

ST PAUL'S
B R I G H T O N



**A Devotional
Guide to
St Paul's Church**

What is Anglo Catholicism?

St Paul's, like some other churches in Brighton and further afield, belongs to the Catholic tradition of the Church of England, a tradition which is often called 'Anglo Catholicism'.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

These words come from the Creed which is said Sunday by Sunday not just here at St Paul's but across the Church of England and across the Christian Church more generally. At the heart of the Catholic tradition is the conviction that what we say in the Creed must be reflected in how we worship and what we believe as members of the one Church of Christ.

We have no doctrine of our own — we only possess the Catholic doctrine of the Catholic Church enshrined in the Catholic creeds, and those creeds we hold without addition or diminution.

Spoken by Geoffrey Fisher in 1951, an archbishop of Canterbury who was not especially Anglo Catholic in his outlook, these words reveal that the Church of England is not its own entity free to believe whatever seems fashionable. Rather, by professing the Creeds held across the Church, we in the Church of England recognise that our beliefs and practices come not from ourselves but from the wider, universal Church of Christ.

How does being Anglo Catholic affect life and worship at St Paul's?

First and foremost, it means that the celebration of the Mass is at the centre of our life. Just as the Incarnation, the taking on of human flesh by God in Christ, is the central Christian belief, so the ongoing reality of this in the present day which comes when bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ is at the heart of our common life.

Also, it means that our worship, especially on Sundays, reflects the fullness of the humanity which Christ assumed in the Incarnation. So, all our senses are engaged when we gather at the altar, meaning for instance that incense is used, vestments are worn and music is heard and sung.

So, what is the relationship between Anglo Catholicism and Roman Catholicism?

Since the Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Church of England has ceased to be in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. Despite the changes of this period, the Church of England then and now has continued to profess her membership of the one Church of Christ. The New Testament tells us that Christ chose Peter alone as “the rock” upon which the Church is built (Matthew 16:18) and it is Peter who is told to “feed” and “tend” the sheep (John 21:15-17). From Peter onwards, the bishop of Rome, the Pope, has been entrusted with this ministry of leadership for all Christians, and so here at St Paul's, the Pope is prayed

for at every Mass as a recognition of his unique responsibility of spiritual fatherhood over us and all disciples of Christ. In God's time, we hope and pray that the Church of England will return to full, visible communion with the See of the Successor to Peter. Until then, we strive in our worship and common life to continually demonstrate the Catholic identity of the Church of England and her place within the one Church of Christ.

Over the subsequent pages of this booklet, you can learn more about the key places within our church building and how and why they are significant to the worship and service offered here.

A short prayer is given for each place as a reminder and encouragement that the worship of the God revealed in Jesus Christ is why this building and all within it exists.

The content of this booklet has been arranged with a view to beginning at the font, before walking down the right side of the church, across the nave, into the chancel, and finally along the left side of the church back to the main entrance doors.

Let the inscriptions on the glass doors into the church guide you as you walk around this sacred building:

This is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven.

The Font

Located deliberately near the entrance to the church, the font is the place of welcome into the Church, the Body of Christ.

The sacrament of Holy Baptism which is administered here spiritually washes a person clean and gives them grace and power to become and grow into a child of God.

At most times of the year, the Easter or Paschal Candle stands next to the font as a reminder that all who are baptised have within themselves the light of the Risen Christ, light which the darkness of the world can never overcome.

In our baptism, we are claimed by the Father and filled with the Holy Spirit so that we can live as Christ did. Hence, baptism is sometimes called 'christening', which literally means 'becoming Christ'. Baptism, therefore, marks the beginning of a person's journey of becoming more Christlike and so also becoming more truly human, for Christ was both fully God and fully human.

*Lord Jesus, you give us living water which will gush up to eternal life;
wash clean all who are baptised in this font,
so that they and all the baptised may live faithfully as your disciples.*

The Stations of the Cross

Along the walls of the church, the fourteen Stations of the Cross serve as a visual reminder of the suffering of Christ as he journeyed to Golgotha, which the Gospels tell us meant “The Place of the Skull”.

Prayed especially in Lent, the season which lasts from Ash Wednesday to the celebration of the Lord’s Resurrection at Easter, the Stations of the Cross reveal the depths of God’s love for us and the obedience of Christ to the good purposes of the Father, even in the midst of the unjust suffering he experienced.

The physical movement involved when we go from station to station can help us focus our whole being, body, mind and soul, on the responsibility we each have to sow love not hatred, and to build peace and harmony with all whom we know and encounter.

*Lord Jesus, you bore the weight of our sin as you carried the Cross;
help us to trust in your love for us,
and to live not for ourselves but for you who gave yourself up for us.*

The Statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Perhaps more than any other phrase, “God is love” encapsulates the Christian faith (1 John 4:8). God’s love for humanity finds its fullest expression in Christ, the One in whom our human condition in its entirety is united with the divinity he has had from the very beginning. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has long been an important way through which Christians have comprehended what St John says in his First Letter: “God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him” (4:9).

John’s Gospel records how the spear which pierced Christ’s side as he hung on the Cross caused “blood and water” to flow out (19:34), symbolising the two principal sacraments that for us now draw us into God’s love, baptism and the Mass. Through worship at the altar above all else, Christians are renewed to live as God’s people, knowing that “there is no fear in love”, since “perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18).

*Lord Jesus, as we gaze upon your Sacred Heart which is full of love;
help us to know you more clearly, love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, today and all the days of our life.*

The Lectern

Elevated from the ground, the lectern is given prominence in the church as the place from which the readings at Mass on Sundays are proclaimed. Culminating in the reading of the Gospel, which is accompanied by incense and acolytes holding candles aloft, the lectern is the place where Christ, the living Word of God, is proclaimed through the written words of Sacred Scripture. Christianity, ultimately, is less a religion of the book and more one of the Word, with the Letter to the Hebrews reminding us that God's Word is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword" (4:12). As we listen to the reading of the Scriptures, we hear God speaking to us here and now, even though the texts of the Bible were written and compiled thousands of years before our day.

On Sundays at Mass, the readings proclaimed from the lectern precede the encounter we have with Christ present sacramentally on the altar, but through them we hear and receive the same Christ who gives of himself both upon the altar and in the hearing and reading of his holy Word.

Lord Jesus, through both the Old and New Testaments you speak to us when we gather in your Name; open our ears to hear your call and open our hearts to respond with joy and faith to what you ask of us.

The Nave Altar

Installed in the 1970s when efforts were being made to bring the celebration of the liturgy closer to the people, the nave altar at St Paul's is the place where the Mass is celebrated each Sunday and so is the focus of our corporate liturgical life.

Like any altar, the nave altar is the place where bread and wine, having been brought and offered to God, are transformed by him in the power of the Holy Spirit working through the priest to become the Body and Blood of Christ, gifts that are then distributed to the faithful who gather at the altar rail. As a consequence, the altar is given reverence, both by the priest who kisses it at the beginning and end of the Mass and by those coming to the Mass who should bow towards it before taking a seat. As William Laud, an archbishop of Canterbury in the 1630s said, the altar is 'the greatest place of God's residence upon earth', because it is upon the altar uniquely that Christ is sacramentally present to us in the precious gifts of his Body and Blood.

Lord Jesus, on the night before you were to die, you established the Mass and the priesthood, so that through the sacred mysteries your people are given strength and refreshment; help us to reverence the altars of your Church and the gifts upon them that you offer to us.

The Statue of Christ the Good Shepherd

Just before entering the chancel, you pass the statue depicting Christ as the Good Shepherd. In John's Gospel, Christ calls himself this (10:11), giving rise to an image which has long captured the hearts and minds of Christians. In describing himself as the Good Shepherd who takes care of his sheep, in contrast to the shepherd who abandons the flock at the first sign of danger, Christ assures us that his love is without limit.

Moreover, this statue here at St Paul's shows a lamb being carried by Christ, with the lamb representing all of us who turn to Christ and seek his strength and help. Whilst living the Christian life enables us to grow into the fullness of ourselves, Christians are not immune from the difficulties and challenges of life in this present world. Often, it is when life is tough that the image of Christ the Good Shepherd carrying us and helping us is a source of much consolation. As Christ says in Matthew's Gospel, when we feel "weary and carrying heavy burdens", it is he who can and does give us rest (11:28).

Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd, guard and protect all who look to you and, through the ministry of the shepherds of your Church, support us especially in all the trials and tribulations that we face.

The Chancel

Separating the nave from the chancel is the ornate rood screen, upon which sits a large crucifix accompanied by statues of Our Lady and St John on either side. Drawing on John's Gospel, it is common for these two figures to be shown on each side of the Crucified Christ, with the faithfulness of both Mary and St John in the darkest of hours of Jesus' life inspiring Christians down the ages.

In traditional church architecture, the chancel was reserved for clergy and others who functioned in the offering of worship, hence rood screens were constructed in order to separate the people in the nave from those at or around the altar. With the nave altar now used at St Paul's for Mass on Sundays, the rood screen and chancel no longer perform this purpose. Instead, as the Mass is offered each Sunday, the rood screen in particular serves as an impressive backdrop to the exchange taking place on the altar beneath it and also as a source of devotion and focus for prayer, both within and beyond the Mass.

*Lord Jesus, upon the Cross you confided St John to the maternal care
and protection of your Holy Mother the Blessed Virgin Mary;
help us to be like your beloved disciple
and know the love and prayers of your Mother who is our Mother too.*

The Choir Stalls and Organ

Alongside the art seen inside St Paul's, the human creativity and skill given by God is also heard whenever the organ is played and the choir sing. Especially on Sundays, which is the weekly celebration of Christ's resurrection, the organ and choir beautify the worship offered in this place, reflecting the glory of the One in whose Name we gather week by week.

The Scriptures are full of songs that are offered to God, including by Our Lady in her *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55), anticipated in the Old Testament by the prophetess Hannah who, like Mary, rejoiced at God's wondrous presence and steadfastness (1 Samuel 2:1-10). St Augustine of Hippo, a Father of the Church, taught that whenever we sing, we in fact pray twice. In playing and hearing sacred music, our hearts can perhaps more readily be filled with the praise and love of God than if only we say and hear the spoken word. All of us, whether skilled at making music or not, can do as the New Testament encourages us, that is to "sing and make melody to the Lord in our hearts" (Ephesians 5:19).

Lord Jesus, bless the work of all musicians in your Church that we may honour you with heart and voice, and help us to proclaim with our lives what we sing with our lips.

The East Window and other Stained Glass

St Paul's is blessed to have much stained glass, which, when illuminated by daylight, reveals in splendid colour figures central to the Christian faith. Around the nave of the church, for instance, many saints are depicted, especially those who have a connection to Britain, such as St Edward the Confessor, a former king, St Dunstan, a former archbishop of Canterbury, and St George, the patron saint of England.

The great East Window above the high altar is arguably the highlight of all the stained glass at St Paul's. Retelling the ancestry of Jesus, this window has at its centre the Blessed Virgin Mary holding the Christ Child whose right hand is raised in blessing. This window testifies in glass to the claims made by the Gospels that Jesus, the New Adam, was descended from the house of David and, indeed, all the way back from the first Adam.

Lord Jesus, through the wonder of human creativity which has produced this stained glass, we behold you in your radiance and glory; pour upon us your grace that we may see you more clearly and that, by our witness, others may also come to see and know you.

The High Altar and Tabernacle

An unmissable array of colour and splendour makes up the most holy part of the church, the sanctuary. The crucifix above the high altar is a reminder that at the heart of the Christian faith is the victory of life and love over death, a victory however only achieved through the death of Christ for us and all people.

The light on the wall to the right of the altar tells us of the presence of Christ in the Reserved Sacrament, which is kept in the tabernacle positioned in the middle of the high altar. The Sacrament is reserved so that Communion can be taken to the sick and housebound as well as providing a focus for prayer. The light to the right of the altar reminds us that Christ is with us always.

The altar itself is furnished with a white linen covering and often an elaborate frontal to indicate that it is here where the wonderful exchange takes place during the Mass: the bread and wine that are offered to God are transformed by him into the Body and Blood of Christ.

*Lord Jesus, you give yourself to us as true and living food and drink;
help us to receive with joy and thankfulness
the wonderful gift of your presence in the Sacrament of the altar.*

The Aumbry

Just to the right of the high altar in one of the side walls of the church sits the aumbry, the place where the holy oils are kept.

In Holy Week each year, just before the Church celebrates the most sacred days of the Christian calendar, the commemoration of Christ's death and resurrection, the Bishop sets apart as holy three oils for use in the Church's life. The oil of the catechumens is the first, used as part of the liturgy of baptism just before a person is washed clean and born again in the font. The oil of chrism is the second of the oils, also used in baptism, but this time after a person has been baptised. Additionally, this oil is used at confirmation, ordination to the priesthood, the dedication of a church or an altar, and the coronation of a monarch. The last of the oils kept in the aumbry is the oil of the sick, which is used in the Sacrament of Anointing when a person is suffering serious illness. The oils are kept in the locked aumbry as a sign that they are vessels of God's love and grace.

Lord Jesus, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God, anointed with the Holy Spirit with power from on high; pour your love upon all those who are anointed with the holy oils of your Church so that your people may be faithful witnesses to your presence in the world.

The Statue of Our Lady

As you leave the chancel and look right, you see the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. At St Paul's, in common with the ancient Churches of both East and West, Our Lady is honoured as the Mother of God (*Theotokos* in the Greek).

Mary holds the Christ Child in her arms as a reminder that she always points beyond herself to her Son, the one Saviour of all. Just as Mary told the servants at the Wedding at Cana to “do whatever he [Jesus] tells you” (John 2:5), so she directs us to her Son our Saviour, the Word made flesh, God made man.

Mary is both the Mother of God and the Mother of all who believe, hence she is often called the Mother of the Church. On the Cross, her Son confided the beloved disciple to her maternal care (John 19:27), establishing Mary as the Mother of all Christians, all those who trust in her Son. Calling upon the prayers and love of Mary, such as in the ‘Hail Mary’ prayer, is an ancient and widespread practice within Christianity, something we at St Paul's seek to follow.

*Lord Jesus, you gave Mary your Mother to be our Mother too;
give us knowledge of her love and of her intercession for us,
so that we in turn may point others to you.*

The Pulpit

Raised above the ground, the pulpit is the place from which the homily or sermon is preached.

Having heard the Scriptures read to us, we listen to the words of the homily that help us to relate the readings to our lives. The Bible teaches us that God's word is eternal (Psalm 119:89), which will not pass away even when the things of this world do (Matthew 24:35). Yet, as Christians who live in a particular time and place, the meaning of the words of Scripture and their application to our lives need to be discerned. It is in the homily preached from this pulpit that we learn how we can more fully live out the calling God gives every person.

As Christians, we do not only hear the Word of God, but we also taste and touch it, most especially when we receive Holy Communion. So, when a homily is preached during Mass, we are also being helped to prepare for the gift which we will soon receive at the hands of the priest, the gift of Christ himself, the Word of the Father.

*Lord Jesus, you speak to us through the Sacred Scriptures;
help us to listen attentively to you and put into practice what we hear
preached from this pulpit by your servants and ministers.*

The Shrine of St Paul

In common with many churches across the world, this church is dedicated to one of the most important figures in Christianity, St Paul the Apostle. Though not one of the Twelve Apostles whom Christ appointed in his earthly ministry, St Paul became a fervent proponent of the Gospel after his famous conversion en route to Damascus. Some of his writings are preserved in the New Testament, with his influence being considerable in many of the theological debates that have shaped Christianity and still do.

As the heavenly patron of this church, we look to St Paul to not only inspire and instruct us but also to pray for us and with us. Like others who belong to the Communion of Saints, we ask for St Paul's prayers, confident that he is in Heaven, offering prayers and praises before the throne of God. Holding a sword, the statue of St Paul in this church reminds us that as Christians, we can take hold of "the sword of the Spirit" as part of the armour of God given to us (Ephesians 6:17).

Lord Jesus, in the conversion of St Paul, you transformed a persecutor of your Church into an apostle and evangelist, one who ended up giving his life for the Faith; give us grace to daily follow you, strengthened and sustained by the prayers of St Paul our Patron.

The Confessionals

St Paul's has several confessionals where a person can confess their sins to a priest in all confidence. The confessional is designed in such a way that both the priest hearing the confession and the person making their confession (the penitent) are given privacy.

The Church of England's Canons (the rules governing the doctrine and worship of the Church) make clear that any baptised person may seek the granting of forgiveness:

'If there be any [person] who cannot quiet his own conscience, but requires further comfort or counsel, let him come to some discreet and learned minister of God's Word; that by the ministry of God's holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.'

In the sacrament of Reconciliation (or simply 'Confession'), a person hears and receives God's forgiveness through the priest.

Lord Jesus, you have given your Church the power to absolve and forgive all in your name; help us to turn to you and know afresh your mercy, compassion and love.