well done Pam for inspiring us and so many other groups who sew and knit, and well done all those who have contributed. Please continue the good work.

Royal Tea

Pontypool Deanery held a Royal Tea, Wednesday 8th June. Everyone was generous with their cakes and sandwiches and a good time was had by all. Dianne Taylor read us some Pam Ayers Poems so the scene was set for a happy occasion. Thank you Dianne. We sang “Happy Birthday” to the Queen and “May the Lord God bless Her” and then we stood for the national anthem while the bunting fluttered in a gentle breeze. We were pleased that Sue Griffiths (ex-president) was there to judge the crowns. Audrey won, though there were some superb crowns with ermine, and plenty of tiaras. Hers was different and cleverly designed.

There was a magnificent crown cake, made by Norah's cousin Ann, and we all went home with a slice. Just like a typical birthday party!

Everyone had an enjoyable time, so a big thank you to all who came and contributed – especially the hard workers in the kitchen.

Paddy Jones
ST CADOC’S NEWS

Regular Events:
Monday 6.30 pm Music Group (Spring, Summer and Autumn)
Monday 3.30 pm—4.30 pm After School Club 5-8 yrs (Term time only)
Fridays Boy’s Brigade
Sunday 4–6.00 pm Sunday Youth Group (SYG)

Hello everyone
It seems to be fairly quiet here in St. Cadoc’s at the moment.
We send our best wishes to those who are not well at this time, especially Vi Skillern, and John McGeehan—recently returned from hospital. We are pleased that Ann Jones has left hospital and is settling down in Leaden Court Cwmbran.

It has been lovely to see some of our people back in church over the last few weeks, Pat Pike, Sian Harvey.

On the 21st. May a bus full of people visited the Penderyn distillery. The tour and exhibition was very interesting, and purchases were made by some!! A thank you to the Rifleman’s Arms for providing us with an excellent lunch at very short notice and to Ann for the faultless organisation. There are now plans afoot for a visit to a cider mill in Hereford in October—possibly the 8th.

Birthday greetings to everyone celebrating this month.

We had a very successful ‘pot luck’ lunch to celebrate the Queen’s birthday, with plenty of food and a special birthday cake.

We had a coffee morning for the RDM, which was very interesting as Paula showed pictures of the village and its people and some of the projects that are taking place.

St. Cadoc’s send their best wishes to Father Malcolm and Carol for a long and happy retirement.

Hope everyone has a good summer whether at home or on holiday.

Thank you!
I was overwhelmed with the cards, flowers and good wishes received after my fall. My many thanks to everyone. Hopefully I am on the mend now at last, and will be able to attend Church more regularly.

Pat Pike.

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Milk Bottle Tops & Used Stamps.
Please continue to collect the above items for the Rotary Club of Henllys. The club is helping in in the world wide Rotary effort to eradicate Polio - the ‘End Polio Now’ project. In partnership with the World Health Organisation and the Bill Gates Foundation.

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The used Stamps are sent away to help raise funds for the Hearing Dogs for the Deaf. An invaluable resource for the profoundly deaf.

Thank you to all who have supported us so far and we are always willing to have others join in gathering these things for us. Paula

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Archdeacon’s Visitation
30th June at St. Hilda’s Griffithstown.
The Archdeacon’s Visitation was the meeting in the year when Churchwardens were sworn in and the Archdeacon delivered his Charge—outlining the expectations of the year ahead and keeping the wardens up to date with all manner of things.

This is a very important meeting this year as it has been restarted after a number years without it.

Not only are the Churchwardens asked to be present but All and Anybody with a Licence.

Administration of the Chalice Licence, Lay Eucharistic Assistants, Local Lay Ministers and Lay Eucharistic Ministers are all asked to be present and to present their Licences. Rector.

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Celebration of Lay Ministries.
Sunday 3rd July, 3.00pm at Newport Cathedral
LLMs/ readers to robe to mark 150 years of Reader Ministry.
There will also be four LLMs (Readers) licensed.
Weekly events:

Sunday 11 a.m. Eucharist Service
(Change dates and time with Ann Jones 750824)
Mondays 7-9pm. Crafty Ladies.
Thursday 12.30—2.30pm Crafty Ladies.
Thursday 3.30—5.30. Junior Church Craft Club
Thursday 7.30pm—8.30 pm. Keep Fit

Last Friday of month—Family History 7-9 pm.
Second Saturday of each month—Scrapbooking
10 am—2 pm. (We have space for a few more members) For more information ring Margaret 756315.

All of the above events are open to anyone who would like to join the different groups.

Bookings for parties etc contact the Rector 01495 762228 / brian.pippen@btconnect.com

Hello Folks,

We remember and pray for all those who are sick, housebound, in hospital or Nursing Home. Sarah and Kate have both been ill recently but are now on the mend.

Happy Birthday to Tula on the 21st, Dean Smith on the 29th, Isabelle Evans who is 2, also Phoenix who will be 2 years old on the 4th July. We hope you all have a lovely time.

Very Special Thanks go to Rev Malcolm on his retirement. We appreciate all the services and events that you have been involved in, for your care and witness here at St John’s. We will miss you but remember there will always be a welcome at any service and a cup of coffee and our usual chat after. God bless you and Carol.

A Sleep-over in the Hall will be organised by Sarah Clark, sometime in the summer holidays (more details later). There will be a film, popcorn, supper and treats. This is open to children from the other Churches. Please contact Sarah. The cost will be £5.00.

The Shopping Trip is full and there is a long waiting list.

The children are having a Tombola Stall at the ‘Party in the Park’, what was the Carnival, on the 9th July, any gifts for this stall would be greatly appreciated.

Queen’s Birthday Party. This was held on Saturday 11th July and a beautiful spread was laid out in the Hall. There was also a film showing of various events in the life of the Queen. Everyone enjoyed the afternoon tea. Thanks to all who gave, those organised it and everyone who came.

We had a Coffee Morning after Church one Sunday in May for Christian Aid Week. Thanks to everyone who donated food and gave towards Christian Aid.

The Monday Coffee Mornings for the Mothers and Toddlers is now being run by the Church. At present it opens from 11.30 pm—12.30 pm. Margaret Pugh.

Thank you to Margaret Pugh and her helpers for a very enjoyable party to celebrate the Queen’s birthday. Rosemary Howell.

The Battle of the Somme – and the comfort of the Cross

On the 1st July 2016 we commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme and remember those who fought and died during the battle. The Somme was one of the deadliest battles of the First World War. During five months of combat, the total number of men killed, wounded and missing reached over one million.

A century later the battle scars still remain. It’s still difficult to make sense of what happened and see God’s place in the conflict. It challenges any image of a safe, problem-solving God who protects at all costs from pain and suffering. As Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane demonstrates, God is to be found in the pain: Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.’ (Luke 22:42). God did not take Jesus out of the situation, but was alongside in the agony.

Geoffrey Studdert-Kennedy, the chaplain popularly known as ‘Woodbine Willie’, served at the Somme: ‘We have taught our people to use prayer too much as a means of comfort; not in the original and heroic sense of uplifting, inspiring, strengthening, but in the more modern and baser sense of soothing sorrow, dulling pain, and drying tears; the comfort of the cushion, not the comfort of the Cross.’

He is saying that prayer in itself won’t save us from suffering, as it didn’t save Christ from the cross. But it is does enable us to fight evil in a way that will transform the situation, like Jesus going to the cross.

‘They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old: Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them.’ ‘Parish Pump’
ST MATTHEW’S NEWS

On a lovely early summer morning of Friday 6th May, St Matthew’s held a special Coffee Morning in support of Christian Aid. The usual tasty homemade delights adorned, with plenty of tea and coffee to wash them down. A selection of Fairtrade products were supplied and caught the attention of the bargain hunters. The usual raffle rounded off the morning. Our grateful thanks to all who supported the event, to all who produced the delicious cakes, to Mrs Doreen Richards-Clarke from Crane Street Church for supplying the Fairtrade produce and to all who enjoyed the pleasant company. In excess of £119 was raised for Christian Aid. Thank you all for your generosity for those who need our support. It was certainly time well spent.

Many thanks to Mr Gary Beaton for giving his time to clear the perimeter and awkward places of St Matthew’s garden, of the long grass and weeds. It certainly makes a difference. Your support is greatly appreciated Gary.

Happy Birthday wishes are extended to Mrs Kay Gerrell whose birthday fell 14th May, as did Mrs Sylvia Jones of the Wednesday morning group. Also birthday greetings to Mrs Sylvia Lewis 18th May and Mrs Melanie Vale for 19th May. Best wishes from everyone.

Mrs Ann Jones is settling in to her new home at Leaden Court, Thornhill, Cwmbran and visitors are welcome at any time. We send her best wishes from everyone.

We are sorry to hear of the death of Mrs Doris Fisher, aunt of Mrs Janice Rowland, friend of St Matthew’s, Wednesday 25th May. Our condolences to husband Bill, Janice and family, from everyone at St Matthew’s. May she rest in peace.

Friday 3rd June St Matthew’s held a Coffee Morning on a fine summer’s day. Not so many folk in attendance this month because of holidays and other commitments, but an enjoyable morning passed smoothly and in a relaxed manner. The usual tasty goodies wetted the appetite and were washed down by gallons of tea and coffee. The usual raffle rounded off a pleasant morning. Our grateful thanks to everyone for their support, providing the homemade cakes and to all who contributed in any way.

Congratulations to Michael and Anne Younger who celebrated 45 years of married bliss, Sunday 19th June. Best wishes from everyone at St Matthew’s and for the years ahead. Happy birthday wishes to Mike also whose birthday is on 25th June.

Thursday 16th June on a very wet and stormy evening, everyone enjoyed an excellent buffet in St Matthew’s Hall, on the occasion of saying our best wishes for a long and happy retirement to Rev. Malcolm and Carole. It was cold and wet outside but the atmosphere inside was warm and joyful.

Our grateful thanks to all those who prepared the very tasty goodies, to all who came along to support and special thanks to our chief guests for their witness with us during the past six years. Here’s to your golden future together.

It is good to hear that Mrs Kay Gerrell is back in circulation after a spell in hospital. We send her our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

Laugh lines!!

The preacher for Sunday next will be found hanging on the notice board in the porch.

Churchyard maintenance is becoming increasingly difficult, so it will be appreciated if parishioners cut the grass around their own graves.

The vicar was ill in hospital and so the churchwarden went to visit. Trying to cheer him up, the churchwarden said: ‘We missed you at PCC last night. We even put forward a resolution to wish you a speedy recovery. It was passed by 14 votes to 12.’

A small boy returned from Sunday School in tears. When questioned by his mother for the reason of his distress, he gulped: ‘Jesus wants me for a sunbeam, but I want to be an engine driver.’

A 102 year-old lady was asked if she had any worries about the future, and replied: ‘Not since I got my eldest son into an old people’s home.’

A lady was very nervous about her appointment at the dentist. She sought courage from her Bible. The verse her finger landed on was Psalm 81:10: ‘Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.’
Iraqi priest: ‘There’s a struggle happening in the whole world’

Until about two years ago, many Christian priests in Iraq would urge their congregations to stand firm in the face of increasing pressure, and to maintain their churches in that country. After all, the Christians had been there for 2000 years.

No more. Since the violent arrival of Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (Isil) extremists, more and more priests have changed their mind. Now, as Fr. Martin, an Assyrian priest explains: “I tell them one thing. If you are thinking about leaving, go now, do not wait.”

Christian leaders in Iraq reckon that the population of Chaldean Catholics, Syrian Orthodox, and members of the eastern Assyrian church and others has dropped from 1.3 million people 20 years ago to less than 400,000. In the past two years Isil has displaced more than 200,000 Christians from the northern region of Nineveh. Many are now in refugee camps in Baghdad.

Fr. Martin goes on to point out that the Christians in Iraq feel caught in the confrontation between Islamic extremism and the West. “When newspapers published cartoons about the Prophet Muhammad, it was in Europe, but gangs tried to assault Christians here. (If) something happened in Belgium or in Holland, I paid here. There’s a struggle happening in the whole world and we will be burned in this fire in the future.”

Source: Daily Telegraph 16 May.

Monmouth Clergy School—Rome June 2016.

It sounds pretty exotic—a trip to Rome—and in some ways it is, it is not just around the corner. Thirty Seven of the diocesan clergy took up the offer of the pilgrimage to Rome—and that is what it was. Each day had a theme and the services, Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and the Eucharist as well as the visits were interlinked.

The themes were Pilgrimage, Mission and Evangelism, Unity, St. Columba, Abbot and Missionary, and finally Thanksgiving.

We visited and held the Eucharist in significant churches—the Church of St. Paul Without—the-Walls, where St. Paul was buried, we also celebrated the Eucharist in the chapel from which St. Gregory sent the evangelist Augustine to be a missionary to the British Isles.

We also visited the famous catacombs of St. Sebastian and a complex of rooms discovered under the church of San Gregorio that were connected to a Paul and John, officers at the court of the Emperor Constantine, both of whom were martyred for their faith.

We also visited the church of St. Paul-Within-the Wall. This is the church of the American Episcopal Church and the first protestant church to be built in Rome. We visited this church because they have a very real and relevant ministry to refugees and for that reason it was a very challenging hour!

The activities in the form of the visits to the several churches we also spent Wednesday morning in St. Peter’s Square with the thousands of visitors and pilgrims who attended the Papal Audience. It revealed so much about the man who is Pope. He has removed all the security around the open ‘Popemobile’ and he lifted children on the vehicle to be with him for the ride! We also learnt, through the speakers who were guests at two of our evening meals, some of other ‘Papal’ secrets—bits of fascinating Vatican bits and bobs! We were surprised to learn that he does not live in the Vatican but in a student hostel, and he never visits the Papal Palaces. He likes to sort his own laundry. These are not the important things we learnt—just fascinating. We were able to feel the history of an important place in the history of our Christian heritage, and interact for a few brief moments with it.

We also rekindled friendships and made new ones. Table fellowship around an evening meal that was never rushed, or a quiet moment with a small glass of Prosecco in the hotel bar or on the roof terrace, with the dome of St. Peter’s in the background, did give the pilgrimage a very special atmosphere.

The fellowship is something that will enhance the relationships of all who took part, and the friendships made will somehow also be special. We must thank those who organised it so well.

BRP
Four lessons from Sport

As I write, the Welsh football team are traveling to Paris for the knockout stages of the European championships—what a turn out!!

This summer will be dominated by Sport, with everything from Euro16 to the Olympics in Rio. Despite the wide differences in the various sports, there are four things each athlete will have in common: focus, discipline, communication and commitment. Such things guarantee success in our Christian walk, too.

Focus. What is it you want to gain, above all things? Paul said: For me to live is Christ, to die is gain. (Philippians 1:21) That sort of commitment is the Christianity that will survive any persecution and hardship.

Discipline. Just as athletes immerse themselves in everything to do with their sport, surround yourself with Christian riches that will feed your mind and spirit. Deliberately choose good Christian music, read the lives of well-known Christians, and seek out mature Christians for friendship and even mentoring. Christianity is like sport, it flourishes best when it is enjoyed with others!

Communication. What would happen to an athlete if he or she stopped speaking to their own coach, for weeks on end? So this aspect begins with Psalm 46:10: ‘Be still and know that I am God.’ Fundamental to your faith is your prayer life alone with God. Jesus said ‘No branch can bear fruit of itself, it must remain in the vine.’ (John 15.4) The Psalms covers every aspect of our walk with God day by day – so if you don’t know how to begin to pray, simply begin by praying the Psalms. And read the Bible every day. God speaks to us through the Bible and prayer – keep the lines of communication open!

Commitment. This is nothing more than the resolve to keep going, no matter what the obstacles. Paul had a driving ambition: ‘That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death. (Philippians 3:10)

And the final result of all our efforts? ‘Our citizenship is in heaven….’ (Philippians 3.20).

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One of the saints of July
31st July St Joseph of Arimathea – the man who buried Jesus

Have you ever suffered from gossip? Ever discovered that people are saying some really wild things about you? If so, Joseph of Arimathea would understand – and sympathise with you. This decent, godly man of the gospels seems to have fired the imaginations of all sorts of odd people down the centuries.

Joseph was a rich, prominent member of the ruling Jewish council – the Sanhedrin. Mark’s gospel describes him as having been ‘waiting for the kingdom of God’ for years, and even being a secret disciple of Jesus. He played no part in the trial or crucifixion.

When Jesus was pronounced dead, Joseph had the seniority needed to approach Pilate for the body – and get it. Near to where Jesus had been crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, cut deep in the rock. Joseph himself already owned it – and it was still new and empty. So Joseph laid Jesus there, and wrapped him in a linen cloth, according to Jewish burial custom. Joseph did not bury Jesus alone - Nicodemus helped him, while some women who had followed Jesus trailed miserably behind.

Matthew tells us that the last thing Joseph did for Jesus was to sadly roll a big stone across the entrance to the tomb, and then go away. With that, Joseph passes out of history - and into legend. For in the centuries that followed, Joseph was swept up into the Legend of the Holy Grail, the Legend of Glastonbury, and even bits of the Arthurian legends. It was said that the Holy Thorn, which flowers at Christmas, had sprung from his staff.

The mind boggles at what Joseph would have made of it all. One suspects he would have preferred to stick to the simple, but far better, true story: as having had the immense, unique privilege of laying the body of Jesus Christ in the tomb. Even if Jesus didn’t stay very long!

- Parish Pump.