

Dear friends,

The contribution of the small singing groups at All Saints (Louise, Charles and Nigel) and at St. Michael's (Martin Smith and Angela) were absolutely lovely on Sunday. I have no idea when congregational singing will be officially allowed of course but, in the meantime, we are being well served!

I have recorded a YouTube video of my reflection given on Sunday that concentrates on the name of Jesus. I'm glad to say that many people told me they enjoyed it – it deals with the name of Jesus – and if you want to watch it you can do so by clicking on this link. <https://youtu.be/vft1c1CTwTA>

Alternatively, if you'd prefer to read it you can access it on my Blog here. <https://revmartinjacques.blogspot.com/2021/04/the-name-of-jesus.html>

It is all very exciting as we unlock society one step at a time and I am particularly excited that we are returning to four hymns and associated choir input from this Sunday at St. Peter's and choral evensong returns on the 9<sup>th</sup> May. The phrase "He who sings prays twice" is often accredited to Martin Luther but whoever said it, we know how much the sentiment resonates.

## Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> May – Easter 5

**Acts 8:26-40.** Luke had already stated (1 verse 8) that Jesus promised that the disciples would be witnesses to him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and "the ends of the earth". The Ethiopian eunuch is exotic enough to represent the ends of the earth to Luke's readers. Here we also have Isaiah 53 quoted and applied to Jesus and the baptism and gift of the Spirit is affirmed. The "Ethiopian" was on his way to Jerusalem to worship and was reading Isaiah so was he Jewish or at least a God-fearer? We'll never know and the fact that he is a eunuch, so not acceptable to Jews in religious worship is made nothing of in this story which may be another sign of Christianity breaking through Jewish cultic barriers.

**1John 4:7-21.** This is a sublime and liberating doctrine equating God with love and provides a theological underpinning of Paul's hymn to love in 1 Corinthians 13. There exists a gritty subtext of course that this love was not due to those who had split away from the Johannine church this letter is addressed to. Those who had "gone out" from the community in chapter 2: 19. Notwithstanding this contextual point, it remains an inspiring piece of writing.

**John 15: 1-8.** Another of the “I am” sayings of Jesus in John’s gospel that emphasises our reliance on God and which simultaneously presents Jesus as the image of God. So far so good and comforting, but there is a sterner side to this parable. Vines grow slowly, typically taking three years to bear fruit and in the meantime careful tending and pruning were needed. Jesus himself was subject to the same process he says so we are not above it. Happily, in Greek the word for pruning also means cleansing, so instead of being simply lopped off and thrown into the fire, that leaves open the path of cleansing by baptism and then repentance and ultimate forgiveness.

## Musical interlude!

I have spoken a fair bit about names this past week. By coincidence a German friend of ours, who we know via Jesmond Parish Church in Newcastle called Ingo Schuder has put together this lovely piece about various names of Jesus set against the piano tune “it is well with my soul” and it is just so restful. – Enjoy. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=dG4mwoUTjvY&fbclid=IwAR1wI159wt2GZObKf-KBR9YUsI2DPJRM5ugD9RcRROI3vegCzPmvYxNWcZM>

## Thought for the day.

In 2009 we jetted back into the UK from Bucharest and on another flight came our dog Toby and three Romanian cats. British Airways was the only airline our authorities trusted to carry animals securely, so they came on BA and we travelled by Wizz air, the budget Hungarian airline! Well Casper, Marley and Toby are no more unfortunately but Axel our cat is the last man standing and still going strong. He had a little trouble with the language initially but has acclimatised very well to his new life! It is remarkable how animals as much as people and possessions tie you to certain places and times in your life so Axel, so named after Axel Rose the lead singer of Guns and Roses, is a constant reminder that I once led a very different life in a strange country with very different demands and expectations. But I am still the same person today and I am an amalgam of all my different life choices and experiences but the core of my personality, my values, my way of looking at life, my sense of humour, have always remained constant. No matter where I’ve lived or what I was doing I have always valued integrity, truth, reliability and duty so the core never changes but life is a great teacher and I have grown and developed, enriched by life’s rich tapestry and the wonderful teachers I have met on the way and those teachers are the people I have interacted with along the way. Those teachers are the stuff of life and God works through the stuff of real life, knocking us into shape, and filing down the sharp corners. When you go through rough times, always remember who you are at your

core and try and see that tough times can be the greatest teachers polishing you to become the jewel that God sees in you, for he knows you completely.

**The words of wisdom** for today are taken from Vespers for the feast of Pentecost from the Orthodox church.

**The Holy Spirit gives all things  
Makes prophecies flow,  
Perfects priests,  
Teaches wisdom to the unlettered,  
Reveals fishermen to be theologians,  
welds together the whole order of the church.  
Advocate, consubstantial and sharing the same throne with  
The Father and the Son, glory to you.**

Love and peace,  
Martin

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