

Dear friends,

One of the signs of the general unlocking of society is the little spate of baptisms that have taken place in all three churches of the RMC recently. A congregation bigger than our 10am morning service took their places in St. Peter's on Sunday afternoon for the baptism of Albert Leak. His parents had married in St. Peters in 2014. Albert was a happy soul and everyone enjoyed the occasion I'm sure and I'd forgotten how raucous and also how joyful these occasions can be. In St. Michael's that same morning Fr. Peter also had a baptism and I haven't checked in with him so I will assume everything went swimmingly there as well. This comes hot on the heels of the twins I baptised a couple of weeks ago in All Saints. Green shoots indeed.

**There won't** be an email next Wednesday as we are taking a week off to do a "Tour of the North" visiting places and churches of significance to us from before our journey south to Devon. So its au revoir Budleigh, East Budleigh and Otterton and hello Cumbria, Tynemouth , Newcastle, Gainford and Winston!

## **Sunday 15th August – The Blessed Virgin Mary**

This Sunday Reverend Colin Randall is presiding at both services at St. Peter's and I am presiding at All Saints and St. Michael's.

**Isaiah 61: 10-11.** Verses 10 and 11 are merely the end of a majestic chapter expressing the good news of salvation. The coming of this revelation Christians ascribe to Jesus Christ of course who is called Emmanuel – God with us – manifested via his birth to Mary. In the West, Mary is generally referred to as "the virgin" whereas in the East she is known mainly as "Theotokos" or God-bearer, which means that in practical terms Mary is never separate from her Son and in a much wider context the Spirit is never separate from matter.

**Galatians 4: 4-7.** The reason Jesus was sent – born of a woman – was so that we might “receive adoption as children” of God. The incarnation alters or re-directs our entire relationship with God and the world, from being entirely separate “things” to intimately inter-related “persons”.

**Luke 1: 46-55.** The Magnificat is a deliberate re-working of the “Song of Hannah” (1 Samuel 2: 2-10). Both Hannah and Mary are blessed with a son in miraculous circumstances (Hannah was apparently sterile – Mary a virgin) and both react with songs of praise to God. In these songs of praise God is depicted as turning society upside down and enacting a just kingdom. The Magnificat especially has provided strength and sustenance for many downtrodden peoples especially in Latin America and has provided scriptural ballast to many theologies of liberation.

**We are currently** finalising rotas, planning and organising ourselves so that we will see the re-emergence of Joint PCC meetings (at which Archdeacon Andrew Beane will address us), the dinner clubs at East Devon Golf club will re-start, the “open the book” initiative that sees us presenting Bible stories in dramatic form in schools is being planned, the first St. Peter’s school Harvest service in church for a very long time is booked, a nascent walking/pilgrimage/prayer initiative is mooted, a new series of table talks on areas of general interest are being considered, and the gradual re-emergence of social initiatives like Solo’s lunches are stuttering back to life . So, a very busy time administratively as well as all the scheduled services and the marriages, baptisms, funerals, and memorial services that form the backbone of our life and witness. As we run through the gears to get us back on track we pray that obstacles will be removed from our path and God will bless our present and future, providing a confident and strong Christian witness to the people of East Devon.



## Thought for the day

A common view from the pews I think regarding Mary probably runs a bit like this. The Romans venerate her too much and in reaction to that fact, reformers are embarrassed by her and don't mention her enough – except at Christmas when they can't avoid it. A more nuanced view is urgently needed to restore Mary to her pivotal place in Christianity (There wouldn't be Christianity without her!) and to see beyond our denominational differences to a healthy and rich spirituality that fully integrates Mary into our common story. Our former Archbishop Rowan Williams provided the template for this approach for me many years ago and his book "Ponder these things – Praying with icons of the virgin" beautifully illustrated with Greek and Russian icons is a treasured possession. As I alluded in my scripture notes, the term "God bearer" links her forever with Jesus and the incarnation and indeed in the Eastern church Mary is rarely ever represented alone, which is a sure safeguard against any nascent Mariolatry. A fully incarnational theology sees divinity and the material world as one thing as manifested in Jesus born of Mary. The manifestation of Full divinity and full humanity had their source in the womb of Mary. She is also a type of the perfect Christian response to God, opening her heart and soul in full humility and obedience to God's will and was "full of the Spirit". Her response to being chosen was one of thanks, praise and prophecy. The image of Mary holding the infant Jesus is a startling epiphany and representation of Divine love and human response and reveals the vulnerability of God – as small, and easily abused and misused. As a type of Christian response, she is also seen as the first Charismatic in that full of the Holy Spirit, she gave birth to Jesus literally just as we are to give birth to Jesus metaphorically in our lives.

## The Prayer for Today

was written by David Silk

**Almighty and everlasting God,  
You have stooped to raise fallen humanity  
By the child-bearing of Blessed Mary.  
Grant that we who have seen your glory  
Revealed in our human nature,  
And your love made perfect in our weakness,  
May daily be renewed in your image,  
And conformed to the pattern of your Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Love and peace,  
Martin

Please note my new email address is [vicar@rmcommunity.co.uk](mailto:vicar@rmcommunity.co.uk)