

Dear friends,

Not many churches could muster 112 people for Choral Evensong on a cold November evening, but we could at St. Peter's on Sunday evening. We hosted the new Bishop of Exeter, Mike Harrison and our Archdeacon Andrew Beane. Our choir was faultless, and the hymns were sung very lustily indeed – I'd picked the hymns before I knew the Bishop was coming and breathed a big sigh of relief that they were all bangers (to use modern parlance). It was good to see a goodly number of people from All Saints and St. Michael's there also. So impressed was our Archdeacon that Andrew emailed me this morning offering to preside at Evensong while I am on Sabbatical – so all in all a very good night for the RMC.

I presided at All Saints and St. Michael's in the morning which were both also well attended – St. Michael's especially so for some reason so we can enter the whole Advent and Christmas season with confidence.

Sunday 24th November – Christ the King

Whilst I have been at St. Peter's for special services such as All Souls, Remembrance Sunday, and Evensong, I haven't presided at St. Peter's in the morning since before I went to Nepal, so this will be a chance to re-acquaint myself with you all properly. Archdeacon Trevor Jones will preside at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30 and 11.am respectively.

Daniel 7: 9-10, 13-14. The ancient one (Aramaic – the ancient of Days) is wearing white and has white hair like wool which denotes eternity and wisdom. In the midst of this vision of God “One like a human being” – a Son of Man – appears. One of Jesus' favourite expressions when talking of himself was as the “Son of man” which refers directly to this vision in Daniel.

Revelation 1: 4-8. To acknowledge Christ as “King” would be tantamount to heresy in the Roman Empire especially under the reign of Domitian who required to be addressed as “My Lord and my God” parroting Thomas' famous acclamation of Christ. The Alpha and the omega – the beginning and the end of all time and history is a title afforded to Christ as well as God.

John 18: 33-37. That the charge against Jesus “The King of the Jews” was nailed to his cross is one of the best attested facts from ancient History and all four gospels record the fact. It is for that fact that he was executed for sedition and the punishment

for that crime was crucifixion. But all Christians would have been aware that his Kingdom was no ordinary Kingdom with borders and armies to defend it – but a spiritual kingdom that transcended physical limitations.

Thought for the Day

After our spectacular display on Sunday at Choral Evensong with Bishop Mike and Archdeacon Andrew it is easy to relax and bask in a job well done. And it is right that we should allow ourselves that time. But at the same time, we should always be aware that we are an ongoing worshipping body of people wanting to be transformed into a better likeness of Jesus Christ. One of those traits is that we are an open, welcoming and kind body of people in all three churches and I think we are heading towards just that. We are used to talking about Love in all its manifestations and implications which is exactly as it should be, but kindness is just as important (as an outworking of Love) in oiling the wheels of our churches. I looked up “kindness” in the Dictionary and it said “generous, helpful and thinking about other people’s feelings”. I think they are traits that I’d like to encounter in any situation or body but especially a church. I’m pretty sure I have been less than kind in my past. But that is not something to just regret – it is something to put right. Transformation of our whole outlook on life and how we see and treat other people is what Jesus wants from us. The word he uses is “Metanoia” – which entails a complete turnaround in the way we think act and speak. Using more philosophical/Theological language it is about becoming more God centred and less self-centred. A work in progress for me and I’m sure for you too, but it is a process worth pursuing because it leads us closer to God.

The Prayer for Today is taken from “The sisters of the Divine Saviour” a group of American nuns.

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit ...

(Titus 3:4-5)

Loving Saviour,

Help me to live your goodness and kindness each day. Remind me that my actions express who I am even more than my words. May I love as you love. Let me be good to those who wish me harm, forgive those who need forgiveness, and reach out in kindness to all I meet so they can experience the unconditional love of God. Set our hearts on fire for you.

Amen.

Love and peace,
Martin