



St Mary's

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St Peter's

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Readings & News: 7th September 2025: St Mary's Dedication Festival **St Mary's Todmorden, St Michael's Cornholme and St Peter's Walsden**

Isaiah 61: 10-end I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its shoots and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Galatians 4: 4-7 ⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. ⁶ And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' ⁷ So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

Luke 1: 46-55 ⁴⁶ And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, ⁴⁸ for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me and holy is his name. ⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. ⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; ⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'

Collect:

Almighty and everlasting God, who stooped to raise fallen humanity through Mary, Mother of Jesus: grant that we, who have seen your glory revealed in our human nature and your love made perfect in our weakness, may daily be renewed in your image and conformed to the pattern of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Gospel Acclamation: Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.
Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

Post Communion: God most high, whose faithful young servant bore the Word made flesh: we thank you that in this sacrament of our redemption you visit us with your Holy Spirit and overshadow us by your power; strengthen us to walk with Mary your joyful path, listening to your word and so to bring forth the fruits of holiness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Hymns: 7th September: St Mary's Hymns O&N

To Enter: Eternal ruler of the ceaseless round - **154**

Gradual: We have a dream - **715**

Offertory: Fill our hearts with joy & gladness - **172**

Communion: Let all mortal flesh keep silence - **381**

Communion: Laudate Dominum - **933**

Recession: Tell out my soul – **631**

St Peter's: Service @ The Mill

There are no services at
Walsden during August & Sept
BUT St Peter's will support the
Scarecrow Festival on
20th/21st September



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Sermon: Today we have a double celebration, with St Mary's dedication festival, on the birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and also the start of the season of Creation. At one level we celebrate creation all year round as we can never stop being thankful for it. However, the church has set aside September, season of Harvest Festivals, as a time of year with a particular focus on Creation.

The origins of the season of creation are ecumenical. In Orthodox Christianity 1 September has been long observed as a "Day of Creation", marking the day God began the creation of the universe, as described in Genesis. Building on this tradition, in 1989 the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I proclaimed 1 September as a day of prayer for the environment; a day to offer "prayers and supplications to the Maker of all," giving thanks for all the gifts of Creation and praying for the protection and salvation of all creation.

In 2015 Pope Francis also adopted 1st September as the Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation in the Roman Catholic Church across the world. And in July this year General Synod voted for the Sunday after the 1st September, the start of the season of creation, to be marked as the Feast of God the Creator in the Anglican church.

The season ends on 4th October, with the feast of St Francis of Assisi, possibly the first known environmentalist most notably celebrated in his *Canticle of Creatures*, a hymn reflecting on our relationship with brother sun, sister moon and all God's creation. The full season of creation was proposed in 2007, at the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly, and was adopted a year later by both the World Council of Churches and the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland.

In the face of increasingly alarming statistics about climate change, the hottest summer on record in Britain this year and growing crises of water shortages and environmental disaster elsewhere in the world, focussing on the whole of God's creation seems timely. And holding onto the themes of this season, of hope, peace and action with creation, aims to overcome the fatalism with which the overwhelming scale of the environmental challenges can all too often leave us.

But what has this season of creation got to do with Mary? Well, quite a few things actually. For many centuries the Church has recognised Mary as the Mother of God and therefore at the heart of God's plans for the recreation and redemption of the world. As St Anselm wrote in the 11th CE, *"God is, then, Father of all created things and Mary is mother of all that has been recreated. God is Father of the institution of all things and Mary is mother of the restitution of all things. God begot him through whom all things were made, and Mary gave birth to him through whom all things are saved. God begot him without whom nothing at all exists and Mary gave birth to him without whom nothing that exists is good."*

Mary is the person who gave birth to God incarnate in the world, she is the bearer of God, or Theotokos as the Orthodox tradition would call her. So, Mary is essential for the project of the creation and salvation; she is the mother of hope, the hope for a world that was lost and fallen; the young woman chosen out of all creation to bear the saviour and re-creator of the world. And so, in turn, as Pope Benedict says, "veneration of Mary as Mother of all that has been recreated must find its expression in care for the earth."

In 2015, when Pope Francis named 1st September as the Catholic Church's Day of Creation, he also wrote *Laudato Si*, his second encyclical which focuses on Creation and



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begins with the words of St Francis' greatest prayer, Praise be to you Brother Son and Sister moon. In that lengthy document, which includes 6 chapters and 172 footnotes, Pope Francis also reflects on the role of Mary and her husband Joseph in Creation.

He speaks of God (para.238) as, "the ultimate source of everything, the loving and self-communicating foundation of all that exists." And of Jesus, as "God's reflection, through whom all things were created, united" with the "earth when he was formed in Mary's womb". And working with the Spirit, the "infinite bond of love," "intimately present at the heart of the universe, inspiring and bringing new pathways," that is, new creations.

And he goes on to say (para.241), "Mary, the Mother who cared for Jesus, now cares with maternal affection and pain for this wounded world. Just as her pierced heart mourned the death of Jesus, so now she grieves for the sufferings of the crucified poor and for the creatures of this world laid waste by human power.... she is the Woman, "clothed in the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev 12:1). Carried up into heaven, she is the Mother and Queen of all creation. In her glorified body, together with the Risen Christ, part of creation has reached the fullness of its beauty...."

"And at Mary's side, in the Holy Family of Nazareth, stands the figure of St Joseph," who, "through his work and generous presence, cared for and defended Mary and Jesus, delivering them from the unjust violence of Herod by bringing them to Egypt... Joseph is a just man, hard-working and strong but also with the great tenderness... of those who are genuinely strong, fully aware of reality and ready to love and serve in humility. He too can teach us how to care;.. to work with generosity and tenderness in protecting this world which God has entrusted to us."

What I find most inspiring about Mary is that she was an ordinary young woman, only in her teens. If we feel overwhelmed at the call on us to do something about the environment, imagine how overwhelmed Mary felt when asked to be the Mother of God! Apart from the societal obstacles of being pregnant, to someone other than her betrothed, there is the mind-blowing ask that she give birth to God! And her prayer, told in today's Gospel, flags up just how radical God's plan can be... And what I find so inspiring about Joseph is that he went along with it...

Together, Mary and Joseph, responded in hope and trust, to God's call to redeem a hurting world. We too are called to respond to God's call in a still hurting world. We never know what our little bit of trying to change the world will end up achieving. But if we all do our bit together things can be changed. Mary did not know where her pregnancy would lead, though her Magnificat which we hear in today's Gospel is a pretty radical hope...

There was a glorious example of responding to the spirit in trust, not knowing where it will lead, at Greenbelt this year. A new movement called the Climate Choir Movement were showcasing some songs as an ad for their gig on the Saturday. At the end of the workshop a shy woman, called Kate Thomas stood up and said quietly, "I wrote that song". Her song has provided inspiration to a whole movement. I will close with that song, "So let us stand, as we face the coming storm; for we love this land, let us work for a better dawn and let us love, like we've never loved before, people of the planet, all together, let us stand..." Let us stand as Mary and let our souls magnify the Lord... for we can never tell where in God's plans for creation, that will lead....