

Dear friends,

The 23<sup>rd</sup> of April is St. George's day, our national patron saint, but did you know that George is also the patron saint of many other states, regions and cities as diverse as Ethiopia and Moscow! In the middle east he is widely venerated by both Christians and Muslims, so his cult has a strong unifying aspect. One of my favourite icons is one of St. George slaying the dragon which was presented to me on the occasion of my birthday on a tour coach in Israel, during a pilgrimage I had led to the Holy Land in year 2000 so brings back a flood of happy memories. This subject was highlighted to me because the appropriately named George Lisle is leading intercessions this coming Sunday at St. Peter's and is arranging his prayers to be said in conjunction with a rousing hymn to St. George which although I won't be there to hear it I'm sure will be a real treat.

**As of** this week I have decided to go back to producing one soul food communication per week, usually mid-week on a Wednesday. Two per week during the pandemic has been a struggle for the past year and as things start to get back to normal I think it is time to resume normal practice.

**Last week** saw the largest congregation so far outside of Easter Sunday. I have recorded what I said (roughly) on a YouTube recording which you can access by clicking on this link. [https://youtu.be/wGuE\\_\\_j6we4](https://youtu.be/wGuE__j6we4) Alternatively, you can read it on my Blog. <https://revmartinjacques.blogspot.com/2021/04/the-power-of-resurrection.html>

## **Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> April – Easter 4**

These are the lectionary readings set for this coming Sunday. I will be presiding at All Saints and St. Michael's and Reverend Karen Young will presiding at St. Peter's.

**Acts 4:5-12.** A man was healed by the "name" of Jesus and we are saved by his "name". Names in the ancient world carried meaning and power so let us look at the name of Jesus. Jesus is the Greek rendition of Jesus' actual name which was Joshua and Joshua means "God is salvation". Although some Christians see this as a proof text proclaiming the uniqueness of Christ (effectively only Christians can be saved), this cannot overrule the universality of God's healing love for the whole world, which He loves in all its pluriform diversity of religious practice and belief.

**1 John 3: 16-24.** Everything that flows from the name of Jesus, in terms of his life and teaching, which in shorthand we say is “love” is to be emulated by believers. In the East this is known as Deification and in the West as sanctification, both really meaning “growing into the likeness of Christ”.

**John 10: 11-18.** Building on the assertion that God is salvation Jesus invokes the “I am” mode of speech which in Judaism is the name of God. (See Exodus 3:14). God/Jesus is the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep of his own accord. A perfect gift offered to God to cement an eternal relationship between God and humanity.

## Thought for the day

News that six English football clubs have decided to try and set up a European super league has met with almost universal derision and the underlying perception aired is that the elite owners of these clubs have completely lost touch with the hopes and aspirations of the ordinary football supporter. The scale of the backlash has resulted in the scuppering of these plans I hear this morning.

But this trend of elites losing contact with their traditional core supporters is becoming quite commonplace. In fact you could say that this is the same thing that destroyed the labour party in its traditional working class areas, namely an out of touch metropolitan elite with no shared interests or empathy with ordinary working class people – labour voters increasingly becoming *former* labour voters in increasing numbers.

Ruling cliques or factions operating within national institutions like the National Trust, Kew Gardens, and various museums are also guilty of draining away any sympathy they ever had with policy decisions and directives that seem to most people to be just plain weird.

One hopes that the same is not true of the church of England, but I’ve seen an increasing number of articles, letters and opinion pieces in various media outlets that are claiming that much the same situation is developing within the church. An out of touch elite operating at odds, or at least out of sympathy, with its traditional people in the pews is the story that is taking shape.

I hope this all turns out to be a red herring but one can’t afford to be naïve either.

Christianity has always had a universal, non-discriminatory, approach to all people and a respect for creation from the very beginning that it can be proud of and it will always bear a changeless message of hope to a needy world. The church of England has similarly been a pillar of English society for generations, often overlooked and ignored admittedly but is a ubiquitous and

familiar presence in every corner of this country and that shouldn't be casually cast aside.

## Musical interlude!

The set psalm for this coming Sunday is the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm and I could have just printed it out but this is the musical version composed by Stuart Townend. Enjoy, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-elQQayhpak>

**The Prayer for Today** is from the Celtic tradition

**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

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