

Dear friends,

The last Harvest festival service of the season took place in the Old Vic nursing home in Otterton last Thursday and it was the most intimate, where all the residents gathered in one room, and I had to conduct the service behind a Perspex screen. Luckily my joke about the residents being so dangerous I had to speak behind bullet proof glass went down very well and propelled us into a lovely and meaningful service. We sang a Capella which prepared me for Otterton Church's Harvest dinner on Friday night where as well as singing Grace I was asked by Tony Bennett to sing the first verse of "Come ye thankful people come" at the end. The Hall was filled with happy people and great thanks as ever must go to Anne and the whole team in putting on this great community event.

Gratitude is the overriding theme of Harvest which spilled over into Sunday morning when I was saying good-bye to an African man at the end of the service, I asked him his name and he mentioned an African name (which I've forgotten) but said that the English translation of it was "Gratitude" and he answered to that! Hopefully, this I will remember.

I missed Choral evensong last month because I was away, so it seemed like a long time since I'd sung it. A Catholic man attending the 10am service asked me what "Choral evensong" was because they don't have it in the catholic tradition. I told him and he said he'd try and be there. Well, he was but he left before I could ask him what he thought! I can report that the choir sounded as magnificent as ever.

Note: Catholic commentators have often said that if there was to be any rapprochement between the Catholic and Anglican churches, choral evensong is the one Anglican tradition they would gladly receive!

**Sunday 16th October – Trinity 18 – Proper
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Archdeacon Trevor Jones will preside at both morning services at St. Peter's and I will preside at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30am and 11am respectively.

Genesis 32: 22-31. A poignant and strange story about how the Hebrew people came to be called “Israel” which as the story says means “Struggle with God”. Jacob struggled with a man all night, who it transpires was God himself. God blesses him and bestows on him his new name which is subsequently applied to the whole nation. The Jews, and indeed, all people have struggled with the concept of God, his nature, his purposes, and his laws and commands. So, the church as the “new Israel” takes up that mantle with one hopes slightly more insight as we recognise Jesus as the ultimate revelation of God.

2 Timothy 3: 14 – 4: 5. When the author refers to “All scripture” he is referring to what we now call the Old Testament (or Hebrew scriptures) because the New Testament did not exist for another couple of hundred years when this was written so to apply it to 2 Timothy, or any other New Testament writing is actually anachronistic. There were major battles to have the OT scripture and the New Testament accepted as being from the same God and Paul (If it was him who wrote this) is saying Yes! And it is inspired by God.

Luke 18: 1-8. We are probably supposed to see the humour in the colourful characters of the unjust judge and the nagging widow. but the theological point is in the contrast between the unjust judge who has to be nagged to do good and God who quickly grants justice to his chosen ones. Though the final line challenges the readers to wonder how much faith they actually have, and will they be found wanting at the time of trial?

You're an Angel

Angel means “Messenger of God” and “El” is the name of God inherited from the Canaanites. So, the names of the angels in the Bible mean the following.

Michael means one like God

Gabriel means strength of God.

Raphael means medicine of God

Thought for the day

We had an interesting discussion at a home group I attend on what the clothes I wear in church means. Some I knew already and some I had to look up. What I wear for Eucharistic worship is the most symbolic and I think deserves to be better known. All Eucharistic wear has its origins in standard late Roman everyday attire but became imbued with special symbolic significance. The white cassock Alb I wear represents all the baptised people of God (Therefore I am there representing the whole congregation before God). It is white because men and women in the early church men and women were baptised separately because they were baptised naked and fully emersed in water and when they emerged from the water, they were all dressed in a white robe representing the cleansing of the soul in the baptismal waters, so my Alb (which just literally means “white”) reflects that symbolic meaning. My stole, like a long ornate scarf I wear, represents the yoke of Christ. I am symbolically Yoked to Christ who leads me in Eucharistic worship. The Chasuble I wear at St. Peter’s is yet another symbol of the yoke of Christ. The most well-known symbol of ordination is of course the clerical collar or “Dog collar” as it is colloquially known. This I had to look up and it is surprisingly recent! The dog collar was invented in Scotland in just 1865 and has since spread to every Christian denomination. Its only function was to differentiate clergy from laity so you could say it is intrinsically divisive, but it is merely a uniform, so we are instantly recognisable. I have also read that black is the symbol of poverty but colour differentiation in the church of England nowadays is more to accentuate high and low church divisions – black representing traditional or Anglo-Catholic traditions and every other colour mainly the preserve of evangelical or low church ministers.

The Prayer for Today is by our very own Di Bagshawe from her book Introspection and is titled “Innermost thoughts”.

Lord of my innermost being,

Conscious of my every thought,

When my mind or tongue cannot form

The phrases to express my prayers,

There is that comfort that no words are needed.

If I am truly in communion with you

All I need is "AMEN"

Then, if I live my life

In accordance with your laws,

Lifting up the smallest thing to you,

May I bear some little part

In the forming of your kingdom here on earth-

But only if it is thy will being done,

And not as the world might prompt me.

AMEN.

Love and peace,

Martin