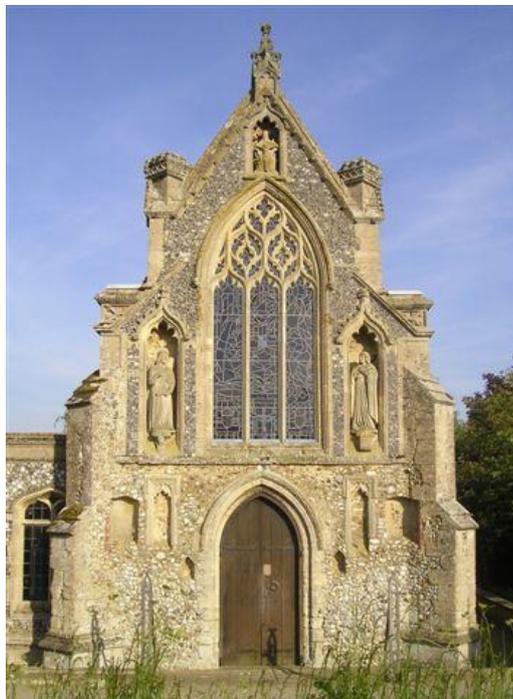


## Diocesan Pilgrimage to Walsingham Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2017

A group of ten St John the Baptist parishioners set out early Saturday morning to join Ss Peter & Paul Parish on the coach trip to Walsingham. We learnt more about the rich history and tradition of this wonderful shrine

In 1061, according to the Walsingham legend, an Anglo-Saxon noblewoman, Richeldis de Faverches, had a vision of the Virgin Mary in which she was instructed to build a replica of the house of the Holy Family in Nazareth in honour of the Annunciation. When it was built, the Holy House in Walsingham was panelled with wood and contained a wooden statue of an enthroned Virgin Mary with the child Jesus seated on her lap. Walsingham is known as England's Nazareth.

One of the greatest Shrines in Medieval Christendom – when travel to the Holy Land was virtually impossible; the original Shrine was destroyed at the Reformation. Many barren years passed until the Slipper Chapel, a 14th century wayside pilgrim chapel, was restored and pilgrimage to Walsingham began once more. In 1934, the English Bishops named the Slipper Chapel, the Roman Catholic National Shrine of Our Lady.



On our journey there Antoine, our group leader, led us in praying the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary to prepare ourselves for the day ahead. We arrived in good time, one of 30 coaches, carrying over 3½ thousand pilgrims from the Diocese of Brentwood. Our day began at 11.30 when we gathered outside the Chapel of Reconciliation as Bishop Alan led the Holy Rosary and dedicated our Diocese to our Blessed Mother.

After this we had time to enjoy our lunch and explore the Abbey Grounds. Some took time to explore the Way of the Cross. These 14 oak crosses of the great Cross-carrying Pilgrimage of 1948 form a Way of the Cross in the Shrine grounds. Despite the great numbers there was an air of calm and tranquillity, allowing time for quiet reflection.



After lunch, we gathered outside the Chapel of Reconciliation to walk the Holy Mile. This was a wonderful sight as we left the Basilica in procession, walking along the old railway line into the village to the grounds of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Abbey. As we entered the Abbey Grounds, the Statue of Our Lady of Walsingham was placed on the site of the Holy House and Mass was celebrated under The Lonely Arch. This is the only part of the Abbey left after it was destroyed at the Reformation.



The day finished with a truly uplifting Mass led by Bishop Alan. A wonderful end to a wonderful day – and despite the forecast of heavy rain during the day-it kept fine till the end of the day. Our Lady was watching over us!

Many thanks to Antoine for all his efforts to look after us on the day; we went home tired but inspired.