

## The Dedication of the Abbey Church

St Benedict's Parish Newsletter

Stratton-on-the-Fosse

12 September 2021

**SUNDAY 12 SEPTEMBER** is the day on which the monks of Downside keep the anniversary of the Dedication of the Abbey Church. The Dedication itself took place on 12 September 1935. We think it was the biggest Roman Catholic ceremony in the West of England since the Reformation. The Prince Primate of Hungary, Cardinal Seredi, presided. He was assisted by two cardinals, seven archbishops, twelve bishops, thirteen abbots and five hundred clergy. The ceremony lasted six hours. On the same day, Pope Pius XI raised Downside Abbey Church to the status of a Minor Basilica. Our celebration of the Dedication of our Abbey Church this year will not be so grand. Although the storm clouds of the Second World War were gathering, we seem today even less confident of our world and its future than they were then.



*Cardinal Seredi at the Dedication of the Abbey Church,  
12 September 1935*

Cardinal Seredi was soon to be caught up in a great refugee crisis. In September 1939, when the Nazis invaded Poland, at least 150,000 Polish refugees, both civilians and military, found sanctuary in Hungary. They included thousands of Polish Jews. He did his best to protect the refugees and he was instrumental in organizing a school and foster home for the Jewish children, eventually saved through the efforts of Henryk Ślawik and his Polish and Hungarian associates. In the spring of 1944, the Cardinal issued a statement condemning the attacks on the Jews and their deportation, but denunciations were likely to lead to retaliation. Encouraging Hungarian Church officials to get involved in charitable services and refugee camps, he quoted 1 John 4: 18 – 'In love there is no room for fear, but perfect love drives out fear.' He died on 29 March 1945. He could have done more, but we would be bold to claim we might have done nearly as much as he did.

The celebration of the Dedication of a Church is not only a celebration of a building and its history, although these are important. The Church of which we are members is built of living stones so that it is a body whose head is Christ Jesus under whom we grow into ever closer union. In this mystical union in which we are caught up, we look forward to meeting all those who attended the original dedication; and, with Cardinal Seredi and his fellow dignitaries, we long to meet the Polish refugees and our Jewish brethren together with their children. The Gospel is, after all, the Good News of eternal life in the Risen Christ.



### Arrangements for Mass and Confessions:

The return of the School has necessitated a small adjustment to our seating arrangements. The seats in the Abbey Church will be returned to their pre-COVID arrangements to accommodate the pupils who will be attending a 9.30 a.m. Mass on Sundays. We will designate alternate rows for the Parish Mass at 11.00 a.m. so that we can maintain social distancing at the Parish Masses. Seating will be disinfected after the School Mass in time for the Parish Mass. *This new arrangement began at Mass on Sunday 5 September 2021.*

1. Mass will continue to be said at the Abbey Church on Saturday at 4.30 p.m. and on Sunday at 11.00 a.m. Confessions are available for half an hour before Mass on Saturdays and Sundays.

Weekday Masses are available at 8.35 a.m. every day in the Abbey Church and at 9.45 a.m. in the Holy Ghost Church, Midsomer Norton, on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Confessions are heard after Mass in the Holy Ghost on Saturdays.

2. We still expect those attending to use hand sanitizer on entry and exit.

3. Whilst masks are no longer compulsory, we ask those attending to continue wearing masks for the time being. For those who are unwilling to or who are exempted from wearing a mask, there will be a designated part of the church at the back to which our stewards will direct them.

4. The Abbey Church is large enough to continue social distancing, which will be retained.

5. We will still use track and trace to provide reassurance that we can respond adequately to any outbreak, thereby reducing the chance of transmission. Those attending Mass will be encouraged to use the NHS QR code.

6. Communion will remain in one kind. The Priest, who will still be masked at Communion, will return to saying 'The Body of Christ' to the individual communicant.

7. Kneeling will be allowed as long as it is by the supplicant's seat and not onto the row in front.

8. Holy water stoups will remain dry for the time being.

9. The church will be disinfected after each service.



**Parish Picnic:** We were delighted by the numbers who came to enjoy a rare afternoon of sunshine last Sunday 5 September. Friendship and picnics were generously shared. The tours of the Abbey Church were well attended. It was a moment to return to one of those informal moments of parish life that are so important for building and strengthening our community in Christ. Thanks are due to everyone who came to make this a happy and memorable day.

**Healing Service:** Dom Michael will conduct an online healing service on Saturday 11 September at 2 p.m. Go to @downsideabbey on Instagram. It will be saved, so you can watch it later on IGTV, if you wish.

**Mass at Peasedown St John:** Owing to problems of communication, monks from Downside will not begin celebrating Mass in the Church of St Joseph at Peasedown on Saturdays at 6 p.m. until October. During September, Mass at Peasedown will continue at its usual Sunday time of 9 a.m. but please check directly with the parish for confirmation of their Sunday Mass times.



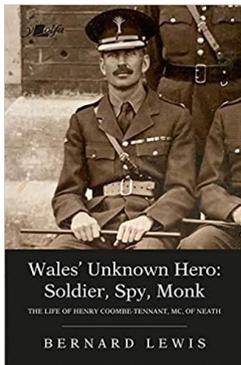
**Somer Valley Foodbank:** Soon the Foodbank will be moving its warehouse. Stock has to be reduced during the move, so we are asked to give anything collected at Harvest Festival to other charities this year.

Here are the September needs for the Foodbank: Corned beef (tinned), Custard (tinned), Fruit (tinned), Jam, Milk powder, Puddings, Tomato ketchup, Spaghetti (tinned), Cleaning products, Deodorants, Laundry products, Shampoo & conditioner, Toilet rolls, Washing powder, Washing-up liquid. Very many thanks for your continuing generosity and support.

For the present **the following items are not required:** Baked beans, Breakfast cereals, Meat (tinned), Pasta packets, Pasta sauce, Rice packets, Tea bags, Vegetable soup, Vegetarian beans and pulses.

With very many thanks for all you are doing to ensure our Foodbank continues to run smoothly.

Elizabeth Maggs (Donations Co-ordinator, Somer Valley Foodbank)



**Dom Joseph Coombe Tennant Book Launch:** On Wednesday 20 October at 11 a.m. Bernard Lewis will discuss the subject of his latest book, Dom Joseph Coombe Tennant, as a life in pictures. Many of us remember Dom Joseph, who had an extraordinary life in the army and MI6 before entering the monastery and becoming Parish Priest in Radstock. Mr Lewis's first talk here was packed out. For further information on how to get a ticket, go to Events in the Heritage section of the Downside Abbey website. You can attend via Zoom or, if you book in time, in person. You will then be able to purchase signed copies of the newly published book.

**Martyrology:** Tuesday 14 September is the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. This feast recalls three historical events:

1. The finding of the True Cross by St Helena, the mother of the emperor Constantine
2. The dedication of churches by Constantine on the site of the Holy Sepulchre and Mount Calvary
3. And the restoration of the True Cross to Jerusalem by the Emperor Heraclius II

More deeply, the feast celebrates the Holy Cross, an instrument of torture, as the instrument of our salvation.

## Readings for the Dedication of the Abbey Church

### First Reading

**May your eyes watch night and day over this temple.**

In those days: Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of the whole community of Israel, and stretching forth his hands toward heaven, he said, 'Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below; you keep your covenant of mercy with your servants who are faithful to you with their whole heart. Can it indeed be

that God dwells on earth? If the heavens and the highest heavens cannot contain you, how much less this temple which I have built! Look kindly on the prayer and petition of your servant, O Lord, my God, and listen to the cry of supplication I, your servant, utter before you this day, May your eyes watch night and day over this temple, the place where you have decreed you shall be honoured; may you heed the prayer which I, your servant, offer in this place. Listen to the petitions of your servant and of your people Israel, which they offer in this place. Listen from your heavenly dwelling and grant pardon' (1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30).

## Second Reading

### You are no longer strangers and sojourners

So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22).

## Gospel

**Motivation:** *It is easy to become self-absorbed, especially in our responsibilities and our status. Do others respect me sufficiently? I know that Jesus is somewhere close at hand, but how ready am I to go and see him? To welcome him into my home and community? To allow him to give me a new direction for my life?*



### Jesus and Zacchaeus

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector, and rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd, because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today.' So he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it they all murmured, 'He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.' And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore

it fourfold.' And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost' (Luke 19: 1-10).