

Dear friends,

I hope the typically cold, wet, grey and windy bank holiday Monday reassured you that things are indeed getting back to normal. It was good to see the snooker finalists performing in front of a packed auditorium at Sheffield and I called my first Banns of marriage in St. Peter's for goodness knows how long on Sunday. Let's pray for Ash and Josie, who enjoyed the service so much they want to be there much more often. I have recorded roughly what I said on a YouTube video and you can watch that by clicking on this link. <https://youtu.be/LHVgHg1liH0>

Alternatively, if you'd prefer to read it you can do so on my Blog by clicking here. <https://revmartinjacques.blogspot.com/2021/05/i-am-true-vine.html>

While talking about praying, this seems the opportune moment to mention the C of E's prayer initiative called.

Thy Kingdom Come.

While we all know that ideally, we should be praying for people all the time it does help to get a nudge and this is a ten day prayer initiative from Ascension day to Pentecost – so from Thursday 13th to Sunday the 23rd and the idea is to pray for up to five people you know to enter more fully into the Kingdom of God. Those who are part of regular prayer groups could incorporate a little space within their normal practice for members to pray in their hearts for these people as well. On the basis that prayer is effective, and all growth comes from God, we are consciously putting our future into His hands. Overlapping the “Thy Kingdom come” prayer initiative is also.

Christian Aid week – 10th 16th May. Please give generously to aid the least well off in the world. It seems apt that our prayer initiative coincides with alms giving – prayer and action in tandem.

Sunday 9th May – Easter 6

This Sunday the morning Communion service at All Saints East Budleigh will be advertised on the “Roots and shoots” Diocesan communication and the link this week is <https://app.faith.online/p/events/WGNNyfM9s>

I will be presiding there, John Archibald will be leading the 11am service at St. Michael's and Rev. Karen Young will be at St. Peter's.

Acts 10: 44-48. The very start of the Christian story in Acts charts the fact that Jews and gentiles were entirely equal in the new church, that God

showed no partiality. This must have been so attractive for the so-called “God-fearers”, gentiles who were attracted to Judaism but were hitherto always on the outside looking in. The building blocks of the new community of equals were being put in place.

1 John 5: 1-6. Whoever is born of God “conquers the world” in this passage. What does this mean? To me this means that the world, and everything in it is intimately connected to God, is not our enemy and we can commune with God through the stuff of ordinary life, and that death and suffering are transformed. “Water and the blood” are indicative of the baptism and crucifixion of Jesus, incorporation and identification with humanity followed by his sacrifice on behalf of humanity, mirrored in the church’s rites of Baptism and Eucharist.

John 15: 9-17. Friendship was given much greater importance in the ancient world that it seems to receive today. Being a friend of Jesus is a truly radical thing because friendship is based on having an equal relationship – not as a master and slave or teacher and pupil. Friends have no secrets from each other and shares everything he has with his friends even his privileged access to God.

Ascension day is Thursday 13th May and there will be a Eucharist at St. Michael’s Otterton at 7pm. This is also the start of the “Thy Kingdom Come” prayer initiative.

Thought for the day.

I thought I’d burn a little incense at the Ascension Day service at Otterton but what does this signify? Quite simply it represents the prayers of the saints ascending to heaven and the scriptural basis for that is found in Revelation 5:8 and Revelation 8:4 but the use of incense goes back to the very beginnings of Jewish worship in the tabernacle (and many other religions also) and of course it was one of the three gifts given to Jesus at his birth. As this service celebrates the “Ascension” and is also the start of the “Thy kingdom come” prayer initiative this seems to fit the bill perfectly.

I suppose another reason is that the essence/sheer physicality of sacramental religion is that it employs all our senses and smell is a very important sense often overlooked (except recently when one of the first signs of Covid-19 was a loss of the sense of smell). I trained for two years in a Monastery and what immediately brings back that sense of time and place and sanctity is the smell of incense.

The incense I have purchased is from Prinknash Abbey in Gloucestershire – the largest producer of incense in Europe. They themselves have a fascinating history being set up by Monks from Caldey island (just off the Welsh coast) who had converted from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism and the sort I have bought is supposed to be almost smoke free but very fragrant (That remains to be seen of course!). It's not that I intend to use it any more widely but on Ascension Day it simply "fits" and hopefully it just adds to a richer experience of worship.

The prayer for Today

**Lord, your love and salvation was meant for everyone,
And Christians are your missionaries.
Because you have made Christians one in Christ,
So those who believe and are baptised
Have brothers and sisters all over the world,
In Africa, Asia, the Americas, Australia and Europe.
Grant that this life of Christ may grow stronger
Drawing them ever closer together in love and unity
And helping them to become more zealous for the gospel.**

Love and peace,
Martin

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