

THE COMMUNITY OF OUR LADY AND ST CUTHBERT CROOK - GARDEN FETE 2018

In 1964 Petula Clarke had a popular hit with what became a hymn "Thank you for waking me this morning". I wonder how many of us felt as positive as that, last Saturday morning. We'd heard of other events taking place on our Garden Fete Day – *the Man Engine, Peases West Fest, Cricket and Football matches* - and there was real worry after last year's lower numbers, we might struggle. Thankfully it was not to be – quite the opposite – **a most blessed and happy day**. The school played a great part in bringing parents and children to the fete, to dance and take part in a football play-off with Tow Law Blessed John Duckett's School. Weren't they marvellous! **Jimmy Montgomery**, who opened one of our Fetes over 45 years ago, came back with his wife and family and charmed the birds off the trees, refereed the football game and even gave a bit of free coaching – what a lovely and generous man.

The **tireless and cheerful stall holders**, who had been working for months, were on the scene early Saturday morning with cakes and bottles to be collected and placed, books, toys, Traidcraft and bric a brac to be unloaded, footballs to be positioned, surprise parcels to be stacked up, sweet trolleys, chocolate, football, teddy and bottle tombolas to be assembled. The Grand Draw, tickets to be sold and counterfoils to be folded. Then there were countless sandwiches to be made, hot dogs cooked, ices to be frozen, miracles to be organised with water and wine not forgetting Splat the Rat, Hook the duck and Hit the spot!! The bouncy castle arrived at the last minute and then proved its usual popularity (where do the kids get their energy from) and Captain Raggy Beard was again great hit with the children. We didn't forget what it was all about, as the clock struck 12.00. and the century old **Angelus bell** sounded, we gathered to pray for a moment and to ask the God's blessing on our community day.

It was Fr. John's first Garden Fete with us and he was delighted with it – he spoke of the community spirit, the loyalty of the parish, the generosity of the people and the happiness of the day. The missionary priest, Fr Archie, who preached a couple of weeks ago, reminded us that events like the *garden fete* can be ways of spreading the **Word** – of evangelising. Another popular song of the 60's was "*They will know we are Christians by our love, by our love*" - we pray that is how we are seen by our friends, family and visitors.

We have **lots of people to thank** – the organising group, stall holders who worked tirelessly in the hot sunshine – one of our best weather days, our excellent compere, Eugene and the team who put the stalls up and took them down put tables away, cleared the hall, tidied up the litter; not easy when you have spent hours standing behind the stalls selling everything you can, making tea, washing up, hooking ducks and splatting rats!!! Thanks to St Cuthbert's school children and our wonderful staff, parents and governors who teach/ support them and most importantly connect them to our blessed parish. The people from the parish, town and further afield who came and enjoyed the day, spent their money and helped us raised the marvellous gross total of £4,442. There were firms and individuals who sponsored the event – they will all be thanked. Talented cooks who created glorious cakes, trifles and savouries. The folks who stayed behind to count the money and give us a grand total. Friends and families who cheerfully turned up to help on stalls, welcoming visitors and offering real St Cuthbert hospitality.

The Garden Fete 2018 proved that the formula still works – good weather, a location to die for, lots of fun things to do, tasty cakes and refreshments, happy welcoming people, optimism, hope and a faithful parish that backs the event heart and soul. Yes, we could do with some new ideas, a few more stalls and maybe some younger people to help take on the mantle but we should pat ourselves on the back and thank God for a lovely day, lots of fun and good crack.

The next day, after a joyful Mass, Fr John led us in the traditional **Blessing of the Graves**. Families and friends stood by the graves of loved ones and Father blessed the individual graves with holy water. The Papal flag on the top of the tower was blowing gently in the warm breeze, the cemetery was peaceful and beautiful – you would never have known that hundreds of children and families had graced the grounds the day before. And yet that has been happening for nearly 50 years and we pray that those on earth and those in heaven combine to continue to bless our parish and give it a bright and vibrant future through our Lord Jesus Christ. So to finish off Petula Clarke's song *Thank You for giving me today. Thank You for every new day dawning, I'll be thanking You. Amen. Alleluia!*