

THE CALL OF ST JOHN'S BOLDRE

He's far from perfect, as you know,
This priest who came six years ago.
All the way from far Down Under,
Belly-fired, and full of thunder.
Six foot tall his figure trim,
Still fighting fit and sound of limb,
Just three years married to Diana,
Who in her own distinctive manner
Subdues his worst, inspires his best
And fills his soul with joy and zest.

English born, but travelled wide,
He's taken much within his stride.
Among exotic domiciles
Zimbabwe and Atlantic isles.
An African-Australian-Brit,
Self confident, a taste for wit,
Provocative though not pugnacious,
Never short of words, loquacious.
So proficient verbally
At times he's thought by some to be
A clever, academic whizz,
Much brighter than in fact he is.

But as he ponders and reflects,
Surveys his faith, his life inspects,
He takes delight that faith and years
Have brought by far more joy than tears.
That God has blessed a hundredfold
This sinful seventy three year old
With favours numerous and lavish,
Not least his present, pleasing parish.

What better place to age and moulder
Than good St John the Baptist Boldre.
What better, lovely culmination
To a lifelong priest's vocation.
Than such a church in such a place.
Such an awesome, grace-filled space,
Where this priest of long years standing
Has made the very softest landing.

An intercontinental call,
Signed and sealed it, that was all.

Sent to him and wife Diana
In now the customary manner
By way of Skype and Internet
Inviting them to take a bet
On Boldre being just the place
To end his lifelong priestly race.
So here they are in leafy Boldre,
Content, still fit, though six years older.

May Boldre church forever flourish
Always fortify and nourish
Everyone in its vicinity,
Never losing an affinity
With all the breadth of human kind.
May every passing person find,
Saint or sinner, rich or poor,
Its friendly, daily opened door
An invitation into peace,
Quiet contentment and release.

And may St John's remain unique,
One-off, distinct, a tad oblique,
Resisting moves to vandalise it,
Rip out pews and modernise it.
Nor give way to populism
And lowbrow forms of barbarism,
But instead always endeavour
Hopefully, we trust, forever
To make its overriding mission
To breathe new life into tradition.

Ancient rites performed with dash
The Faith expounded with panache.
The organ played with spark and fire,
A four part, keen, melodious choir
Dazzling flowers that lift the heart,
Pealing bells before we start
God's love apparent all around
As warmth and friendliness abound.

Thus may St John's forever be
The heart of our community
Dear to you and dear to me.
A place for all to love and be.