

## **St Mary's Festival of Flowers – 4<sup>th</sup> August 2023.**

### **Address given at the opening service by Fr John Dickens**

It seems a gloomy time at present.

I'm not just talking about the weather, but the state of the world.

The climate emergency is at the front of our minds, we are having extreme weather events: floods, storms and wildfires.

We have wars and civil unrest all over the world: Ukraine, Yemen, Sudan, Pakistan and the Middle East.

In our country we have economic hardship and political instability.

It is so easy to be gloomy.

And of course, it is right for us to take these issues seriously.

These things all mar the image we have of God's Kingdom on earth.

But it is also appropriate at times to celebrate.

To celebrate the good things of life.

And flower festivals give us an opportunity to celebrate, to see a glimmer of hope.

Realise that there are good things as well as bad.

Everyone loves a flower festival!

So what are we celebrating?

God's creation of course, that we heard about in this morning's psalm.

The beauty of the flowers we see symbolizes the beauty and variety of God's creation.

But we know that to get the beautiful displays we see before us, a lot of human effort is involved.

The flowers have to be grown and nurtured.

They have to be harvested and transported.

Then with great skill and talent they have to be arranged into the creative displays we see.

A flower festival therefore encapsulates the beauty of God's creation combined with the talents of his people.

God and humankind working in harmony to produce something that is good.

St Mary's flower festival demonstrates something else.

It is a community flower festival.

It recognizes and celebrates the communities of this town.

Groups of people who work together, not for personal gain, but for the good of the town.

So this festival is a celebration of God's creation, human gifts and communities working together to serve the needs of others.

Here we get a glimpse of God's Kingdom on earth, despite all the gloom and doom of the world.

Something to celebrate.