

Dear friends,

Yesterday was the tenth anniversary of the death of my first wife Alexandra. One never knows quite what to do on such an anniversary, so I just said a short prayer and hoped that she is now at peace in God. But later I received a card from Bishop Jackie (unconnected and as I'm sure so many other clergy did) which was ostensibly about Advent/Covid but the sentiments about crossing rough seas really hit the mark. "On this unknown sea the Lord is with us. The wind and the waves obey him. Take courage"

Well, Louise and I should have been starting our short break to Bath on Monday. Oh well, can't complain. It's just another day in paradise for me as Phil Collins once sang compared to countless millions of others. Nevertheless, it is still a disappointment because I've never been to Bath and it looks lovely.

An all-day zoom meeting on Thursday with the Diocese just about did me in. There ought to be a law against it. I know they probably think they are doing something really helpful and positive but by the early afternoon I was starting to lose the will to live. There is only so much you can take in one session and Louise was away running an all-day Dementia clinic in Exeter at the same time so there wasn't even anyone to speak to normally all day either. And the dishwasher broke! Still, keep saying it over and over again - "paradise, paradise, paradise".

Scheduled re-start

We are on four weeks lockdown but just so that everybody is aware - we are definitely planning to re-start services at our normal times on **Sunday 6th December**.

Sunday 22nd November – Christ the King

Ezekiel 34: 11-16, 20-24. Kingship has always been closely entwined with Shepherding in the Hebrew Bible and indeed had been a common motif for centuries beforehand. Pharaohs are often depicted carrying a shepherd's crook for example. In the first section (11-16) God himself is the

shepherd and in the second section (20-24) the shepherd will be a restored king of the house of David, which in Christian theology finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1: 15-23. To modern ears this can sound quite mesmerizing and if actually written by Paul finds him in full “preacher” mode. Developing from his earlier “Rapture” phase, the church is now Christ’s body on earth – his “presence” (Parousia) in a spiritual unity. Christ is the universal spirit and presence of God on earth although we must still pray for wisdom (verse 17) as we “work out our salvation with fear and trembling” as Paul writes in Philippians 2:12

Matthew 25: 31-46. “Christ the king” was instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1925 as a counter blast to Fascism but like this text from Matthew it is ambiguous and subject to many different interpretations. The text appears to be about what happens on the “Day of the Lord” when “All the nations” (Verse 32) are gathered before the Shepherd king. Salvation is doled out not on the basis of faith, which isn’t mentioned once, but on how we treat others so on the face of it is “salvation by works”. A warning to complacent Christians perhaps? However one interprets it, the main point is that Christ identifies with those who suffer, and love for them is a service to Christ who fills “all in all” (Ephesians 1:23)

The Lighter side!

A few real notices that have appeared in church bulletins.

Low Self Esteem Support Group will meet Thursday at 7 PM. Please use the back door.

Don't let worry kill you off - let the Church help.

At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be 'What Is Hell?'

Come early and listen to our choir practice.

The ladies of the Church have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon.

Weight Watchers will meet at 7 PM at the First Presbyterian Church.

Please use large double door at the side entrance.

The Associate Minister unveiled the church's new campaign slogan last Sunday: 'I Upped My Pledge - Up Yours.'

Musical interlude!

The aforementioned Phil Collins singing “Another day in paradise” which accords quite nicely with our gospel reading today. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qt2mbGP6vFI>

Words to conjure with by Valerie Kaur, a Sikh lady who was quoted on Fr. Richard Rohr’s daily communication.

“Love” is more than a feeling. Love is a form of *sweet labour*: fierce, bloody, imperfect, and life-giving—a choice we make over and over again. If love is sweet labour, love can be taught, modelled, and practiced. This labour engages *all* our emotions. Joy is the gift of love. Grief is the price of love. Anger protects that which is loved. And when we think we have reached our limit; wonder is the act that returns us to love.

Thought for Today

The whole day Diocesan zoom meeting last week was about the new C of E initiative called “Living in Love and Faith”. Exeter Diocese is the first Diocese to use it but it is going to be rolled out nationally. It is all about inclusion and initiating a conversation in the church about the way homosexual and Transgendered people are welcomed and treated in our church communities. Sexuality, gender and sexual ethics have been hot topics in the church for a long time and this is the C of E’s attempt to initiate discussions within the parishes. There is a 5-session video course that it is envisioned will be shown at parish level. I’m sure it is well produced and worthy and notwithstanding all of our natural embarrassments and coyness about discussing any sexual topics I would need a few stiff drinks to summon up my courage to present them (I know I’m a bit prudish – you don’t have to tell me!) so I’ll probably leave it until later next year. Identity is a word that loomed large on the day but as I’ve said many times before, whatever other label we want to hang around our necks as individuals, as Christians our primary identity is as “a child of God”.

The Prayer for Today is by Johann Freylinghausen (1670 – 1739)

**May your Spirit guide my mind,
Which is so often dull and empty,
Let my thoughts always be on you,**

And let me see you in all things.

**May your Spirit quicken my soul,
Which is so often listless and lethargic.
Let my soul be awake to your presence,
And let me know you in all things.**

**May your Spirit melt my heart,
Which is so often cold and indifferent.
Let my heart be warmed by your Love,
And let me feel you in all things.**

Love and peace,
Martin

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