

# **OUR CHRISTIAN WAY OF LIFE**



**ST. PETER & ST. PAUL,  
KING'S SUTTON**

As you look around this church you will see a statue of St. Mary with Jesus, Stations of the Cross, and a place to light candles; and when you come to a service, which we call Mass, you would see various ceremonies. The Hail Mary might be said, and bells rung. You might be led to thinking, 'What kind of church is this? Is it C of E, or is it Catholic?'

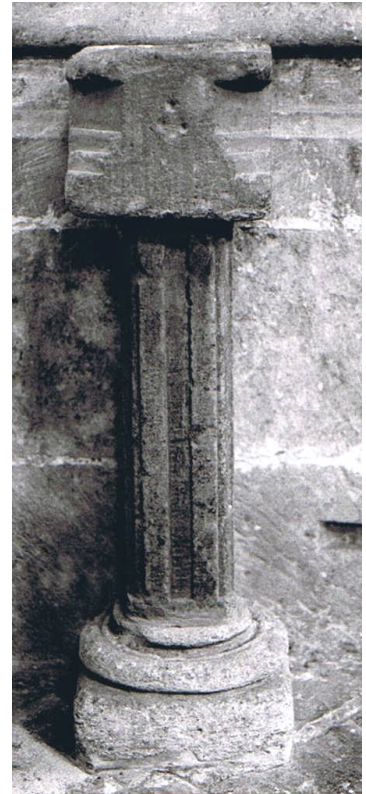


Well, it is both! It is a parish of the Church of England (C of E) in the Diocese of Peterborough, but we teach and practice the ancient Catholic faith. We are not Roman Catholic, but treasure the traditions of being Christian which are normally called 'catholic'. It is a word which means universal and the C of E claims to be the ancient catholic church in this country, founded by St. Augustine who was sent here by Pope Gregory the Great in 597. But, of course, the C of E is also a 'reformed' church, for example: reforms such as services in the English language, centred on the Scriptures, involving all the people of God – reforms now taken on board by the Roman Catholic Church too.



*The font used for baptisms*

In the south porch and under the tower there are **water stoups**. These hold holy water and people dip their fingers in the water and make the sign of the cross on themselves as a reminder of baptism. It is a renewing of our Christian commitment.



*Water stoup under the tower*

The **sign of the cross** is much used. The cross shape is from the forehead, down to the chest and across from shoulder to shoulder. It is a sign of our total commitment to Christ: with all our mind, heart and strength, and a statement of the fact that we are saved from sin and death through the death and resurrection of Christ. So around the Church are several



*The crucifix on the rood screen.* crucifixes, and especially above the screen, where St. Mary and St. John stand as they did on Good Friday.



The **Stations of the Cross** tell the story of Jesus' journey from being sentenced by Pontius Pilate, along the way to Crucifixion and finally death and burial. They are used by people praying who share in Jesus' journey, making a stop

or 'station' at each one: remembering Jesus' final journey and how he accompanies us on our journey. The saints, especially Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and our Patron Saints, Peter and Paul, are important in our tradition. We see them as alive to God, praying for us and, with all the people of God, living and departed, we are united with them in worship. Peter and Paul, who both died in Rome about 65 AD for their faith, wrote parts of the New Testament, and their teaching remains the core of the Gospel after Jesus himself.



*Figures of  
St. Peter  
and St. Paul on the  
west side of the  
tower.*



In our devotions we use the **Angelus** and the **Hail Mary**. The Angelus asks for Mary's prayer, 'now and at the hour of our death' and reminds us of the Archangel Gabriel's words to Mary, seeking her consent to be the Mother of Christ. A bell is rung for the Angelus: 3 groups of 3, and then 9. A different prayer, celebrating the Resurrection, is used in Eastertide. It is called the Regina Coeli.

All these things point us constantly to the worship of the Father, through Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are caught up into the divine life in our worship and no more so than in the Mass. It has other names: Holy Communion, the Eucharist, but we choose to use the ancient, Western word.

At the beginning of the Mass, the people of God gather before the Altar. The priest, representing us to God and God to us, approaches the altar and kisses it as a sign of reverence. The altar is the sign of God's presence in the church. On Sundays and other Holy Days incense is used. This reminds us that we use all our faculties in worship: smell as well as hearing, sight, touch and taste. But it is principally used to mark out the holy. So the altar and the crucifix above it are censed. Later in the service the Gospel book is censed, for there are Christ's holy words; priest and people are censed too, for we are the holy people of God, set apart for his service in worship and the world.



The Mass has two parts: the first focussed on the Word of God in Scripture; the second in the bread and wine of the sacrament. We believe Christ is among us as the words are read, preached about and pondered, as he is also present in the consecrated bread and wine. These gifts of creation are offered to the Father, as signs of our life and love: through Christ's words said by the priest, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, they become for us the Body and Blood of Christ. The sacrifice of Christ's life on the Cross becomes present for us now, and we join our offerings of praise and thanksgiving with his and are caught up into the praise of heaven.



As the bread and wine are consecrated, the priest 'elevates' them so that the people can see and offer their adoration. As he does so, bells ring and the elements are censed. The priest, on behalf of us all kneels briefly in adoration. After the Lord's Prayer people come to receive Holy Communion. We are united with Christ, and so are united with one another. Communion is both vertical, with God, and horizontal, with each other. Some of the consecrated Bread is 'reserved' in the Tabernacle, which stands on the St. Thomas Becket Altar in the North Aisle. A light burns there all the time, to remind us. People kneel in recognition of Christ's presence.

Prayers are offered day by day. We remember the Church, the world and our local community: those who are in need, the sick, the bereaved and those who have died. In addition to those who have died recently we remember people on their anniversary of death. We pray for people who have died as they continue their journey towards God.

Many people like to light a candle as a sign of their prayer. At our baptism we are given a candle and told to shine as lights in the world. Lighting a candle here is a sign of that continued commitment to bring Christ's light into the dark places, and our praying is part of that light-giving.



In the porch you will see notices about our Bishop and our Patrons. Keith is the Bishop of Richborough, an assistant bishop to the Archbishop of Canterbury. (Richborough is the site of a Roman fort and is associated with St. Augustine.) He is one of the Provincial Episcopal Visitors. After the Ordination of women to the Priesthood, the PCC here decided it could no longer receive the ministry of the Bishop of Peterborough, and so we receive Episcopal care from Bishop Keith.

We are not against women's ministry generally. But, along with the vast majority of the Church – Roman Catholic and Orthodox – we do not believe it possible for women to be ordained to the priesthood or episcopate. There are theological reasons for this. As with most congregations there are people here who disagree with this, but we manage to live and worship together.

Our Patrons are the Society for the Maintenance of the Faith, based at Pusey House in Oxford. The Society exists as its name suggests to uphold the faith of the Church handed down through the centuries and they have the responsibility for this parish of appointing its priest.

If you want to know what we believe, then read St. Mark's Gospel in the New Testament. It tells the story of Jesus; and then perhaps read the Nicene Creed (you will find it in the orange covered service booklets). This is what we believe.

But most of the time we are not in this building. The Christian community is scattered far and wide: in places of work, of leisure, shopping, sport, schools and homes. There we live out our faith offering service and love to all.

The Christian way is the way to human fulfilment and is open to everyone. Do come and join us in Church and discover what it is all about.



Christ invites you: **Come and see.**



*Have you spotted our stone dragon?*

Text: Fr. Roger Bellamy

*Photos: Sue Allen*

