

Dear friends,

Louise's parents sent us a photograph of the view from their window of a winter wonderland in the Midlands and her brother in Surrey sent one of their children on a Toboggan. Sunday morning wasn't quite as bad here in East Devon but it was certainly icy and the car had to be defrosted before I could set off to church. Those whose driveways were on a slope were unable to get their cars out safely but if you could get to church it contributed to a general feeling of achievement on top of everything else that is happening in the country at the moment. Did someone mention the Dunkirk spirit?

## January 31<sup>st</sup> – The presentation of Christ (Candlemas).

This festival, (transferred from the 2<sup>nd</sup> February) marks the end of the whole Christmas and Epiphany season. After this Sunday it is "Sundays before Lent" until Ash Wednesday on the 17<sup>th</sup> February.

**Malachi 3: 1-5.** Messenger and Angel are the same word in Hebrew and the message is that divine judgement will be painful for those who experience it. The judgement starts in the temple and its worship (v3) and then will pass into the social sphere. To all the Hebrew prophets a worthy temple cult went hand in hand with social justice. Chosen today to accompany the "presentation of Christ in the temple" gospel story, arguably it might be better suited to the cleansing of the temple story?

**Hebrews 2: 14-18.** Jesus was like his brothers and sisters "in every respect" (v17) the writer of Hebrews attests. It is this total identification with humanity in our temptation and suffering that qualifies Jesus to act as the great high priest acting on behalf of all humanity.

**Luke 2: 22-40.** The presentation of the first born male carries no such sacrifice as described by Luke so what Luke is really describing here is the purification of Mary. But liturgical accuracy is not Luke's aim here. This "new thing" is rooted in the story of old Israel and the scriptural allusions are rooted in very old Israel indeed. Simeon for example reminds us of Eli in relation to Samuel. As with the annunciation story and the shepherd's vision, Jesus here is the object of faith and hope, yet the child's purpose will only be carried out through suffering which Simeon also foresees.

**Exeter University** in collaboration with the BBC have launched a unique experiment to help understand the emotions people feel when they watch scenes of nature online or on television. When people click on the link they will be asked to watch a three-minute video of, what Professor Smalley says, is a "virtual nature experience".

But what people hear will be different and chosen at random.

"Some people might encounter something which focuses on the visual experience, others might encounter something which focuses more on sound," explains Smalley.

Participants will then be asked to provide information about the emotions they experience when they watch the video.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-55746288>

Louise and I have both taken part. It is quite interesting and thought I'd include it here for you to partake if you'd like to. It is a national public experiment so it doesn't matter where you live.

## Musical interlude!

Enigma really are enigmatic to me. The creation of a Romanian German called Michael Cretu they pioneered an other-worldly ephemeral style that unexpectedly sold millions. And who doesn't like Gregorian chant set to a disco beat? Sadness (Part i) by Enigma. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4maoo4A3x4>

## Thought for the day – “Lead us not into temptation”

I wrote about the use of thy and thine as familiar terms in the Lord's prayer on Saturday which prompted Celia from Budleigh to ask me to write about that line in the Lord's prayer which goes “Lead us not into temptation” because she couldn't believe that God would indeed lead us down that road and found it troubling. After a little research I found out the following.

Well Celia has a powerful ally here in Pope Francis who caused a stir amongst traditionists when he first announced in a TV documentary in 2017 that he thought that line was a bad translation of the original Greek and indeed the pope officially authorised a change to the Lord's prayer in 2019 which read “Do not let us fall into temptation”.

And actually, Italian Bishops had previously agreed a new translation of the Bible into Italian in 2008 which translated Matthew 6 and Luke 11 as “Do not abandon us to temptation” though they had never agreed that change for use in liturgical services.

And in the Bible, in James 1:13-14 it reads “No one when tempted should say “I am being tempted by God” for God cannot be tempted and he himself tempts no one.” Which seems to agree with the Italian Bishops, though the change in the Lord’s prayer has faced opposition and has been rejected by the German Bishops for example.

So far the flow is therefore all one way. The only episode in the Bible that leads me to think any differently is that after Jesus was baptised in the river Jordan, it was the Spirit that led him into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil (Mark 1:12-13). So, Jesus was led into temptation. Perhaps we need to bear in mind another piece of scripture here – 1 Corinthians 10:13 that says. <sup>13</sup> No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it. So you might argue that God led him into the wilderness knowing full well in advance that Jesus would ultimately not fall for any of the temptations. But apart from the theological arguments , the core strength of the Lord’s prayer is its commonality. This is why I mourn the day the “modern” Lord’s prayer was introduced as an alternative to the traditional version because then even the most central prayer of the church becomes not a commonly held and binding thing but a point of difference and confusion. Two different versions doesn’t bind but confuses so I personally continue to champion the most well known version in our churches commonly known as the traditional version.

**The Prayer for Today** always strikes me as perfectly formed. The “collect for purity” first appeared as a 10<sup>th</sup> century catholic prayer and indeed formed the introduction for the 14<sup>th</sup> century spiritual classic “The cloud of unknowing”. Thomas Cranmer’s classic English translation first appeared in the 1549 prayer book and has remained a feature of every Anglican liturgy ever since.

**Almighty God,  
unto whom all hearts be open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hid:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love thee,  
and worthily magnify thy holy Name;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Love and peace,  
Martin

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