

Standing at the Crossroads of a New Year

Thus says the Lord: *Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.* (Jeremiah 6:16)

Whilst in conversation with someone at the Anglican Centre in Rome in November, I realised I had spoken to this person before. It was at the beginning of the year when I was queuing to get inside Durham Cathedral for Cath's graduation ceremony in early January. Two random conversations that seemed to serve as bookends at the beginning and end of an eventful year. The only connection being a conversation with someone I had never meet before.

We might say that both Durham and Rome are centres of Christian pilgrimage, and that the beginning and end of each year is in a sense another milestone through the journey of life. Pilgrimages are showing signs of popularity not seen since the Middle Ages. More and more pilgrim routes are being opened up or perhaps more precisely, being rediscovered and once again being made accessible.

There are many aspects to a pilgrimage, most notably the sense of travel. It serves as an act of devotion, discovery and discipline. The beginning of a New Year is shared with the Feast of Epiphany, where Magi or Wise Men travel a great distance to worship the Christ Child and they bring with them gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh. They discover the Christ Child lying in a manger. We are also told they go home via different route.

In a pilgrimage the return journey is every bit as important as the outward journey. In the case of the Magi we are told they return via a different route in order to avoid another meeting with Herod which may have revealed the location of the Christ Child. Other commentators suggest that the 'different route' has more to do with repentance. The Wise Men's lives having been changed by their encounter with Jesus and seeing things differently.

The woman I spoke to both in Durham and Rome was volunteering at the Franciscan Retreat Centre in Assisi when we met in Rome. I asked her if she was saddened by the prospect of returning home. She replied that perhaps the most exciting part of any pilgrimage is returning to everyday life and applying what you have learned along the way.

The bookends at the beginning and end of 2025 remind me of life's pilgrimage; a journey of discovery, devotion and discipline. The question is what are we noticing and discovering along the way and how do we apply it to our day to day living out the Christian life of devotion and discipline?

Rev. Tony Rindl, Vicar of St. Leonard's

Dates for your diary

Date	Time	Service
Sunday, January 4th	08:00	Said Communion
	10:00	Family Communion
Tuesday, January 6th		<i>Epiphany</i>
Sunday, January 11th	10:00	Parish Communion
Sunday, January 18th	10:00	Parish Communion
Sunday, January 25th	10:00	Parish Communion

Sunday, February 1st

08:00

Said Communion

10:00

Family Communion

Parochial Church Council will
be held on Wednesday,
January 21st at 7pm

Our Folk

RIP: Paul Weston, Lorraine Jones, Pat Preece, Diane Leroy, Bob Dowell, Jocelyn Kennedy and Geraldine Taylor.

Community News

Wednesday Welcome reopens on January 7th. Refreshments are served from 10am.

Marston Green 50 Plus

A **New Year Social Evening** with a shared supper on Monday, January 12th, when the year's programme will be distributed. On Thursday, January 29th a New Year's lunch is booked at Haigs.

Ladies Fellowship

Monday, January 19th, 2 - 4:30pm in the Elmdon Lounge. Speaker T.B.A. All ladies are welcome - come and make new friends over a cuppa!

Literary Society

Friday, January 16 at 7:30pm in the Elmdon Lounge, '**Favourite books from youth or childhood**'. Please bring your own drinks and refreshments.

Happy New Year!