

Dear friends,

The Talent night at St. Peter's last Wednesday to celebrate my 20th year of ordination as a priest was just lovely. Twelve acts from across the RMC made it very personal and moving. More people came than we thought but luckily Mandy usually over caters and so a packed Peter Hall reverberated with happy chatter with what was a superb spread! Special thanks to Sandy for compering the evening and to everyone who braved giving a performance and everyone who came to support.

It is always uplifting to get congregations in the high nineties, and I was especially glad that this is what greeted Yong and Wendy Lim (our mission partners in Cambodia) for their presentation. Thank you to Betty Clement for organising this visit but also thanks to Betty and Alan for hosting a superb lunch for ten people afterwards to make our guests feel at home.

Sunday 9th July – 5th of Trinity – Proper 9

I will be presiding again at St. Peter's this morning because it is both a "Funfaith" Sunday and there is also a baptism in the 10am service. Archdeacon Trevor Jones will preside at All saints and St. Michael's at 9.30am and 11am respectively. I will also return to St. Peter's to sing choral evensong at 6pm. (I've invited our Archdeacon Andrew Beane to attend so will wait and see!)

Zechariah 9: 9-12. Uplifting poetry that foresees a future where the Messiah ushers in a future of peace and freedom from oppression. "Riding on a Donkey" is reminiscent of Jesus' entrance to Jerusalem at the beginning of Holy Week. Originally written as good news for the people of Israel and relief from actual physical oppression, this has been universalised to encompass all of humanity and to include spiritual freedom and release from the fear of suffering and death.

Romans 7:15-25. It is very difficult to interpret this passage for many complex reasons. My basic human response is to conclude that no matter how good our intentions are we inevitably fail because of the power and nature of sin. But for a Christian believer though – what is the remedy? Paul states later (in Romans 8:1) that there is No condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, so don't stop trying to do good even if we fail. And that God has already acted in Christ to save us. We believe that God can take all our motives and actions, however flawed, and turn them into service to the good.

Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30. There is no pleasing anyone! That seems to be the best way of describing people's reaction to either John the Baptist or Jesus. People always manage to find a reason to reject someone or something if they want to. People will always in our modern world be able to find a reason not to be bothered by religion or a particular church within that religion or a particular person. That is followed by what is described in the BCP service as some of the "comfortable words" of Jesus. A promise that He can lift the heavy burdens of life and give us rest, if we would but come to him who is in an intimate relationship with God our Father.

A date for your Diary – Saturday 15th July: Vicarage Garden party in East Budleigh

We have held this annually for a few years now. It starts around 2pm. It is free and just a time to mingle in good company with others from the RMC. You need to bring something to sit on and food and drink and is on a bring and share basis. Thank you to David Ottley from Otterton for providing the Marquee again! Remember, this is a wildlife garden and there is still a prize on offer to anyone who spots a Panda in our Bamboo Forest.

Sunday 23rd July at Midday.

The St. Peter's BBQ that celebrates our patron saint had to be postponed because of the Music festival so has been moved to the 23rd July. Cost is £12.50 and tickets are available from Fran in the office on Wednesday or Friday mornings or from Iris after the morning service.

Thought for the Day

Being a practical down to earth sort of chap, I sometimes wonder just what it is that I do? I mean that even as a labourer in a cold-store there was an outcome that could be measured or as a Jeweller you could measure results in terms of sales, but as a vicar things are well, a little bit ambiguous. This is probably a result of my working-class cultural outlook where work can be easily quantified. I sometimes muse about taking up something practical to try and address that particular anxiety about there being no tangible outcome to most of what occupies my time, but I simply don't have the energy.

Thinking about this problem from time to time I came up with a kind of description of what I provide, which is providing a framework for people's lives through Baptism, marriages and funerals and through worship providing

people with a direction to guide them through life – a kind of “rough guide” to life pointing out things of interest along the way and guiding people to places of spiritual refreshment.

But underpinning all those things I am basically a relationship counsellor and matchmaker. I put people in contact with God, the ground of all being. I mediate his eternal presence and try to explain the world in relation to its creator. The world is so complex and difficult and alongside the beauty and goodness sits ugliness and evil. We would all need a guidebook to explain it all, and Christianity is the best and most honest guide to the world that I have come across. This is a happy accident for me as I just fell into Christianity as the culturally normative expression of Theism in Britain. But explaining things when there is just no really good explanation can be exhausting. In all humility, just accepting that mystery is integral and that despite your best efforts to understand things, a straight “Don’t know” is the most honest and most appreciated answer of all. I might not have an answer to your particular question but I do know that God is Love and his nature is to Love, sustain, forgive and save. In the end, all will be well.

The Prayer for Today is of unknown origin but very pertinent.

**From the cowardice that shrinks from new truths,
From the laziness that is content with half-truth,
From the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth,
O God of truth, deliver us.**

Love and peace,
Martin