

Dear friends,

Holy Week was inaugurated by a couple of lovely Palm Sunday services at All Saints and St. Michael's (and St. Peter's too I'm sure) and this week there will be a compline service every evening in St. Peter's this week (except Good Friday) at 7pm. Very well attended so far I am glad to say.

On Good Friday itself there will be a service of reflections at 3pm – the time Jesus actually died on the cross.

This all inevitably sets the stage for the highlight of the Christian year where we celebrate the victory of life over death and light and goodness over darkness and evil on Easter Sunday and the readings for the day with my usual short precis is as follows.

Sunday 4th April – Easter Sunday

Accentuating the particular significance of this “new” revelation, provision is made to have a reading from the book of Acts in preference to the Old Testament reading so I have done so. I will be presiding at the 8am and 10am services at St. Peter's and Reverend Karen Young will preside at the 9.30am and 11am at All Saints and St. Michael's.

Acts 10: 34-43. Peter's speech in the house of the centurion Cornelius is significant as it marks the expansion of the Christian message outwards from its Jewish roots to the wider world. All the elements of early Christian preaching are there. It is a message for the whole world (v34) though its roots are in Israel (v36), Jesus was raised on the third day and ate and drank with his chosen witnesses. There is a command to preach and that Jesus will judge the living and the dead, and we have forgiveness of sins.

1 Corinthians 15: 1-11. Paul's account of the good news of the resurrection being relayed first to Peter, then the twelve (although presumably 11?) and then to 500 people (otherwise unknown accounts) and to James (this makes sense as he led the early church in Jerusalem) ends with Paul placing his own conversion experience on the same level as the other aforementioned “sightings”. This mixing of the physical and spiritual, and placing them on the same level emphasises the mysterious nature of the resurrection where categories break down and are unable to be investigated by historical methods but only by the dramatic effect it had on the witnesses.

Mark 16: 1-8. Enigmatic, sparse, lacking in any details of any resurrection “appearances” (verses 16-20 were added by an editor afterwards so disturbed were they by the lack), this for me just adds to the mysteriousness of the resurrection, so much is unknowable and defies description. My favourite explanation for the sudden end sentence “and they were afraid” is that the next chapter in the story has to be written in and through the lives of the people who believe and want to follow Jesus Christ. We are all the final chapter of Mark.

Save the date – 26th June – RMC Garden party

As long as the current rate of progress continues, on the 21st June it is projected that all restrictions will have been rescinded in the UK, and all of us will have had two jobs. I propose a grand RMC celebration garden party at the vicarage. It'll be free, and while we are never without a bottle or two at the vicarage, if people could bring a bottle that would be great. If our ladies (or gents!) could also organise cakes, all we'd need to do is pray for the sun to shine. I propose a 3.30pm start time, simply because I have a wedding at St. Peter's at 2pm! All in favour – say aye. I am looking forward to it already.

Musical interlude!

This Leonard Cohen song depicts love standing the test of time and blossoming into old age accompanied by lovely images of older couples very much in love in the twilight of their lives. Dance me to the end of love. Enjoy. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGorjBVag0I>

Thought for the day

The origins of blood sacrifice lie in the human instinct that the best way to create, maintain or restore relationships with each other has always been twofold - the gift and a shared meal.

As with people so also with a divine being but how? They took either a valuable animal or other foodstuff and offered it to God by burning it on an altar. This was the gift. I'm sure the smoke and smell rising from the altar symbolised the transfer of the gift from humanity to divinity. The blood and sometimes the body was then returned to the offerer and used as food for a divine feast with God.

In a sacrifice the animal is made sacred and is given to God as a sacred gift and returned to the offerer as a sacred meal. This original meaning of

sacrifice involves neither substitution or suffering so should inform our use of the word when applying it to the death of Jesus.

The prayer for today is by R.S. Thomas

Tell Us

**We have had names for you:
The Thunderer, the Almighty
Hunter, Lord of the snowflake
and the sabre-toothed tiger.
One name we have held back
unable to reconcile it
with the mosquito, the tidal wave,
the black hole into which
time will fall. You have answered
us with the image of yourself
on a hewn tree, suffering
injustice, pardoning it;
pointing as though in either
direction; horrifying us
with the possibility of dislocation.
Ah, love, with your arms out
wide, tell us how much more
they must still be stretched
to embrace a universe drawing
away from us at the speed of light.**

Love and peace,
Martin

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