



News from St Marks

St Mark's continues to throw up surprising encounters which are the clearest indication to me that we are doing God's work even if it is not in the ways we might have expected. More of that later, but first I want to add to the story that began with the anointing of Patricia as she came to the end of her earthly life. If you remember from the March magazine, I was then asked by her son to take her funeral. This duly took place at Southend Crematorium and while it was a small affair, she was commended to God's loving care with love and dignity and the release of 8 white doves! However, my connection with the family does not end there. A week later, I was emailed to ask if I would be able to help them with renewing their wedding vows in November!

Last week was Ash Wednesday, and I had spent some time wondering how I was to emulate St Clement's successful 'Ash & Dash' outreach which has taken place in the Diana Triangle over the last few years. The obvious problem was that we do not have the same sort of passers-by. Leigh Broadway, Elm Road and Broadway West are always busy with shoppers and visitors to the town. And while the weather **can** be a problem, we have always found at certain times of the day that we can engage with lots of people, even if they are not sure of what it means to wear an ash cross on your forehead!

How could we recreate that experience? Bearing in mind I don't have a team that is able to be around during the week and I also have a service at St Mark's to get ready for in the morning; and another to get ready for in St Clement's in the evening!

However, once again, I underestimated God's faith in my ability to make the right decision. In the end I chose to stand outside St Mark's between 8am - 9am hoping to grab some people on their way to work. I was lucky that Lyanne was able to come too. [It is always much harder when you try to do these things on your own - and after all, Jesus sent his disciples out in pairs!]

The sun shone, though a bitter wind whistled across the railway bridge at us. And then 3 young men walked our way. I was not at all expecting any sort of success, but simply hoping for the encounter to be without any aggravation. The first chap I spoke to, walked on, then turned back saying, "Alright Darlin', after all I was brought up a Catholic!" And with that his mates joined in!

From that wonderful opening I felt I gained the confidence to accost more people as they walked past us. From the dad and his little boy on the way to school, (Dad initially said no, but his little boy told us he had learnt about Lent in school the day before so wanted a cross!); to the lady who stayed to chat about her pets and then asked if she could speak to me about renewing her wedding vows; to the ex-soldier who didn't believe anymore but thought we were doing an amazing thing and wanted to come over to tell us; to the 15 acting students who were confused about it all but once one had it - all the others wanted one as well! In all we ashed 30 people and had many conversations that morning. I cannot express just how much the

experience gave me hope for the future of the ministry for the community served by that little Victorian church on the corner.



With Blessings Mother Cherry

<https://www.stmarkschurchsouthend.org>