

Dear friends,

It was my first trip to Greece and if the rest of the country is anything like Corfu it would be lovely. It was searingly hot (and we still had the Michael Moseley incident uppermost in our minds) the sea was warm and blue, the tavernas rustic and cheap, and Albania loomed large across the narrow sea (Adriatic – Ionian?) to the mainland. Of course, it was very mountainous and green so we knew it must rain sometimes and according to one of the waiters it gets very cold and wet in the winter – a side most tourists never see. The flight from Exeter was a dream compared to having to drive to Gatwick or even Bristol, so that will be a factor in all future plans. But of course, it is always a joy to fly back over England's "green and pleasant land" and appreciate why so many people want to come here in the first place. "Broken Britain" doesn't look very broken from 35,000 feet – it looks idyllic.

The annual RMC vicarage garden party is upon us again and this year we have avoided Wimbledon ladies' finals day (Hurrah)!

Saturday 20th July from 3pm.

Bring and share food and drink but as usual we will provide a seedbed of wine and nibbles.

Hopefully the sun will shine so bring a rug or something to sit on. We don't have many joint events where people from St. Peter's, St. Michael's and All Saints can mingle and chat, so this is a great opportunity to relax together.

Sunday 7th July – Trinity 6 – proper 9

I will be presiding at both services at St. Peter's. Reverend Chris Cant will preside at All saints at 9.30am and John Archibald will preside at St. Michael's at 11.00am.

Ezekiel 2: 1-5. The divine voice addresses Ezekiel as "Mortal" a translation of the literal Hebrew idiom "Son of man" (Jesus' favourite way of referring to himself). It is making the point that Ezekial is a mortal "ambassador" bearing God's word to a wayward people. Why, if they are so stubborn and rebellious does God bother? No matter how wayward we are, God obviously never gives up on us!

2 Corinthians 12: 2-10. Paul, referring to his Damascus road experience "caught up into the third heaven". Describing the indescribable in words is always going to be difficult, but it had such an impact that it changed the course of his life from a church persecutor to the church's greatest evangelist. It also refers to the famous "thorn in the flesh" that Paul prayed to have removed from him but in vain, getting the

message that God's grace is sufficient for him. No-one knows what the thorn was specifically, but many speculate that it was an eye ailment. When Paul takes the pen from his scribe to actually write at the end of the book of Galatians, he notes how large the letters he writes in his own hand.

Mark 6: 1-13. "Familiarity breeds contempt" could be the message of the first six verses that outline the response of the people from Jesus' hometown. The second section from 6b onwards addresses a new phase in the widening of their mission proclaiming repentance across the villages in the region of Galilee. This would necessarily have included Gentiles (non-Jews) as Galilee had a minority Jewish population and the region was known as "Galilee of the Gentiles".

Thought for the Day

Having a personal spiritual practice that feeds your soul is just that – very personal. Many of us adopt a practice that fits how we were brought up, which church traditions we have been exposed to, and what "works" (if only for a season). This is quite separate from the official worship and services in the church. We change and grow, and both adopt and drop things in different phases of our lives. Morning and evening prayer (both corporate and private), Bible study groups, saying Grace before meals, regular worship, meditation and contemplation, extempore prayers, set prayers, Lectio Divina (Prayerfully reading and re-reading a Bible passage), reading theological books, arrow prayers, finding a sacred space where we feel close to God (perhaps our gardens?) – some of these, all of these, or a combination of some of these and more I haven't thought of feed us and help us feel more at one with God and his creation. Having been moulded by daily Mass and daily morning and evening prayer in a monastery I know all about the value (and frustrations) of routine, familiarity and discipline and while the form changes, the fundamentals of having something "ready-made" to draw from is literally a Godsend. Going back to my monastic roots I adopted in Corfu a ritual that revolved around the incarnation so consisted of the Hail Mary, the Jesus prayer and the Lord's prayer said one after the other and I also re-read an Orthodox treatise on the theology of the Eucharist. This helps me because it unites the western catholic tradition with the Orthodox tradition with the truly universal Lord's prayer. That wouldn't necessarily work for anyone else of course which is why I started by saying that a spiritual regime (or practise) is very personal. You probably already have one, even if you'd never thought of it as a spiritual regime (it is just what I do!). The aim of all of these things is to bring us consciously closer to God and to realise his love for us and to consequently increase our love of everything that God loved first.

The Prayer for Today

Part of my prayer practice was the Jesus prayer. This comes from the Hesychast Orthodox tradition but is quite well known in the West now. In their tradition it is repeated over and over again (like a mantra) to achieve the spiritual result that is, after many years, nothing less than theosis (union with God).

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Love and peace,
Martin