

Dear friends, another gorgeous day – another gorgeous walk. You'd think I was feeling magnificent wouldn't you – but all aches and pains and the weight won't budge. Still, some good news in that my optician is not convinced that I have macular degeneration in my right eye because it hasn't really got any worse over the last three years – so may be genetic – thanks Dad.

Two wonderful and uplifting services at All Saints and St. Michael's on Sunday. There were over thirty at each church, so rumours of our death are a little premature and the spirit at each was excellent and put a real spring in my step for the rest of the day.

A PCC meeting on Tuesday evening at St. Peter's for those it concerns and of course the literary festival gets under way on Wednesday so plenty of (well remunerated) upheaval. Don't forget that the Wednesday morning communion will be set up in the Peter Hall. We are going to loads of the talks including Rev. Richard Coles on Friday. We are obviously very different, but he was at the same theological college as me (He was a year after) so it's good to see a Mirfield old boy do so well for himself.

Sunday 22nd September – Trinity 17 – proper 20

I will preside at both services at St. Peter's and Archdeacon Trevor Jones will preside at All Saints and St. Michael's.

Wisdom of Solomon 1: 16 – 2:1, 12-22. The ungodly don't just have intellectual hang ups about God, but these are translated into a nihilistic philosophy of life but also into active persecution against believers. This book calls that a "Covenant with death". Their point of view is very common nowadays. No-one returns from death – we are here without our knowledge or agreement, and after death we will be forgotten so the only thing that matters is the here and now. In this ambiguous world, even if that is accepted, the true marvel is that many people continue to believe in a good and merciful God and that our deeds have eternal significance.

James 3: 13 – 4:3, 7-8a. James' statements could be seen as a direct commentary on the wisdom of Solomon reading. Godly wisdom and earthly wisdom are very different and lead to different outcomes. Peace and contentment of soul cannot be bought. Doing the will of God is its own reward.

Mark 9: 30-37. Before childhood was romanticised in the twentieth century, previous notions of childhood is what Jesus would have been talking about. Childhood was a necessary evil to be passed through as quickly as possible. Uninformed, immature, having no status in society, incapable of owning property, quarrelsome, ignorant. That being compared to children only appears in the synoptic gospels (Matthew Mark and Luke) – not in the letters. In this context is stands absence of status, lack of respect, being a non-person, rejected by society – just like one who had been crucified.

Thought for the Day

The Pope said last week in an interview in Singapore that “all religions are a path to God” like different languages, and of course there is only one God and we are all of us sons and daughters of the one living God. Magnanimous and open as usual this is hardly new but is significant as catholics make up the vast bulk of world Christianity and what the Pope says reverberates through all Christianity. In the sixties the second Vatican council stated about other faiths “reject nothing that is good and true in other religions”. I checked that before I started doing Yoga which has its roots in Hinduism! This has a direct bearing on our forthcoming Sabbatical in Southeast Asia where we are mixing with Christians immersed in three separate cultures – Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist. One particularly exciting stay is at a Christian ashram in Tamil Nadu (India) which adopts a lot of Hindu customs, iconography, and practices, including the Eucharist celebrated cross legged on the floor, only serving vegetarian meals but still being Christian. In Malaysia, we will be attending an Ignatian retreat centre but with Malaysia being Islamic there is a different vibe because it is unlawful to convert a Muslim to Christianity so the retreat centre has a funny (to us) strapline which goes something like “All welcome – no Muslims”. In Sri Lanka we will be attending the Anglican church in Kandy which is also the location of one of the most famous Buddhist shrines in the world – the Temple of the tooth. So, all in all, a heady mix of cultures, faiths and languages. But I know what some of you may be thinking. Doesn't it say somewhere that Jesus is the only name by which we can be saved? Yes, it does but think about that for a moment. What is Jesus' name? Jesus is a Greek translation of Joshua which means literally “GOD is our salvation”

The Prayer for Today is from a Jesuit website and unites all mankind.

You, the One

You, the one

From whom on different paths

All of us have come.

**To whom on different paths
All of us are going.
Make strong in our hearts what unites us;
Build bridges across all that divides us;
United make us rejoice in our diversity.
And at one in our witness to your peace,
A rainbow to your glory.**

- David Steindl-Rast OSB

Love and peace,
Martin