

## **A personal letter to all the People of God in All Saints' Episcopal Church**

Greetings in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ!

My name is Father Paul Blanch, and I am delighted to introduce myself as your new parish priest and Rector.



I was born and raised in North Eastern England in the City of Durham, growing up under the shadow of that city's great Norman Cathedral, the burial place and shrine of both St Cuthbert and the Venerable Bede. Thankfully my upbringing from birth was in the context of a committed and active Church of England family whose daily life was immersed in the life of our local church and parish. I was one of those fortunate children who was taught to pray at home, but also led by example to worship with my family Sunday by Sunday at the Parish Eucharist in our village church.

My early years from the age of five were further influenced by attendance at our local Church of England School. Here our parish priest came into school and celebrated Mass with incense and all the ritual he could muster. The spectacle and drama of this liturgy took hold of me immediately, exciting both my heart and my senses, thus also touching my very soul.

I can look back to these days as powerful, profound and spiritually heady! These spiritually developing years would coincide with my adolescent development, and as I matured, so my faith moved forward in leaps and bounds. At sixteen, I had volunteered for active service with the Church Army through their exciting young people's scheme of Christian service. This experience took me to work in their social care department caring for the elderly over a period of one year. This brought together for me the balance of an active faith with "hands on" service, and it is an experience I will never forget.

Throughout my education from High School to University my faith has remained central to me, but not without its development and change. Throughout my academic studies I have found the need to question, to investigate and become more open to the pertinent theological issues of our time, and therefore while my love of scripture is as deep and powerful as ever, I



approach the hermeneutical task with a greater degree of openness, and feel the need to be aware that the “Word of God” is also being heard within the world and the Church in other complimentary ways. Hence, I am a strong advocate of the Anglican balance of Scripture, Tradition and Reason.

My journey to priesthood came to fruition in my late twenties, and my time at Seminary was a very significant experience. This formed me for parish ministry in what has now been a diverse and exciting twenty eight year ministry.



My spiritual journey is very much ongoing, acutely aware, as I am that each day wonderful new things emerge, new ways forward become evident as this move to Northern California amply illustrates. Let me tell you all that I am passionate about my faith, excited about the future at All Saints’, and very much look forward to serving God and you his people as Rector, Pastor and Priest. Of course this journey is not travelled alone or in isolation. Maggie, my wonderful wife not only walks with me, but prays with me, supports me and shares in my delight of a God who is truly a “God of Surprises”, so I guess what I am saying is that you get two for the price of one!

We hope to be with you all in early December to begin a new life and ministry at All Saints’, and I encourage us all to pray daily that the future of All Saints’ under God will be both fruitful and fun!

Every blessing to you all in the weeks that lie ahead, and God willing I should be with you in the Holy Season of Advent. What a great time to begin a hope filled and expectant new ministry.

**“My job is not simply to solve people’s problems or even to make them happy, but to help them see and feel the wonderful Grace of God already operating in their lives.”**

These words were written by a very wise pastor some years ago, and they have become a powerful reminder to me of the real task of a parish priest.

Yours in Christ,

Fr Paul F Blanch.

The Feast of the Holy Cross  
September 2014