

Dear friends,

**As a front-line worker** in the NHS, Louise, although only a youngster, had her vaccination on Saturday. It made her feel rather happy/relieved, a feeling that I expect is being replicated a thousand times over every day and although the authorities are understandably cautious and are playing down the effects, that sense of release and hope that everything is on the right track will flow through society as a whole.

**Of course**, we mustn't let that minimise or easily forget the ongoing death toll which passed the 100,000-mark last week, a milestone that the Archbishops of Canterbury and York want marked by designating February a month of prayer and reflection at 6pm every evening to just stop and contemplate. The C of E has issued this prayer to help us.

Gracious God,  
as we remember before you the thousands who have died,  
surround us and all who mourn with your strong compassion.  
Be gentle with us in our grief,  
protect us from despair,  
and give us grace to persevere  
and face the future with hope  
in Jesus Christ our risen Lord.  
**Amen.**

## **Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> February – 2<sup>nd</sup> before Lent (or Epiphany 8)**

I will be presiding at the 8am and 10am services at St. Peter's. Rev. Chris Cant at the 9.30 at All Saints and John Archibald at the 11am at St. Michael's. We will all revert to using the green "ordinary time communion books" until Ash Wednesday.

**Proverbs 8:1,22-31**. Wisdom has a divine quality in the Bible and is treated as a "person". Wisdom was there at the very beginning of creation and was "rejoicing in creation and delighting in the human race. The quality of reason and wisdom also has another way of being expressed in the Bible as the "Logos" hence the reason we have John's prologue today. Logos is usually translated as "word" in English Bibles and Jesus is the word made flesh but could be expressed as the "wisdom of God made flesh"

**Colossians 1:15-20.** Three mystical and mysterious readings today and this one from St. Paul is no exception. The universal Christ is the “image of the invisible God” and in Him God was reconciling himself to all the world through Him. God in Christ is revealing that his ubiquitous presence is in all things and he cares and loves all that he has made and wills its salvation.

**John 1: 1-14.** This powerful piece of exalted theology that we last heard at Christmas caps off three mind expanding readings today and together they form the outer layer of the “cosmic egg” under which we live and move and have our being. God is the light that enlightens all things yet made especially visible in Jesus Christ. When we believe that God is in Christ (and everything else besides) we see that we are children of God.

## Thought for today.

Don't be surprised when you doubt. Religious people often feel like failures or turncoats if they express doubts at any stage. But doubt is in fact a very necessary stage that everyone goes through as their faith is perfected in the cauldron of life. The danger is of course that it finishes off your faith entirely but if you can still maintain a belief despite your doubts and stick with thinking things through however difficult and keep praying, a new way of seeing and believing will emerge. It's what the mystics call the dark night of the soul. I proffered the process just recently of “order, disorder and re-order” Doubt is the necessary and often painful kindling that propels us from order to disorder before we eventually see things in a more nuanced way. Today Fr. Brian McClaren says much the same thing and offers a four layered scheme arrived at through experience and observing stages of faith over many years that move from Simplicity to complexity through perplexity to Harmony. This is written not to test yourself or see where you are on the scale but simply to let you know that while doubts do torment us sometimes – seeing them as a gift of God's spirit to bring you closer to Him and perfect your faith might ease the pain somewhat.

**The prayer for Today** is the serenity prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr

Prayer for Serenity

**God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can,**

**and the wisdom to know the difference.  
Living one day at a time,  
enjoying one moment at a time;  
accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;  
taking, as Jesus did,  
this sinful world as it is,  
not as I would have it;  
trusting that You will make all things right  
if I surrender to Your will;  
so that I may be reasonably happy in this life  
and supremely happy with You forever in the next.  
Amen.**

Love and peace,  
Martin

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