

Sunday Message from Fr William for Trinity Sunday 2023

Dear People of St Mary's

Today's solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity is celebrated always on the Sunday following Pentecost Sunday, and is like a final echo of the Easter Season. So, as we now set out from Easter once again into Ordinary Time, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for the work we did together during Lent and Easter on the 'liturgical formation' called for by the Second Vatican Council, and called for again by Pope Francis in his recent letter on the Liturgy. The Church in this country and in many parts of the world is still slowly emerging from pre-Vatican 2 habits when the Mass was in Latin, the priest 'had his back to the people', and for several centuries people understandably stopped watching the liturgical actions of the Mass, and, as Pope Francis writes, largely lost the capacity to 'read' these symbolic actions. Visual engagement was often reduced to looking up at the consecrated host when the bell was rung.

Now the Church is gradually returning to the 'full, conscious and active participation' of the early Church in the Proclamation of the Word, and the dialogue between God and his people. It is gradually returning to the 'full, conscious and active participation' of the early Church as they celebrated the actions of the Last Supper – when he took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and handed it to them to eat – actions of Christ they continued to celebrate 'in memory' of Him.

Over the ten or so years I've been with you at St Mary's I've dedicated a lot of focus on these reforms, because I believe they will be essential for the flourishing of the Church into the future. Without them it will be a story of being stuck in a bygone era, and managed decline.

Talking of the future... In April 2019, when the parish was handed over to the diocese, the bishop asked me to stay on for five years. I very happily agreed, and Ampleforth agreed to this continued support to the diocese for these five years. With the end of this period now on the horizon I met with the bishop last month to ascertain his plans for St Mary's post-William. You'll be pleased to know that he has no intentions of closing the parish, and never has had. As for providing a resident priest, yes it is his intention to provide a resident priest for St Mary's. But he did explain that this might be dependent on whether the accommodation could be made suitable. In particular, the resident priest should have access in and out of the flat other than via the chapel or atrium. So, we are starting to look at the project of transferring the tabernacle to the church, reincorporating the Blessed Sacrament chapel into the priest's accommodation, and reopening the front door onto Bond End. As for timing, priests are usually installed in August, so we're looking at something like August 2024 for my return to Ampleforth and my successor to join you in St Mary's. I'll be sad to leave you.



Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, Sunday 4th June 2023