

St Francis of Assisi, Llay

PARISH NEWS

Mid-February 2024



The content in this Parish News is in addition to that in the Parish Bulletin, the Parish Website and the Diocesan newsletter, The Wrexham Clarion. If you have news or opinions of interest that you'd like to share here, would you please let our parish secretary know of them.

PILGRIMAGE

Having walked over 2000km on pilgrimages in Europe, Peter would like to share some reflections:

Planning the walk, with its timing, weather forecasts and likely fitness to determine the stage lengths, is one of the most delightful elements in long distant walking, and it's wonderful to see all the planning assumptions put to the test when the pilgrimage is eventually under way.

From the first day, with the preparation concerns in the past, there's a sense of freedom from all the everyday anxieties of home, together with a pleasurable expectation of the days to come. And as the miles unfold and you settle into a comfortable walking rhythm, a peace descends as you enjoy the everchanging scenery, the towns and the local cultures, with lots of time to reflect on life, spirituality, on past and future responses to events, on values, relationships and ambitions – but unable to maintain for long a constant theme but rather letting the thoughts lead the mind, buffeted continuously by the senses as the environment and the company forever changes, and frequently coming back to thinking about the saints who had inspired the route and the pilgrims of the past who had followed them in these same footsteps.

Exhilarating, meeting a huge variety of people – fellow pilgrims each with their own tale to tell and almost invariably optimistic, and the locals, normally cheerful and supportive but on rare occasions grumpy, full of evaluations of their neighbourhoods, and dining with groups of happy and tired pilgrims every evening.

The pilgrimages were times of joy and sometimes of discomfort – of wonderful sights and encounters, together with the inevitable aches and pains and the days of heavy rain, and even a few times the frustration of a wrong direction and a retracing of the route. But at each pilgrimage end there's a great sense of happiness, of success at its completion and the fond prospect of the welcoming arrival back home.

There were many memorable events on my pilgrimages, and here are some on the Via Francigena –

- Staying, between Siena and Rome, in a continuous sequence of religious establishments, presbyteries, monasteries with very early mass and breakfasts served by monks and friars, and convents, in one of which, at Sutri, the mainly silent Carmelite nuns were delighted to hear of their Dolgellau monastery and several nuns came out to chat about how it compared with their own!

- Arriving in Rome, learning at the Papal Mass and Audience that it was being dedicated to pilgrims, and being blessed by Pope Benedict as he passed by within 3 metres. Here's my photo -

- Near Viterbo, north of Rome, coming upon a group of geyser-heated ponds where we joined pilgrims of several nationalities lying in the warm water in the mid-day sun for an idyllic hour or so.



- Visiting Tattinger's champagne cellars in Reims but finding their tour too expensive, to be amazed by their receptionist informing us that one of our group of pilgrims had been identified as the biggest importer of their champagne into South America and we were to have a conducted tour with several interpreters, finishing in the boardroom where we could drink as much champagne as we wanted!

ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC AND ANGLICAN HIGH SCHOOL

Marking Holocaust Memorial Day.

Monday, 27th January was Holocaust Memorial Day, marking the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and the theme for Holocaust Memorial Day this year is 'For a Better Future'.

To mark the solemnity of the day, pupils attended an assembly on the theme and prayers of sorrow and remembrance were offered in form of worship. Each day during morning break, the chaplains and RE department offered pupils and staff the opportunity to cut out brightly coloured butterflies, on which they were asked to write a word of encouragement, remembrance, hope or gratitude as a symbol of a better future for all. The butterflies were stuck on to card and made into a beautiful display as a tribute to the 6 million Jewish and other souls who were murdered and the many others who suffered during the Holocaust.

Our thoughts and prayers were also for the victims of further genocides that have taken place since WW2 in other parts of the world and for the continuing conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza and the Middle East. In the words of Pope Francis "Let us not tire of praying for peace, for an end to conflicts, for a halt to weapons and for relief of exhausted populations".



ROME IN THIS YEAR OF THE JUBILEE 2025

Kathy reflects on visits to Rome:

My first visit to Rome was in the year 1969 at the age of 19 when I travelled with a friend on my first package holiday and my first time in an aeroplane. We went for the 'art', but both coming from a Convent education, we naturally were incredibly drawn to the religious atmosphere of the city.

Last year I visited for the 4th time, with my husband on his first visit, and, oh my, what a difference! So much preparation before we left in order to secure entrance to the Vatican Museums and what enormously long queues to enter St Peter's Basilica. The difference in the 50 plus years was almost unbelievable but so many more people now have the ability to access these sacred sites.

In a zoom call last week with 6 of my Convent school friends, one of them, Christine, said she was going to make the pilgrimage to Rome this Jubilee year. My heart sank thinking of the crowds that she and her adult mentally and physically disabled brother would meet, and I had the feeling that the hustle and bustle would be far too much for me! However, I have to admit a great admiration for her and all who are planning a similar trip, especially with anyone with a disability.

I shall be keeping all those making such a pilgrimage in my prayers alongside prayers of hope for peaceful settlements in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, Syria and all war-torn countries across the world.

