

Marston times

PARISH CHURCH OF SAINT NICHOLAS

A Festival beginning with 'A'?

That's what the Teacher asked for, trying in vain to discover who had heard of Advent Sunday.

It was Johnny who at last shot up his hand and said: I know, Miss ... 'Arvest Festival'!

His spelling wasn't good, but at least he knew one of the most popular days in the Church Calendar for young and old alike.

It is rather strange that, popular as it is and rooted in Biblical history, there is no special Sunday set apart for Harvest Thanksgiving. Each Church decides for itself if and when it is to be. For St. Nicholas Church, it will be on Sunday, 3rd October. When so many people are below the poverty line, or are in refugee camps, we here in Marston ought to be doubly grateful to God for all the blessings we enjoy.

Harvest, ever since Amos (see Ch.8) has linked the thought of summer fruit with that of God's Judgement. This is a note that is not often sounded today.

Yet it is a salient feature of the Christian message, and one to which we should heed. Nations and peoples who live selfishly, and hoard the good things of this life, will reap the Judgement of God for their callousness.

So let us remember this two-fold aspect of 'Arvest - of Thanksgiving for all God's gifts - of active concern for the world's needy.

We invite everyone to join with us at the services in Church on 3rd October, to give thanks, and to pray for the hungry three-fifths of the world who also need our personal and national financial aid.

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THE 'NEAR END' OF GOD

PARISH COUNCIL

The idea of God is so vast, so remote from most of us, that we are content to bear it in mind but not become involved with it. God is very great but he has a 'near end', whereby he literally touches us.

Many have had seaside holidays during which we have fallen in love again with the sea. We may never have sailed on the tropical seas where the Orinoco and the Amazon pour their floods through primeval forests. We may never have seen the perilous Antarctic, or even the blue Mediterranean. Yet we can know the sea. It has a 'near end'. We can sit beside it, bathe in it, sail over it, or be lulled to sleep by its music. The wide oceans are unknown to us, but we can know the sea.

God is like this. He is so great we can think of Him only in terms of symbols, yet He has a 'near end'.

How and where does God 'touch' you?

Where, for you, is the 'near end' of God?

Is it when you cuddle your baby and his fingers curl in your hair, and he smiles for you? Is it the stillness of your garden at dusk, or when the early crocus pricks its way through the snow? Is it a poem, a picture, or a symphony?

For each of us there is a 'near end' of God.

To believe in God is to believe that in and through our spiritual lives we begin to touch the hither side of God. It is in the life and character of Jesus that we see this most clearly.

St. John writes in one of his letters that 'God is love'. But how and where do we reach Him? John says quite simply that 'he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in Him'.

For Christians this experience is for them 'the near end of God'.

M. E. C.

OPEN MEETING

THURSDAY, 21ST OCTOBER AT 7.30 P.M.
AT THE HARLOW SCHOOL

The Parish Council has called a parish meeting to be held on 21st October at 7.30 p.m. at the Harlow School, at which representatives of the City and County Councils, and Education Committees, will be present to explain the scheme which the City Council proposes to adopt and which the County Council is also considering adopting in the fringe areas.

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This meeting will be of interest to all in the parish, and especially to those who have children of school age. The meeting will be an open one to those who would like to come, and it is hoped that local people will be able to express their own opinions.

ACCESS TO CROFT ROAD RECREATION GROUND FROM RIPPINGTON DRIVE

The Parish Council have decided to ask the Bullyingdon Rural District Council to endeavour to find an alternative route for this access.

PLEASE RETURN

Mr. L. M. Garner, Clerk to the Council would appreciate the return of two maps which he lent to somebody in the village recently.

JUMBLE SALE

2 P.M. SATURDAY, 16TH OCTOBER

AT THE MORTIMER HALL

In aid of equipment for the Sunday School

Jumble can be collected by, or deliver to:-

Mrs. M. Whetham, 20 Haynes Road,
(Oxford 49017)
or

Mrs. M. Monger, 37 Marsh Lane.

coffee morning

Make a note in your diary of Saturday, 9th October, 10 a.m. to 12 noon. Our Over 60's Club has a Coffee Morning and Bring and Buy Sale to raise money for their Christmas Party and Pantomime Outing. Please come, or send a gift.

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Sounds of music

By A. W. Sidebottom - Choirmaster at St. Nicholas

"The Sound of Music" was the most popular film of all time: I heard of one woman in Oxford who went to see it thirty-three times. What was there about this film that made people want to see it again and again? The quick answer is that it made people cry. But they cried because it made them happy! And the music was one of the main reasons for this happiness. People do whistle and sing when they are happy. They might whistle a pop tune or a movement from a classical symphony. They might whistle that extraordinary combination of the two, Mozart 40.

Much popular music is very poor music. The tunes are confined to two or three notes, the rhythm is stereotyped and the harmonic progression is so simple that if you put it into a hymn tune it would seem suitable only for the first class in Sunday School. But then, after all, taste in music is acquired by a long and laborious process; it is not a matter of chance or being born with it. It therefore follows that only the lowest style of music is naturally pleasing to a large mass of people.

One of the dangers in Church music is that poor music is provided for the Church service in the belief that it will please people. Surely the aim of music making in Church is not to please the congregation, but to please God. Would God be happy with the second-rate and commonplace?

The great Italian sculptor Michelangelo said: "Nothing makes the soul so pure, so religious, as the endeavour to create something perfect; for God is perfection and whoever strives for perfection strives for something that is godlike".

In St. Nicholas Church every Friday, the choir in their practice are trying, in their own way, to create something perfect. An anthem is worked on until it is as near perfect as they can get it. On Sunday morning the anthem is sung as an offering to God.

The same principle applies to congregational singing. The words and the music must be worthy of inclusion in a service of worship. So must the way in which they are

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sung. John Wesley's first hymn book started with a list of seven instructions, which still apply today. "Sing All. See that you join with the congregation as frequently as you can. Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you. If it is a cross to you, take it up and you will find it a blessing. Sing JUSTILY and with good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard, than when you sung the songs of Satan".

How disappointed Wesley would have been by the feeble and half-hearted efforts of many congregations, particularly in the Anglican Church, today! I imagine he would stop the service after the first verse of the first hymn and really tell the congregation what he thought of their singing.

The new church services are emphasising participation by the congregation. For this to be effective it is vitally important that everyone should join in "Justly and with good courage".

'WHERE'S THE FONT?'

Have you realised that the original font that stood in St. Nicholas Church for centuries is missing? The one that is there at present is only mock-Gothic, of a fairly recent date.

What happened to the former one? Some say that it was removed and dumped in a local garden, so if there's a mysterious hump in your lawn, or your rock plants are growing in anything that vaguely resembles our font, do please let us have it back.

P.S. The stone trough outside Dr. Heatley's house is not the font. We've asked him . . . and this came from Kent and was used for quite a different purpose!

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VISIT TO BELGIUM

43RD OXFORD OLD MARSTON SCOUT TROOP

We left Old Marston during a thunderstorm - a good omen of better weather ahead perhaps?

Our journey was by coach to Dover and after an uneventful trip by Car Ferry we reached Ostend, arriving at our Chalets (what no tents?) at Heare.

The weather was very good and having our own coach we were able to visit many places - France, Germany, where we visited the famous Grotto de Hans, Luxembourg and Brussels. The wine (for seniors only!) was very cheap.

Lack of space allows only a brief report but we did all get back safely, with many thanks to all who made the trip possible. We are now looking forward to next year's trip to who knows where!

D. Sheppard

CONGRATULATIONS

We offer our congratulations to Miss Olive J. Lodge, our intrepid Parish Worker, who last Michaelmas Day celebrated ten years work in our parish. We send her all our good wishes for her continuing work in the future.

'Don't shop too early!'

REMEMBER THE CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

ON SATURDAY, 4TH DECEMBER

AT ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH HALL

Please can we have your help now with making things for the stalls, and your support on the day.

Proceeds to the Church Missionary Society.

A GLASS-BEADED SCREEN

That's certainly the best kind of screen for your coloured transparencies. Have you ever thought that quite an amount of the moon's surface is made up of 'glass' rocks?

What better reflector could you have for the light of the sun? "And God saw that it was good". (Gen. I) He certainly did!

Old Marston?

You see it on the sign-board, but you won't find it on the Ordnance survey map. Why? Because there isn't such a place. There is only 'Marston' and 'New Marston'. There isn't even a Vicar of Old Marston, only a 'Vicar of Marston' and a 'Vicar of New Marston'. It's nothing to worry about really. You'll find the same idea in Headington.

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ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH, MARSTON

Sunday, 3rd October, 1971

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion

10.00 a.m. Parish Communion

11.15 a.m. Special Service for Parents and Children

6.30 p.m. Evensong

(It is hoped to show a film on the conservation of wild flowers in the Cotswolds and Chilterns)