

Dear friends,

It was good to be back at All Saints and St. Michael's for the first time in a month and all went very well. It was good to read the final Banns of marriage for Steve and Katrina – especially as their wedding is next Saturday, but no worries as they are a very relaxed and likeable couple.

At St. Michael's it was unsettling to hear of a gang of youths that has been making life unpleasant for people coming into the church. I have never been at a church where this doesn't happen at some time or other and hopefully now that half term is over the problem will disappear as soon as it appeared.

We are looking forward to a couple of weeks of concentrating on those who have died, on the 5th November at 3pm in St. Peter's we hold our annual All Souls service and on the 12th November all three churches hold their remembrance day services held at normal church times in the morning with the added Royal British Legion service at 3pm in St. Peter's in the afternoon.

Also this Wednesday evening (1st) at 7pm we are holding our Deanery synod meeting at All saints church hall (appropriate because this is actually All Saints day). This is an open meeting, meaning you don't need to be a member of Synod to attend, and the speaker is Admiral Sir James Burnell-Nugent representing the pressure group called "Save the Parish"

Sunday 5th November – All Saints day (Transferred from 1st November)

I will be presiding at St. Peter's at both services in the morning and at the 3pm All Souls service in the afternoon. Jean Burrows (having now safely returned from Tanzania) will preside at All Saints at 9.30am and John Archibald will preside at St. Michael's.

Revelation 7: 9-17. Apocalyptic writings like revelation share common themes. They were written in times of great persecution, contain coded and obscure signs and symbols, and their main purpose was to give their persecuted readers hope that despite all their sufferings, God was still in control of events and they are all promised a blessed future with Him in his glory. The people "dressed in white" have come out of the tribulation, and have washed their robes in the blood of Jesus and are now forever in paradise.

1 John 3: 1-3. John proclaims that Christian believers are “children of God” underlining what he proclaimed in the prologue of his gospel. This is an extraordinary thing to proclaim, that we have such an intimate and personal relationship with God himself through knowing Jesus Christ. How extraordinary that is, is often glossed over by our frequent repetition of the “Our Father” without really thinking about it, but through God we are intimately connected to all created things. In a world increasingly obsessed with identity, this is our identity as Christians – children of God.

Matthew 5: 1-12. These words from the sermon on the mount are beautiful blessings on the poor, dispossessed and hurting who are promised a future state when all things shall be put right, and virtue displayed will be taken account of and rewarded. Jesus places his listeners as being in the same league as the prophets who also stood up for them and they will receive the same reward.

Thought for the day.

One of the books I read in India was “the God desire” by David Baddiel who spoke at the Budleigh Literary festival recently. India was a suitable place because the God desire is evident absolutely everywhere, from the plethora of Hindu Temples, Christian churches and Mosques that we encountered absolutely everywhere (and many other persuasions too numerous to mention) and the obvious public devotion in public festivals and ceremonial worship known as “Puja” to Hindus. This word is applied liberally and a restaurateur in Goa referred to our “Good Friday Puja” while showing us some pictures on his phone of a massive Hindu Puja in his home city of Calcutta in Bengal. So, the God desire I would argue is hard wired into the human consciousness and is given expression in countless ways internationally. As I have written before, David is very much an Atheist. I used to have – still have – a Buddhist friend up North who describes himself as “an atheist with an interest in the Divine”. I have no desire or interest in comparing the various merits of the differing expressions of our collective belief in the “other”, but as we find ourselves as “Christians”, however we came to ally ourselves with this faith – we need to embrace it fully and to not be ashamed of expressing our faith fully. Worship and devotion to God differs enormously, but the practise of trying to align ourselves with God’s will is universal in the practice we call prayer (I would characterise meditation and contemplation into that same description.) In prayer we are connecting ourselves to what we understand God to be – our Father, because we are all his children.

The Prayer for Today is of course that most fundamental of Christian prayers to God our Father taught to us by his son Jesus Christ. There are differing versions – even within the Bible! – and in this one I prefer to keep “Thy and Thine” ever since I discovered that they were the original more personal and therefore intimate forms of address in English and “You and your” were the more formal forms.

**Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil,
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory
For ever and ever Amen**

Love and peace,
Martin