

# St Mary's News

July/August 2023



## *Includes ....*

*A Silent Retreat at St Beuno's – the Revd Tony Rindl*

*I have a story - a poem by Daniella Clinton*

*A time well spent – Rosemary Clemas*

*... and much more!*

## A Silent Retreat at St Beuno's



Many of you may already know I went on a silent retreat at St. Beuno's at the beginning of May. It was a wonderful week, which I can only describe as being a very special time with God. St Beuno's

is a retreat centre set in the beautiful Denbighshire countryside of North Wales. It was built in 1847 by the Jesuits and was originally a theological college before becoming a retreat centre in the 1970's. St Beuno's was designed by the architect Joseph Aloysius Hansom, known for the Hansom cab. It really is a beautiful setting, and for the eight days I was there I had my own room in a nearby cottage in the grounds. I was also blessed with lovely springtime weather and the most beautiful sunsets overlooking Conway and the Irish Sea and also views of Snowdonia.

The Jesuits or Society of Jesus is a religious order founded in part by St. Ignatius of Loyola. St. Ignatius, born 1491, was a Basque nobleman who was injured in the Battle of Pamplona when a cannonball badly damaged his leg. For many months he was bedridden and with very little to entertain him. Reading material was limited to the Bible and a book on Christian saints. Perhaps understandably he would spend many hours simply daydreaming. At first, he would dream about being back on the battlefield and becoming the finest soldier. After a while he noticed he soon got bored and such daydreams often left him feeling unfulfilled. Somewhat depressed he turned to the book on Christian saints and began to daydream about becoming a saint. Whilst daydreaming about being a soldier didn't excite him, dreaming about becoming a saint did. He was captivated by this and drawn to the idea of being a saint would spend many enjoyable hours daydreaming. This led him to discover that our imagination can draw us into a deeper awareness of the God that is within us if we apply some spiritual

disciplines to our praying and thinking. It is within that framework that I embarked on my 8-day silent retreat.

By silent, I really do mean silent, being entirely cut off from the outside world so nothing can distract you from listening to God. The rules are strict. There will be no conversation apart from twenty minutes with a Spiritual Director once a day. There is no access to telephone or computers, no emails, no internet. You are not encouraged to read any book other than the Bible. Participants were essentially free to spend their time as they wished. There were plenty of local walks, extensive grounds, various chapels and hideaways. My Spiritual Director introduced the Ignatian discipline of four sessions of prayer daily, each lasting an hour. There may be a concern an hour 'talking to God, listening to God' might be no more than the fantasy of our imagination. There is a definite structure to the prayer time and there is the daily session with the Spiritual Director who will help you discern. Added to that is our own intellect and our own understanding of Scripture and indeed like Ignatius embrace what truly draws us to God and excites us.

There is also a helpful structure to the hour of prayer:

- Notice your state (are you relaxed, excited, anxious, reluctant etc?)
- Notice how God is looking at you (Is he in front, behind, to the side, standing, sitting, smiling, looking concerned, etc?)
- Place yourself in prayer physically, perhaps make the sign of the cross.
- Ask for the grace you need
- **MAIN BODY OF THE PRAYER**



- Colloquy (a conversation with God as one friend to another)
- A formal prayer to round it off - perhaps the Lord's Prayer
- Close with the physical symbol used earlier, the sign of the cross
- Review of the prayer



In addition, I always found it important to use a passage from the Bible as a foundation to my time of prayer.

On the first evening we were given these instructions, and it was suggested it might be helpful to read the story of Mary and Martha. It is a

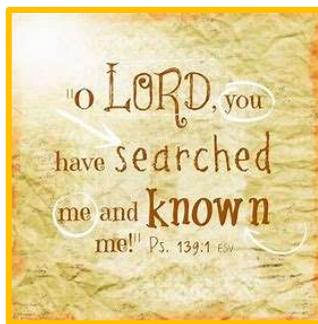
well-known story and one you will be familiar with. Mary and Martha are sisters and Jesus is coming and will be their honoured guest. Martha is busy getting the house ready whilst Mary just spends her time with Jesus. Martha is frustrated and so goes to Jesus and suggests he has a word with her lazy sister and tell her it is not fair as she is doing all the work. Jesus replied “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.” Note how Jesus says Martha, Martha; it would seem God often repeats the name when he wants our attention; ‘Samuel, Samuel’ the calling of Samuel or ‘Moses, Moses’ as God calls Moses at the burning bush.

So here I am embarking on a retreat, very much with the sense of God calling. He wants my attention and how am I at the beginning of the retreat going to put aside those things that I am worried and upset about and how am I going to focus on the one thing that matters? I am sure this will be different for each person, and whilst there were many things that I may be worried and upset about, the one thing that seemed to be drawing my attention was a

deep desire to rediscover my 'first love' for God. Something of that excitement, joy and desire I had when I made that decision to give up my life for God and to follow Jesus at the age of 21.

I am often reminded of what the angel says to the Church in Ephesus in Revelation. "I know your deeds, your hard work, and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first." (*Revelation 2*) I shared this with my Spiritual Director, and she seemed to approve of the idea.

She suggested I spend time reflecting on various passages from Scripture but most noticeably Psalm 139. Then to look back over my life and identify those key moments, and to ask God to reveal those moments of grace. Sarah, my Spiritual Director, described how the Italian dish gnocchi is cooked in oil, and when each piece of gnocchi is cooked it pops up out of the oil. So it is with our memories. It is very easy to draw from our memories the big moments in life such as childhood, going to university, starting work, getting ordained, getting married, relocating to another part of the country etc. However, what was special with those specific memories popping up like gnocchi and appearing quite random and yet with a very clear sense of God's grace and providence. It may be the memory of a moment of awe or wonder such as a brilliant sunset, or some beautiful place visited on holiday. It may be a wonderful answer to prayer. It might be the memory of a friend or a particular conversation that brought much encouragement. Included in those memories popping up are



special moments of being particularly aware of God's presence. At first the memories came thick and fast, and I was constantly adding to the list. As time went by, they became less frequent but more surprising and more profound. I was left in little doubt that God has been my constant companion throughout my life and like in Psalm 139 God knows me better than I know myself, and yet loves me utterly and unconditionally. No matter where you go and what you do there is no escaping God's love.

This pattern repeated for several days, and I noticed that joy and excitement of my first love for God coming back. Not that it has ever left me completely, but simply becomes hidden in the busyness and pressures of life. Perhaps the following, attributed to Fr Pedro Arrupe, sums up perfectly the value of this exercise.

*'Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.'*

By this stage much of the week had passed and with only a couple of days remaining it was time to look ahead. I found the resurrection account of Jesus reinstating Peter on the lakeshore to be most helpful and to try and hear what Jesus might be saying to me in the light of reigniting my first love for God. I found this insightful and something I will need to continue to refer to over the coming months.

There is so much that I gained from the week. It was a time of rest and relaxation, and it was also a time of reflection and recognising the God who loves us so dearly and is ever present in our lives. Yes, to rediscover that first love but also to gain fresh

insight and revelation, and perhaps develop more keenly the ability to discern what comes from God and what doesn't.



*The Revd Tony Rindl*

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## Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

The *Transform Trade* project is closed for the time being. We have sent several large consignments of watches and jewellery to *Transform Trade* for repair and reuse. Thank you to everyone who has contributed.

*Workaid* ([www.workaid.org](http://www.workaid.org)) has a list of "in most need" and "not accepted items". Please inspect these lists before donating! We would like to ask for anymore unwanted tools or haberdashery to send to *Workaid* in Chesham. Please liaise with Vicar Tony for dropping off as he has offered space in his garage to store items(!) until a consignment has accumulated to take to Chesham.



On the website you can also read about *Workaid's* policies of empowering young people in Africa and the UK for the reuse and recycling of the world's resources.

Many thanks in anticipation!

*Jackie & Brian Mee*

## Parochial Church Council

### *Report of the June Meeting*

The following report summarises some of the matters considered at the Council's meeting of 19th June.

*APCM:* The Council welcomed Eileen Roby, following her election as Churchwarden and ex-officio Council member; also Martin Whittick and Daniella Clinton as Council members.

*Finance:* The Council approved the purchase of a card reader to enable donations to be made by credit or debit card.

Our book-keeper, Jacky Faria, has completed the day-to-day records up to the end of April 2023. She will be resigning on 6th July and anticipates that the records will be fully up to date by then. The Council is investigating the most cost-effective means to replace her as a matter of urgency.

A Financial Report has been completed for the first quarter of 2023 (up to 31st March) and shows a deficit of £8,479, slightly higher than forecast. This is broadly in line with the revised Budget estimate for 2023 which anticipates a deficit of around £23,000 for the year to 31st December. The Council has set aside Saturday 30th September for an Away Day to discuss the finances in greater detail and to consider the Mission Action Plan.

*Buildings:* The Church's clock faces are all in great need of repainting and regilding, for which we are exploring the possibility of obtaining grants.

*Minibus:* The Council should be able to keep the minibus going for the time being thanks to a significant donation. We are continuing to explore ways to fund a possible replacement in due course,

although no decision about this has yet been taken by the Council. The Council noted that without more volunteer drivers, it would not be possible to keep this service going in the longer term.

*Safeguarding:* The Diocese is supporting us in implementing our safeguarding requirements.

*Pre-School:* Following its inspection in April, OFSTED awarded Pre-School a 'good' rating across all areas.

Once approved, full minutes are normally available on the St Mary's website: <https://www.stmaryswatford.org/pcc>.

If you wish to send correspondence to the PCC please send it to the PCC Secretary, Marcus Jones (email: [ttekcos@aol.com](mailto:ttekcos@aol.com)).

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## Tony and Cath

On Saturday 22nd July 2023 at 2.00pm in St Nicholas Church, Harpenden, Tony and Cath will be married.

We pray for them and wish them much love and happiness for the day and for their future together.



## I have a story



I have a story to tell and let me tell it proudly  
Of a carpenter from Nazareth  
Nailed on a cross of wood he knew so well as he was there at its  
creation  
The word of God made manifest  
The son of God born of a virgin  
I have a story of a miracle  
The miracle of grace  
Grace that caused the son of God, Emmanuel to take my place  
I will wait three beats as he did three days  
Before he rose again  
Triumphing over sin and shame  
The Lamb of God rose again

I have a story to tell and let me tell it proudly  
Of heartbreak and grief of loved ones passed  
Of anxiety and depression I struggled so hard to mask  
I have a story  
That when I went to bed one night wishing that I wouldn't wake up  
After crying for days I had filled my cup  
The depths of the spirit opened up  
I fell up into clouds and yet I was awake,  
I looked around  
I saw a Lion with a mane of gold  
strong and mighty, this Lion was bold  
In my grief wordlessly my heart poured out and this Lion spoke  
like a friend  
"Your grandfather is enveloped in glory" he said  
I have a story  
That the Lion of the Tribe of Judah spoke to me  
I have a story of El Roi, The God who Sees

My God moves mightily, mightily indeed  
Jehovah Raphah, the God who healed my heart  
Comforted me, He did not depart  
Though at times I wished it, as I swam in the depths of shame  
He called me out, baptised me, called me His again and again and  
again

I have a story  
These stories I must share, I must  
They testify of the Lord who delivers us  
Three days given for our eternal salvation  
Three days spent for our redemption  
Three days in which our debt to death was cleared  
That we may shed our grave clothes too  
Step into the light without fear

Perhaps our stories were prepared for such a time as this  
As the good news passes on I pray it never leaves our lips  
I have a story to tell  
And I know that you do too  
I'm still learning so I pray  
That the holy spirit falls upon us anew  
Tell the story of that old rugged cross  
Tell the story of He who was buried for us  
Tell every foe, tell your closest friends  
Keep telling your story until it's time to say  
The End

*Written and submitted by  
Daniella Clinton*



## A Time Well Spent

Sitting in the garden reading 'Land Healer' by Jake Fiennes about creating 'good' farms to help the countryside for example by bringing the bird count of skylarks up from two to twenty, I could hear on the road behind our hedge a diesel car which sat idling for a full twenty minutes!

The Eco situation is a challenge for everybody...

...Leading on I write about an Eco course that four of us from St Mary's Church attended. These were Tilly, Pam, David and myself - Rosemary. A time well spent.

The speaker, Dr Ruth Valerio didn't leave a stone unturned. She had a Christian background of working for the Evangelical Alliance and after visiting the slums of Addis Ababa she was led to thinking about living responsibly and how to go about it. She then wrote a book 'L is for Lifestyle' in 2004. She stated that 'through study, God rooted me in a love for his world and a passion to see justice'.

This was what our time with Ruth was about; a few days of laying the biblical foundations for environmental love. Much of the material is in Genesis in the story of The Creation - the world God created.



We had a look at some of God's wonderful creation by walking around some of the very large and beautiful Ashburnham estate during our course there.



One of our stops was at the walled kitchen garden where so many varieties of vegetables are grown without using pesticides. We were even shown the varied types of earthworms which live at different levels in the soil. In another section beside the kitchen garden was Ashburnham's own recycling site covering quite a vast area.

Near the main house is the Church, which according to their magazine, appears quite 'go ahead', reaching out to the local community.

The large old stable block has been converted to a Prayer House, described as a 'house of prayer for all nations.' Each room there represents a country that needs prayer.

Another part of the estate features a large orangery which is now a cafe open to the public.

Later Ruth discussed acknowledging the environmental issues in our world. She talked about community and the need to draw strength from one another. That is perhaps with friends or by communities bending together to tackle a certain issue. Then of course, perhaps the most important and practical question is 'how can we take action in our own lives?'

Ruth described earlier how she had joined her local community and co-chaired it for



twelve years. She is now working for Tearfund ([tearfund.org](http://tearfund.org)). Ruth is focused on trying to get churches engaged in issues being raised at the UN climate change summit.

Useful information to be found at:

[www.arochoa.org.uk](http://www.arochoa.org.uk)

[www.tearfund.org](http://www.tearfund.org)

[www.ashburnham.org.uk](http://www.ashburnham.org.uk)

*I remain confident of this:  
I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.  
(Ps 27:13 NIV)*

*Rosemary Clemas*

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## Ordinations

The Revd Cath Da Costa was ordained as a Priest on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> June in St Mary's Church, Hitchin by the Bishop of Hertford. She will continue to serve in the Parish of Harpenden.



David Scourfield was ordained as a Deacon on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> July in St Albans Cathedral by the Bishop of St Albans. He will join the Parish of All Saints, Leavesden as Curate.

We offer our prayers and congratulations to them both for their future ministry.

Hopefully some photos will appear for the next edition of SMN!

## Services

The Church is usually open each week

Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 3.00pm  
and on Saturday between 12.00noon and 2.00pm

### Sunday

9.00am Holy Communion (said) in church  
*on 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday only each month;*

10.30am Morning Service in church and via Zoom  
*every Sunday;*

5.30pm Encounter in church  
*on 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of month only*

(preceded at 5.00pm with refreshments)

### Wednesday

12.30pm Holy Communion in church

*(for Zoom links please contact the Church Office)*

### Thought for the Week

on our website - based on a bible verse or passage,  
it is a short reflection by one of the leadership team  
for you to think about during the week.

It can be downloaded and listened to whenever and wherever.

Please keep up to date with what is on offer  
via our Facebook page, Instagram  
or the website [www.stmaryswatford.org](http://www.stmaryswatford.org)

# Who's Who at St Mary's

## Vicar

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## Churchwardens

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Eileen Roby  
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## Facilities Manager

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## Church Office

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Monday and Thursdays

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