

Dear friends,

As we were cited by the Diocese as the place to watch the morning service yesterday, I have no idea how many took up the offer but I am glad to say that the service was a credit to the R.M.C. and the singing trio did a marvellous job. Thank you also to James Bersey, the organist from Otterton who filled in for Geoff as he couldn't be with us. My sermon I have recorded on a YouTube video which if you'd care to watch it can be accessed here, <https://youtu.be/Kly79006wtI>

Alternatively, if you'd prefer to read it you can do so by clicking on my Blog. <https://revmartinjacques.blogspot.com/2021/05/a-friend-of-god.html>

Sunday evening's choral evensong was also a triumph. A wonderful choir and me remembering (just) how to sing everything after the long lay-off of over a year meant that it was like we'd never been away. I was told more than once that people felt truly uplifted.

The Ascension Day service is at Otterton tomorrow evening at 7pm. This as you know is the start of the prayer initiative "Thy Kingdom Come" where we pray for the mission of the church.

Sunday 16th May – Easter 7

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26. The idea behind choosing two candidates and then casting lots was to give the casting vote to God in who would lead the new community. Though we never hear of Matthias again, his role is probably symbolic – twelve reflecting the twelve tribes of Israel so stressing the continuity of the church with ancient Israel.

1John 5: 9-13. A simple message with enormous implications. "Life" is in Jesus. God raised him to eternal life and believing this we inherit eternal life by believing in his "name". Jesus Christ – Joshua Messiah - God is salvation, the anointed one.

John 17: 6-19. The prayer "that they may be one" is used by ecumenists to push for reunification of the churches but is surely a forlorn task in the world where there are thousands of different denominations. And

we must remember that this cause would not have been in the mind of the person that wrote it. He had in mind spiritual union between believers and God. I suppose he would have taken for granted that ecclesial unity was a forgone conclusion and would inevitably flow from that prior union. But of course, it hasn't and you might argue that this was inevitable because of human failings, but nevertheless the notion of spiritual union – gets much better traction in Eastern Christianity where it is the explicit goal of human life – union with God – also called theosis.

Thought for the Day

I think the most controversial thing I have said recently is that we have a rolling list of 35 different meals, with some people wondering what they all are and suggesting that we compile a cook book! This new varied diet sometimes makes for amusing incidents in Tesco when I am asking for “pickapeppa sauce” or Mushroom ketchup and Tamarind Paste, and the last lad I encountered said “why don't you have fish and chips instead?”

Anyway, all part of the new health and fitness regime, the results of which I hope is visible to all. I've said before of course that a healthy body also deserves a healthy spirituality, and we all need a nudge. Our nudge for the diet and exercise was the lockdown of course, and the church closures and restrictions were a nudge towards a fresh look at what sustains us. Prayer and sacramental religion is at the centre of my Christian practice. In terms of personally spiritually sustaining I am talking particularly in terms of private prayer. And my definition of what constitutes prayer has expanded also. A walk in the countryside – listening to the sights and sound of nature – and appreciating creation as a God-given gift is prayer. Being with friends and family and thanking God for them and appreciating how they enrich your life is prayer. Silence, and noticing your breathing and being thankful for the gift of life itself is prayer. Appreciating a piece of music and having it touch you deep inside is prayer. Because God is Life, the life of all things and because God is in all things you can find and touch God in all things.

The Prayer for Today is by Michael Longley just touched me so I share it with you. It is a poem called simply “A prayer”.

**In our country they are desecrating churches.
May the rain that pours in pours into the font.
Because no snowflake ever falls in the wrong place,
May snow lie on the altar like an altar cloth.**

Love and peace,
Martin

Please note my new email address is vicar@rmcommunity.co.uk