

# THE CLARION

The Magazine of The Parish of St Mary The Boltons

JANUARY 2005

## The Revd Ginny Thomas

Thank you to everyone who sent Christmas and New Year greetings. I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas and a good beginning to the New Year.

“It is hard to believe that I have already been at St Mary The Boltons for four months – the time has gone by very quickly. I understand that some people have been asking about me, where I come from etc. and so re-printed below is an edited version of the article I wrote for the Clarion in June 2004 to introduce myself.

If someone had told me 15 years ago that I would one day be a priest in the Diocese of London, I would have laughed and said ‘Certainly not!’

Fifteen years ago we - my husband Patrick and our two children Edwin and Iona - were living in the United States, in Fairfield Connecticut. We had moved there in 1987 following several years of living in Germany and Belgium, where Patrick’s work as an insurance broker had taken us.

We had met at the University of East Anglia where we both studied European Studies and started our married life together in Glasgow before moving to London and then abroad.

While we were living abroad, and before the children were born, I taught English as a foreign language. When we moved to Fairfield I became involved in voluntary work, which included being on the management committee of a local youth orchestra and becoming chairwoman of an environmental education programme which was part of the school curriculum in the local schools.

It was also in Fairfield that I became very involved with our local church, St. Paul’s, not only serving on the Vestry (the PCC) and becoming a warden, but also chairing the church’s lively adult education programme and taking part in other activities such as visiting the elderly in their homes and helping at a local soup kitchen.

I was encouraged to attend Yale Divinity School at New Haven, Connecticut and after some hesitation enrolled for their Masters of Divinity degree - a three year full time course which was challenging but also very stimulating. It was during that time that I felt I needed to explore the call to ordination, although it was somehow clear to me that the call was to come back to England.

We were able to move back in the summer of 1997 after I graduated from Yale; Edwin and Iona were already here continuing their education and Patrick was able to get a transfer within his company. After some weeks we found St. Luke’s Church in Sydney Street and a little later I started to explore ordination. I was accepted for training in 1998 and after two years’ further study was

ordained at St Paul’s Cathedral in 2000 and priested at St. Mary Abbots Church in Kensington the following year. After ordination, I was able to continue at St. Luke’s as an honorary curate and for the past four years have ‘served my title’ there.

We very much enjoy living in London - after an absence of 23 years - and whenever we can we like to go to the theatre and concerts, the opera and to spend time exploring the city. We both like to garden but this alas is something we have had to forgo, as we live in a flat.”

I have very much enjoyed my first four months at St Mary The Boltons and thank you to everyone for your warm welcome and support.

Ginny Thomas

## November Holiday in Turkey

Thank you God

for recharging my tired,  
worn out Earl’s Court batteries,  
for refreshing my five dulled senses.

I rejoice in  
hearing the rhythmic pounding  
of the waves crashing on the beach,  
seeing the setting sun throwing a golden,  
shimmering beam on the sea,  
smelling the intoxicating, fragrant scent  
from the tiny stars of the jasmine bush,  
tasting sweet honey pastry and crunchy pistachios  
of a baklava,  
feeling totally at peace and in harmony  
with your creation.

Thank you, God.

Anne Swift,  
Side, Turkey, November 2004

## The Wise Men visit the Infant Jesus

In 1662, Bishop Lancelot Andrews wrote in his Christmas sermon:

It was no summer progress. A cold coming they had of it, at this time of the year; just the worst time of the year, to take a journey, and specially a long journey. The ways deep, the weather sharp, the days short, the sun farthest off, *in solstitio brumali*; the very dead of winter.

With these words, we are immediately made aware of the cold, the slush, the darkness, the discomfort of a journey made by real men in a real everyday context. And yes, T. S. Eliot borrowed from this for his poem *The Journey of the Magi*.

But how real were the Magi? Their origins remain obscure, being based on a short account in the Gospel of St. Matthew, which over the years has been greatly developed. Magi; plural of magus (*Greek; magos*) is a priest or seer, later, an astrologer, from which we get magician. We are told they predicted the birth of Christ, following a star to where it took place. Such astrologer/Wise Men would most certainly have known of a connection between the movements of heavenly bodies and momentous happenings on earth. They must have been filled with unshakable faith, to go so far, without knowing where they were going, for hundreds of miles, with the sole aim of paying homage to a king they knew very little about.

They could well have reached Bethlehem, and more than likely, been interrogated by Herod. Certainly, important strangers coming from so far would have been worthy of his attention. Herod's intelligence network was wide, and his Court, extremely cruel: see Robert Graves' book '*King Jesus*'.

But the fascination of the Magi, for me, lies not so much in their actuality, as in the symbolism surrounding them. '*There came Wise Men from the East . . .*' says Matthew's Gospel, but does not mention their number. They were not numbered until Origen - a 2<sup>nd</sup> century theologian - and not named until the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Gradually it became established that there were three of them, based on the number of gifts given to the infant Jesus, but there could well have been more.

Balthasar (*Persian: war council*), depicted as African, represents the physical body. His gift is myrrh, foretelling the embalming and sacrifice of Christ's own body. Caspar (*Persian: treasure master*) often depicted as Asian, represents the soul; his gift being that which sustains the feelings or the soul, - costly oil of frankincense. Melchior (*Persian; the King*), traditionally depicted as European, brings gold, denoting the special status of the baby, or, as some commentators have it, the pure metal: the pure intelligence of the Word '*Logos*'. So, by the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, we have three symbolic gifts, from the three main races and only three continents known at the time. The Magi were also depicted as representing the three ages of Man; Melchior being the oldest man with a long white beard. In deference to modern views, you now find less and less the Wise Men shown as racial types, and more often, in painting and on Christmas cards, depicted as they really were - Iranian.

How the Wise Men evolved into Kings is not clear. If their significance lies in that they symbolise the three-fold nature of humanity; body, soul and mind, then obviously if they become 'Kings' rather than 'Wise Men', this Birth is a happening which is destined to transform the three fallen parts of humanity's being, reinstalling the Divine/ Superior (the Kings) in each.

As for their presence in the stable; we are all well aware of their importance here. As kings and Gentiles - as opposed to the shepherds, who were 'local' and so Jews - they symbolise the new dispensation - Christ is come as a gift to all men, for all time.

Now the Fourth Magus, is not mentioned in the Gospels. He may be the mythical figure, Artaban, a follower of Zoroaster and a stargazer, who also had noted the conjunction of two planets, in the sign of the Fishes.

Artaban, it is said, missed his appointed rendezvous with the Three Magi in Babylon. He too followed the star but was distracted on his way, only catching up with Jesus thirty years later, before his crucifixion. In the intervening years, he had spent the three precious jewels, his gift for the Holy Child. He had put his treasure to good use, helping the naked, the hungry, and the despairing. This last Magus is permitted to meet his Lord only at the point where he himself has exemplified to some degree, His teaching. Thus, the Fourth Magus has become a metaphor for the man who seeks Christ, who would find Him no matter what the odds. If he does not arrive 'at the Stable door', so to speak, some form of devotion or work in Christ's name, can sustain him until he finally ends his quest.

A Russian legend of the Fourth Magus coincidentally is found from at least the 6<sup>th</sup> century - about the time when the identities of the Three Kings were 'crystalised'. It tells of a magus; tall, bearded (because a sage), wise, swathed in brown woollen hooded coat and furs against the cold, following the star he has seen in the sky, all the way to Asia Minor. Not for him a camel. He takes the only feasible means of transport available; a large (for provisions) wooden sledge lashed to a strong team of reindeer. With a gift for the King he expects to find, he heads off across the icy Steppes, but never reaches Bethlehem. What became of him? Did he fall victim to the Russian winter? Did he ever exist? Suffice to say that at the approach of the anniversary of Jesus' birth, he sets off to find him, lashing his reindeer onward and onward, bounding across the snowy wastes. Over the centuries this journey of his has moved to the sky. Nothing bizarre about that, for the sky has long been the traditional home of the Soul. We go 'up to heaven'. He never finds the Christ child, but mindful that He is omnipresent, that we must seek Him in our neighbour, he reaches back into his sledge and brings out his gift for every small child he encounters on his travels . . .

Mary-Gabrielle Blanchet

### **Prayer on a Wintry Morning**

Harsh is the weather on these wintry days.  
Cold cruel winds persist in many lands.  
Your Way is known and yet men go their ways.  
He shivers in the blast who understands  
the meaning of these things. Your Cross is here  
until earth's new Spring Day when you'll appear

'O come, Lord Jesus,' is our lonely cry.  
'O come as you once came, but now our King  
crowned by your loving people, raised on high,  
earth's Lowly One, who loved each little thing,  
blessing the universe on that great Day  
when all things cold and cruel pass away.'

Unknown Source

### **Parish Choir**

The Parish choir will rehearse at 7.30pm on Friday 28 January for the Eucharist on Sunday 30 January. A list of the dates of services in 2005 involving the Parish Choir will be sent to members early in the New Year.

### **Starting Dates for Groups in 2005**

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Gardening Group **Saturday 8 January 9.00am**  
Sunday School/Club **Sunday 9 January, 10.30am**  
Mother & Toddler **Monday 10 January, 9.00am**  
Bible Study Group **Monday 17 January, 8.00pm**  
Fabric Group **Thursday 20 January, 9.00am**

### Thursday Lunch on 13 January 2005

Come and join us for a simple lunch and entertaining conversation in church at 12.30pm. Bring a friend or if you know someone who often eats alone invite them too. The more the merrier.

### Pantomime Saturday 8 January 2005

This year we are going to the Polka Dot Theatre, Wimbledon to see 'James and The Giant Peach'. Tickets will be around £13 from the Parish Office. Letters should be with you. **NB Error** on forms the return slip only should read 8 January 2005.

#### Used Christmas Cards

Please don't throw your cards away. A convent in Norfolk generates funds through recycling. Please bring your cards to church on Sundays 2, 9 or 16 January and put them in the box marked at the back of the church. Thank you.

### For Sale St Mary the Boltons New Book

by Arthur Tait (*Parishioner and Archivist*) Please see the sample at the back of the church. Price £7.50. If you would like a copy please speak with Ginny (*Associate Vicar*) or a duty sides-person or contact the Parish Office 020 7835 1440. This makes an ideal gift and is a really good read for all.

### Lent Course 2005

#### 'Neighbours Who Serve Us'

This year's Lent Course will be held in church on Wednesdays at 7.45pm following the Said Eucharist at 7.00pm. Dates are February 16 & 23, March 2, 9 & 16. All are welcome. Please do come and learn about 'Our Neighbours who Serve Us'. The first speaker on 16 February will be Andrew MacCallum, Director of Nursing, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital.

### Nonsuch Singers Concert

St. Martin-in-the-Fields  
Trafalgar Square WC2  
Saturday 22 January 7.30 pm

#### *La musique sacrée*

19 & 20<sup>th</sup> century French sacred music

Richard Pearce *organ*

Graham Caldbeck *conductor*

Durufié	Quatre motets sur des thèmes Gregoriens & Toccata
Villette	Salve Regina & Hymne à la vierge
Saint-Saëns	O salutaris hostia
Franck	Panis angelicus

Poulenc  
Fauré

Litanies à la vierge noire  
Cantique de Jean Racine  
Salve Regina

**Fauré Requiem** intimate, deeply moving setting of the Requiem Mass, composed in 1877 in memory of his mother, is performed in the context of other famous sacred works by him and his contemporaries Franck and Saint-Saëns. The continuing French sacred music tradition in the 20<sup>th</sup>C is traced by Poulenc, Villette and Durufié, each built upon this 19<sup>th</sup>C legacy. Poulenc began composing his distinctive *Litanies à la vierge noire*, following the death of a close friend and his first visit to the shrine of the Black Virgin at Rocamadour. **Box Office: 020 7389 8362;**

**Book online: [www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org](http://www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org)**

Items for the February edition of *The Clarion* to be sent to the Parish Office by Sunday 20 January please.