

Dear friends,

The sun shone brightly for our weeklong walking holiday on Gozo but for the second part of the holiday a storm blew over Malta. But as we were in a city by then it didn't matter so much with all the cathedrals, churches, archaeological remains, museums and art galleries to explore. Valetta is a magnificent city with lovely restaurants – the only trouble is, we put on eight pounds each in two weeks, so we are again on a strict diet for a while!

The sheer antiquity on the temples in Malta is breath taking, predating the pyramids of Egypt and Stonehenge by at least a thousand years. It's funny to say it but one of the highlights was seeing the "sleeping lady" figurine which is over 7000 years old and the detail on the figure is truly amazing.

Back late on Saturday evening, I was glad I had prepared (as far as I could) for the services at All Saints and St. Michael's on Sunday morning. At St. Michael's, Mike Scrivener was at the organ and gave it some real welly which helped contribute to a wonderfully uplifting service, galvanizing the newer members of the congregation to the long-standing stalwarts. We also welcomed Rev. Bill Lammy, the Vicar from the White Cross mission community to the service also.

Sunday 7th November – 3rd before Advent

I am presiding and preaching at the 8am at St. Peter's and at the 10am Heather and David Sharland our mission partners in Uganda are presenting to the congregation. Rev. Colin Randall is presiding at All Saints and John Archibald will preside at a service of the word in St. Michael's.

Jonah 3: 1-5, 10. It is unusual if not unique in the Bible that a prophet is sent to a foreign city to warn them to repent. The irony here is that they responded much more positively than the people of Israel ever did to these warnings. It's message is that God is concerned for nations other than Israel and he finds ways to communicate to them and the secondary message is that there is often a much warmer response to God from people outside the household of faith than from within.

Hebrews 9: 24-28. The "perfect" high priesthood of Christ is contrasted with the "imperfect" role of the high priests of Israel. The high priests offered a sacrifice that was not their own, whereas Christ offered himself. The high priests had to offer repeated sacrifices year after year on

the day of atonement whereas Christ's sacrifice is once for all. A priest of the order of Melchizedek. (Don't ask!). As Christians we all collectively share in the high priesthood of Christ because Christ lives in our hearts by faith and then again some of us are fortunate to be picked to become "ordained" priests.

Mark 1: 14-20. If we understand the first chapter of Mark's gospel as a kind of prologue to the whole gospel, it depends where you stop as to what you think is the most important piece of the narrative. If you stop at verse 15, the proclamation of the kingdom of God coming near is the most important thing but if you read further the culmination of the gospel is the dissemination of that message and the formation of a new community of believers – the church.

Law and Disorder

John Neligan, one of our churchwardens at All Saints, was a former Judge and he is going to share his insights into the legal system and share his anecdotes on Friday 26th November at 7pm in the church. Refreshments for a donation. Tickets £5 from the village community shop or I'm sure will be available on the door.

Rules on Foreign Travel.

These rules are quite complicated and involve long passenger locator forms (online) one for entry into the EU and another one for re-entry to the UK to be filled out while still on holiday 48 hours before you fly home. Screening by health officials in Malta, necessary covid vaccination certificates (that cover your return journey) and when you are finally home you have to take a Day 2 PCR test. That part was very efficient actually. The testing laboratory was in County Antrim. We dropped our swabs off in Exeter on Tuesday morning and by Wednesday morning we both got email confirmation that we had tested negative for Covid – Hurray! But actually, although complicated and time consuming the whole process worked fabulously well and there were no problems at all.

Thought for the day

The people who constructed the Temples in the stone age on Malta and Gozo are often depicted as primitive, but they were primitive only in that they lack the technology of today. The societal complexities required to organise the building of huge Temples taking many generations to complete, the artistic decorations of the tombs, fine sculpture, the organizing of agriculture to feed

themselves and the making of clothes, all point to the fact that our stone age ancestors were in all respects just like we are today in terms of brain power, and with sophisticated belief systems that dealt with life, death and the afterlife. The beautiful Baroque St. John's co-cathedral in Valetta, adorned with artwork by Caravaggio is different in style but the impetus and intent is exactly the same. To worship what is (apparently) unseen and bowing before the mystery of life and death, except in the case of Christianity with a firm hope based in the resurrection of Chrst. People have been searching for the divine for as long as human beings have walked the earth. What we have in Christ is what we believe is the ultimate and unique revelation of the true nature and purpose of the divine. The source less source of all things, is the one who Jesus Christ called our Father, and even more stunningly said that the divine was here with us all the time and when we realise that we become sons and daughters of God. That all life is sacred because it has its source in God and will end where it began – in God. Contemplating these mysteries can blow your mind but we don't need to fully understand whys and wherefores, we need to trust that it is true and inhabit that truth and let it transform our lives.

The prayer for Today is by Emily Bronte (1818 – 1848) and for me, embraces both transcendence and imminence beautifully.

**No coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-tossed sphere:
I see heaven's glories shine,
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.**

**O God within my breast,
Almighty, ever-present Deity!
Life – that in me has rest,
As I – undying Life – have power in thee!**

**Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts: unutterably vain;
Worthless as withered weeds,
Or idlest froth amidst the boundless main**

**To waken doubt in one
Holding on fast by thine infinity;
So surely anchored on
The steadfast rock of immortality.**

**With wide embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears.**

**Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And thou were left alone,
Every existence would exist in thee.**

**There is not room for death,
Nor atom that his might could render void:
Thou – THOU art Being and Breath,
And what thou art may never be destroyed.**

Love and peace,
Martin

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