

Dear friends,

With 96 at the morning services at St. Peter's, the most for a little while, I hope is an indication that the anxiety over the omicron variant is waning. As I said at the start of Epiphany, the stories associated with this season are very evocative and a joy to preach about, including the hidden depths of the story of turning water into wine that we explored last Sunday. The double aspect of the physical reality pointing to a spiritual truth is introduced with the words "On the third day" a wedding took place is Cana of Galilee. But also and unmistakably of course "On the third day" the wedding took place between earth and heaven in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead transforming the water of our humanness into the rich and intoxicating wine of people who know God as their Father. The wedding at Cana is the keynote "sign" of John's gospel and all other signs refer back to it.

A helpful take on how to understand the Holy Trinity advanced by Fr.

Richard Rohr recently I found very helpful is to understand the trinity in terms of Love which of course is entirely Biblical for as John says "God is Love". The Trinity needs unpacking because it is couched in arcane philosophical language so complicated that it unfortunately leads people to disregard it entirely but if Father, Son and Holy Spirit are understood as the source of Love, the word of Love and Love in action respectively it becomes a more experiential and less theoretical concept. This taken together with the concept of perichoresis which means a divine dance (a lovely image traditionally used to describe the Trinity) that explains the interaction of the three aspects of God and we end up with a divine cosmic dance of Love. What a lovely way to describe how Christians conceive our God. Love is always personal and relational and is the binding agent of all that is.

Sunday 23rd January – Epiphany 3

Archdeacon Trevor Jones is presiding at the 8am and 10am services at St. Peter's and I will be presiding at the 9.30am at All Saints and the 11am service at St. Michael's.

Nehemiah 8: 1-3, 5-6, 8-10. The effect of reading the law had the effect of re-creating the community as a people brought into being and sustained by God. The laws provide the groundwork of how people were to relate to each other and how the community related to God. A sense of purpose and unity was discovered.

1 Corinthians 12: 12-31. If the reading of the law gave the Israelites a sense of purpose and unity, this piece of St. Paul should have a similar effect on Christians today describing as it does the fully functioning community as a body where each part of that body is indispensable. Gifts and skills are distributed around the whole body so all contributions to the body are needed for us to thrive. The community has become the resurrection body of Christ.

Luke 4: 14-21. Luke places this incident at the start of Jesus' ministry (right after the temptations in the wilderness) and announces that the character of that ministry will be liberation, bringing good news to the poor, release of the captives, bringing sight to the blind, and letting the oppressed go free. Proclaiming the year of the Lord's favour may allude to the Jewish concept of Jubilee, when land and possessions were re-distributed, debts were cancelled, and slaves were set free.

Coming up soon

A Seat at the table: engaging church members with science

Wednesday 9th February

**Refreshments from 7 pm, meeting starts at 7.30
pm.**

**St Peter's Church, The Lawn,
Budleigh Salterton. EX9 6LT**

You are invited to a meeting to learn more about how you can engage with science in Devon. Speakers from Exeter University will tell you about some of the research going on at Exeter University and what opportunities there are to

get involved in the design and delivery of research projects. Your views on research are always welcome!

Everyone is welcome. We are advertising in churches around Devon but feel free to invite friends who don't come to church.

On the 12th February, as already trailed, we are inviting RMC people to a day of prayer and discernment that will take place at All Saints church in Sidmouth from 10am -4pm, the aim of which is to engender a sense of unity and purpose. More on that soon.

We are also planning to take part in the Diocesan Lent course this year called "Surprised by generosity". This is a seven-week course that will start on Ash Wednesday (March 2nd). Further details to follow....

Thought for the Day

One of the most liberating things you can be told as a practicing Christian is that you don't need to pretend to know everything, understand everything or have a glib easy answer to every world problem and situation.

Religious faith provides an anchor for your soul and a context and principles for making decisions and evaluating situations but it does not provide answers as to why some people get cancer, why disasters happen, or why I didn't get that promotion.

Admitting we don't know something offends our egos, so we often end up proclaiming things for which we have no justification. Humility is central to Christianity but is a place we'd rather not go if we have the choice. Though it should be relatively easy for a person who believes in a higher power. We already acknowledge that we are not the centre of the universe, that God's ways are far above our ways, and we sometimes struggle to apply God's law of love into concrete political and social situations. Not for nothing is the name "Israel" – struggle with God - very appropriate. But in calling ourselves children of God, we are saying that at one and the same time that we are not God but also that we find peace and strength in our relationship with Him. Our

faith can provide peace of mind, strength and confidence – the liberation that Jesus proclaims in this week’s gospel story and also the basis for seeking after truth but that truth doesn’t arrive gift wrapped but only after a lot of struggling on our part. John’s gospel is clear that the truth is something we will be guided towards in conversation with the God of Love - it won’t be presented on a plate because life is dynamic and changing constantly.

¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

The Prayer for Today is Celtic in origin, rather beautiful and aptly reflects the premise that we can’t know everything.

**As the rain hides the stars,
As the autumn mist hides the hills,
As the clouds veil the blue of the sky,
So the dark happenings of my lot hide the shining of your face from me.
Yet, if I may hold thy hand in the darkness, it is enough.
Since I know that, though I may stumble in my going,
Thou dost not fall.**

Love and peace,
Martin