

## House Up-date: Walsingham

*Paschal SSF writes:*

For nearly a thousand years pilgrims and visitors have unburdened themselves of their hopes and fears at Walsingham, and have found peace. Why? Because the Virgin Mary appeared in a vision to the Lady Richeldis, in 1061, and told her to build a replica of her house at Nazareth, where she received the "first of her joys", the angelic salutation from Gabriel when she was invited to become the Mother of God. Soon Walsingham became "England's Nazareth" and it rivalled Jerusalem, Rome and Compostella, as one of the most popular pilgrimage centres in Christendom.



The English Reformation soon did away with Religious life, pilgrimages, and devotion to Our Lady, with its accompanying processions, images and shrines. In 1538 the Holy House, Augustinian monastic church and Franciscan friary were all destroyed. However God put it in the mind of Fr. Hope-Patten to restore pilgrimage and devotion to Our Lady here, when he

became vicar in 1921. Against a background of suspicion, prejudice and fear often, sadly, from within the hierarchy of the Church, he resolutely maintained Catholic faith and practice and so now thousands of pilgrims can come once again to this holy place.

Paschal and Maximilian have now been here for two years, working as members of the Shrine staff and living in a tiny cottage-friary opposite the Anglican Shrine. It has been an eventful time, with the departure of the Priest-Administrator and his Shrine-Priest and the arrival of an Episcopal Administrator and his new Shrine Priest and Youth Missioner. After 'filling gaps' for some time, the full complement for the Shrine Team is here, and the balance between our communal life and the demands of the pilgrimage programme is now being implemented.

Maximilian has been studying for the priesthood via a local course and is at present having two terms at Westcott House, Cambridge, before being ordained to the diaconate at Petertide at Hilfield friary. Local tutorials, course weekends, and practical experience in both parish and shrine, have opened him to a variety of church life, whilst the sacristy duties have kept his feet on the ground! Both he and Paschal have been used in preaching quiet days, retreats and special events, as well as speaking at conferences and working with children and youth in churches and schools. Maximilian will continue with his final studies in his diaconal year. Both the parish and the Shrine look forward to having a liturgical deacon always "on tap" too!!



Paschal, as Assistant Priest at the Shrine, continues to share with Bishop Lindsay Urwin and Fr. Stephen Gallagher in the daily liturgical life of the Shrine with its emphasis on personal renewal, healing and re-commitment to Jesus. It feels like being "on Mission" all the time, as the Shrine staff seek to open people to the theme of the Shrine which is the mystery of the

Incarnation. Much of his time is spent seeing pilgrims for spiritual direction or confession. It is hoped that an accessible room will be designated especially for this ministry of the friars. With 210 pilgrims a night, during most of the year, it will be an art to manage this particular pastoral emphasis here, but we take courage from the Sisters of St Margaret who, in their own Priory, have listened, guided and encouraged pilgrims for over 60 years, and continue to do so. Despite the sadness that we cannot provide accommodation ourselves, it is amazing how people find us either in "Our Lady of the Angels Friary" or in the Shrine. But the brothers have also had engagements with the local Third Order, parishes and schools in the Norwich Diocese and beyond, and there is a constant stream of invitations to preach further afield. However, the on-going pilgrimage programme demands most of our personal energy and resources.

Whilst Henry VIII managed to raze the monastic buildings and places of pilgrimage he could not destroy the water of Walsingham! Daily the healing wells of Walsingham continue to bubble up life-giving water, so fulfilling Our Lady's promise to Richeldis to provide "succour to all who come here". Mary is constantly pointing people to her Son, who is the Living Water himself.

Today Christians come here to discover in Mary the secret of sanctity, that of joyfully and humbly saying "Yes" to God in their own lives. The wounds of a divided Church are still felt in this unique village which has felt the full force of religious intolerance. Yet Walsingham, with its different denominations, and with its silent prayer and public praise, instinctively recognises that it is one "Domain of Mary" with two Shrines. How privileged it is for Anglican Franciscans to do our small part in "rebuilding God's house" which is in need of repair! *f*