

Fr Andrew Greany

Welcome all....

I had hoped somehow to avoid this unwelcome task of offering a valedictory word or two on the occasion of the departure of Fr Andrew. But he beat me to the door by three months! No surprises there! These have been very good years for us in this parish, since Fr Andrew came. His arrival coincided almost exactly with the formation of the new parish in September 2015, with the renewal of the musical life of the parish under Martin and Tom and with a more general sense of renewal in our corporate life, after some uncertain years. It was good that he came at this time of a fresh beginning: for some of us old campaigners, it was a welcome injection of ideas and energy.

So, what did he bring to the parish? Well, on the first Sunday he was here he brought a very large, heavily-framed portrait of Queen Victoria with him. At 9.45am he strode down the south aisle of St Barnabas, in his canonical cassock, bearing the picture, and said "I don't suppose there might be room for our beloved queen in the sacristy?" I have to say that as yet, it seems to have escaped the attention of the removal men.....

On a more serious note, Fr A has quite simply brought a sense of the worthwhileness of this whole crazy business of traditional parish life: utterly faithful in daily prayer and worship, in pastoral care, in preparation for preaching and teaching. I have never known a more devoted or dutiful priest. He is demanding: of himself first and then of others, that we should do our best and offer God and his people nothing less. Perhaps the marks of the mantle of the late Fr Hooper of Mary Mags can be detected in his ability to draw others into an awareness of the divine in the midst of the ordinary: in the eucharist, in the prayerful reading of scripture, in our conviviality and fellowship, we shall encounter, *and be encountered by*, the living God. This is what its all about. Nothing clever or new-fangled: plain old hard graft, common sense, careful planning and certainly no short cuts on the road to heaven.

In Fr Andrew, many of us have come to know a person of immense kindness and wisdom, good-humoured (unless someone chooses the wrong hymn tune or suggests that *Lauda Sion* may not be the most well-known hymn in the book....) energetic and dogged. Did I say dogged? We'll come back to Bairstow in a moment. Fr Andrew sits light to his learning and puts 'all sorts and conditions' of men at their ease. Is the glass half-full or half-empty? Let's just say that one sometimes needs to work quite hard to persuade him that it may be just over the half-way mark....

Bairstow: they say that a master comes to resemble his dog and a dog his master. I suspect all of you will join me in hoping that Bairstow becomes daily more and more like Fr Andrew rather than the other way round....though it has to be said, there are clearly some areas of overlap....

Many have observed over the years that there is not a very great distance between the world of Anglo Catholicism and the world of comic opera. Fr Andrew has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the works of G and S. Few will forget his rendering, with Ann, of the *Pale, young Curate* here in church, and there aren't many parishes in which the final verse of 'Jerusalem the Golden' is preceded by improvisation upon the *Pale, young curate*, as it was today at the Offertory. Which rather gets to the heart of the matter: for in amongst the steely, determined, perceptive prayerful rigour there is a great twinkle of humour and warmth, always ready to see the funny side of the many eccentric situations and people that make up the daily round of the parish priest.

It has been such a great joy to all of us, youngest to oldest, to discover that, in God's good and right time, it became possible for Fr Andrew to be woven into the story of our parish. We know why, for so many reasons, St Barnabas and St Thomas, Oxford will be counted as truly blessed to number Fr Andrew Greany amongst the many priests that have served her altars and her people. Fr Andrew: on behalf of all of us, thank you, Godspeed and come back soon. Fr Andrew and Bairstow!