

Dear friends,

A lovely little group of us met at Colaton Raleigh village hall on Sunday for a beautiful cream tea and cakes after a lovely walk. Thank you, Fran and Jan, for all your hard work and beautiful homemade jam.

So nice was it that we are planning another one on Sunday 21st November at 3pm, this time with Mince pies and Mulled wine. Be there or be square!

We hotfooted it back home and just in time to change and get down to St. Peter's for Choral Evensong which was lovely. Our growing choir are sounding magnificent. The cantor struggled a bit (can't think of his name for the life of me) but all seemed to be uplifted by the experience.

Sunday 19th September – Trinity 16 – Proper 20

I am presiding at both services at St. Peter's this week and Father Peter is presiding at All Saints and St. Michael's.

Jeremiah 11: 18-20. Jeremiah is grateful that God has revealed to him that his life is in danger because of his work as a prophet. In his innocence "as a lamb" he had trusted those very people who were plotting against him. Chosen to accompany the gospel prediction of Jesus' betrayal and death, it is a reminder that in both the old and new covenants, doing God's work can lead to persecution and even death.

James 3:13 – 4:3, 7-8. "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you" and in that drawing near you will inevitably be drawn into the wisdom of God (I introduced this concept that week). Wisdom is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits. Growing in wisdom is growing into the person God wants all of us to be.

Mark 9: 30-37. The choice of a child as a role model is found only in the synoptic gospels. In this particular context it stands for a lack of status, lack of respect, rejected by society – all true of someone who had been crucified. In other contexts it might stand for openness, being a blank canvas, innocence, receptive to a new idea. The choice of a child at all is unusual for the time because it pre-dates our modern romantic notion of childhood. Then, childhood was thought a necessary evil to be passed through as quickly as possible. It meant being uninformed, ignorant, quarrelsome. Jesus was re-defining and dwelling on the positive attributes of childhood.

Our Dinner club is back!

On Thursday 7th October we have planned our first Dinner club since 2019. The East Devon Golf club, our usual location, have been very helpful and we have negotiated the following. Welcome drink at 7pm – followed by a cold buffet – followed by a hot buffet – followed by a choice of dessert – and then either tea or coffee and mints. The after dinner speaker will be our new Archdeacon Andrew Beane. The cost is £23 per person. Places are limited so please book with Fran as quickly as possible. It will be lovely for all our churches to be represented and mix and get to know each other a bit better!

At the Mother's Union meeting yesterday I enrolled five new members and we were treated to a wonderful talk by Di Bagshawe, whose life in India, Borneo, and Singapore and all points East was an inspiration and example to us all – a plea for tolerance and seeing the Christ in the other no matter what their outward religious profession might be. Wendy and Yong from Cambodia were also present, and we were able to pray for them as they return to Cambodia on Friday.

Thought for the day

The story that about one hundred cats and dogs were airlifted out of Kabul, at the expense of human beings who were left behind will split opinion I'm sure in this animal loving nation of ours. I think the majority were appalled, but I have heard others voice their agreement. On the one hand, all life is God given and precious, but on the other, human beings are surely a different order of creation, the only one "made in the image of God" as Genesis puts it. We can argue 'til the cows come home exactly what that means. I take it to mean that we have a unique combination of self-consciousness, and moral agency and conscience that sets us apart from the other animals. This difference is not so we can abuse or exploit animals without thinking about them or considering them – we are *stewards* of creation. Of course, some take this notion of non-exploitation even further into their thinking about eating animal flesh and become vegetarian, while others see meat eating as a necessary part of the natural God-given order of things. Whilst so many of us have pets (me included) and we treat them often as a part of the family, there is still a qualitative difference between how we see our pets and how we see our mums and dads or children. Even the fact that we "own" pets marks out the subtle difference between us.

I'm as sentimental as the next man (probably much more so) and don't wish any harm to anything but the most effective argument against what happened in Kabul is that, as far as I know, the Taliban don't have a particular hatred against cats and dogs, so they wouldn't be in any particular danger if they had been left in Kabul whereas all those people left behind probably do have a lot to fear. That was the point of the airlift – to remove people from a life-threatening situation. Cats and dogs are lovely but perhaps we need to regain a sense of perspective and proportion.

The Prayer for Today is an interesting and heartfelt prayer written by Theologian, missionary, and philosopher Albert Schweitzer.

**Hear our humble prayer O God
For our friends the animals,
Especially animals that are suffering,
For any that are hunted or lost or deserted or frightened or hungry;
For all that are put to death.
We entreat for them all your mercy and pity
And for those who deal with them we ask a heart of compassion,
Gentle hands and kindly words.
Make us ourselves to be true friends to animals and so to share the
blessing of the merciful.**

Love and peace,
Martin

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