

Feast of the Assumption of Our Blessed Lady (transferred) Sunday 16th August 2026 Chapel of All Saints, Wardour

On Sunday 16th August, the 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time was displaced by the Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Blessed Lady, transferred from the day before. The Church has a long tradition of celebrating its great feasts with a Procession of the faithful.

This tradition, too often dismissed as ‘popular piety’ (as if anything is wrong with that!), has been neglected in many parts of the Church in recent decades, where once it formed an integral part of the liturgical life of any parish.

Here in Tisbury and Wardour, there are published accounts of the annual Corpus Christi Procession, and evidence of a Marian Procession is provided by, among other things, a magnificent 19th century processional Marian banner at the chapel.



Every year a parishioner leads a group of parents in organising a Shakespeare production: around twenty children spend a fortnight learning and rehearsing for a two night run, performed outside in a field. In a delightful, possibly coincidental (but we don't believe in coincidences), heraldic tribute to the Arundells of Wardour who built Wardour Chapel, the players are known as the Swallows.



This year, our parishioner suggested that, as the Assumption was being observed the day after the Shakespeare performances, we should have a Marian Procession after Mass, and she would encourage the Swallows to come to Mass and to take part in the procession. Additional encouragement may have been provided by this year's Director of Music for the production.



Parishioners arriving for Mass found the usually discreet marble relief carving at the back of the chapel of the Madonna and Child (carved by Pierre-Etienne Monnot in 1703) lit with candles in honour of the Feast; a Marian banner and a Papal banner standing ready; and a statue of Our Blessed Lady, bedecked and crowned with flowers, standing on its palanquin on the Sanctuary. The palanquin (word of the week!) was made for the occasion by a parishioner whose carpentry skills were previously unknown to many of us.

After the final blessing the celebrant, Fr Joseph-Columba Meigh (known to those who had been at the Shakespeare as the Director of Music), removed his Mass vestments ('St Germain' from the collection at Wardour, chosen for the day because of the beautiful delicate blue flowers woven into the silk) and put on the magnificent Marian cope – 19th century embroidered silk with a fine late 19th century embroidered hood depicting the Annunciation, and much earlier *Opus Anglicanum* orphreys.



The statue of Our Lady was honoured with incense and, under the supervision of the new parish carpenter, four sturdy Swallows lifted the statue of Our Lady shoulder high and the procession set off down the aisle: thurifer, processional Cross, Marian banner, children scattering petals, statue, Papal banner, celebrant and MC, and a good congregation of faithful of all ages.



Praying the Rosary, interspersed with rousing Marian hymns, the procession went down the drive to the gate, left towards Wardour Court, left again past the front of Wardour Court and into 'Temple Garden' (by kind permission of Margaret Baird).



The statue was placed on the stone plinth in front of the garden's temple and, with providential timing, Fr Joseph led everyone in the mid-day Angelus as the chapel's Angelus bell rang out across the Vale of Wardour. All then prayed the Litany of Loreto, and then sang the Salve Regina while the statue was once again honoured with incense; devotions concluded with a final blessing.



The altar party returned to the sacristy – removing the cope must have been quite a relief on such a hot day. Refreshments (elderflower cordial and home-made biscuits provided by a kind parishioner) were much needed – and greatly enjoyed by all. Next year the Feast also falls on a Sunday...

Queen of All Saints, pray for us!
Queen assumed into heaven, pray for us!

