

Dear friends,

My sermon on Sunday reflected on the fact that while we have no control on what happens to us in life (fair weather or storms) – we do have a choice on how we react to them. This is obviously a response to the gospel story about Jesus stilling the storm but what I said owes an enormous debt to one of the most influential books I have ever read called “Man’s search for meaning” by Viktor Frankl, psychologist and Auschwitz survivor. If you’d like to hear what I said just click on this link. <https://youtu.be/cqoMviDtVH4>

Alternatively, if you’d prefer to read it you can do so on my Blog by clicking here. <https://revmartinjacques.blogspot.com/2021/06/calming-storm.html>

Sunday 27th June – Commemorates St. Peter

This would in normal times be a chance for us all to get together for St. Peter’s church patronal festival, but we are leaving joint services until next year. I will be presiding at St. Peter’s church and the venerable Trevor Jones is presiding at All Saints and St. Michael’s at the usual times.

Ezekiel 3: 22-27. The resonance with St. Peter is I think the similarity to Peter being unable to speak up and denying even knowing Jesus when Jesus was arrested (as well as the incident from Acts 12 which is our second reading today) yet subsequently becoming a vocal and articulate preacher of God’s truth at Pentecost and other occasions enabled by God’s Spirit.

Acts 12:1-11. A story of an angel helping Peter to escape Herod’s clutches. An angel is a messenger from God doing God’s bidding or delivering a message from God. Understood literally this would be a marvellous act of God, understood more metaphorically a message that God is on the side of Christ’s disciples against all that would try and hinder the spread of the gospel.

Matthew 16: 13-19. The famous incident when St. Peter accurately proclaimed the truth that Jesus was “the Christ” (anointed one or Messiah). Jesus knew that this truth was revealed to Peter directly via the Holy Spirit and told him so. Peter is known as the rock on which the church will be built though whether it is Peter personally or more generally “faith in Christ” that is the rock on which the church will be built can be argued either way.

“Looking East in Winter” by Rowan Williams

Most of you know of my deep attraction and affinity with the Orthodox church of the East, an attraction nurtured initially by Mirfield and Rowan Williams himself and then serving for three years in the Orthodox country of Romania. So, on Sunday before church, listening to radio 4 imagine my excitement when Rowan talked about his latest book - the premise of which apparently is that the Western church is in trouble and facing multiple icy winds (the Winter of the book’s title) but that we can gain and learn so much from the Orthodox church which can inspire us- hence “Look East”. It was on my pre-ordination talk with Rowan in Canterbury twenty years ago that he told me to read “For the life of the world” by an Orthodox theologian about Eucharistic theology which first made me “look East” and I can’t wait to read this one!

Musical interlude!

Always a favourite, but in the light of recent events I find the words very appropriate. Bob Marley and “Three little birds”. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HNBCVM4KbUM>

Thought for Today.

The story of the calming of the storm from last Sunday and my reflection that we can only choose how to react and not choose what happens to us – is especially pertinent to the Raleigh Mission Community in our present circumstances.

We have had our associate priest suspended with immediate effect and precious little expectation of any replacement due to the new financial restrictions placed on the church. We also still suffer from Covid restrictions and so we face a future where I will be the sole permanent priest from now on, in a slightly weakened state. We are shaken but not stirred! We need to safeguard the current service provision for our three churches while being mindful that this could easily increase to four churches in the wake of future pastoral reorganisation. I, with the dedicated and competent assistance of a willing group of retired priests and wonderful lay leadership are determined

and able to do just that for the foreseeable future but we need to be realistic when thinking about workloads and what is possible over and above that. The new rotas are being compiled as we speak, and it is prescient indeed that we brought the PCCs together to aid efficiency and communication and foster a sense of togetherness. The default position is that I will cover as many of the weddings, funerals and baptisms as I can myself, remembering that the retired priests are after all “retired” and mustn’t be prevailed upon too much! In my last sermon at St. Peter’s, I said “Don’t worry – be happy”. Keep calm and carry on. We are a happy band of pilgrims who have come through the past year as healthy as we possibly could have and with God’s help we will grow in depth and numbers as God sees fit. We look to the future with hope and faith. We have so much going for us -We are the sole venue of the Budleigh music venue in July and we can use the RMC Garden party on 24th July as a galvanising event to launch us into the future socially. Spiritually, we need to keep close to God and continue to pray for God’s Spirit to provide guidance and inspiration to take us forward and bring in the kingdom.

The prayer for today is the collect for St. Peter

Almighty God

Who inspired your apostle St. Peter

To confess Jesus as Christ and Son of the living God,

Build up your church upon this rock,

That in unity and peace it may proclaim one truth

And follow one Lord, your Son our saviour Jesus Christ,

Who is alive and reigns with you,

In the unity of the Holy Spirit,

One God, now and forever. Amen.

Love and peace,

Martin

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