

Dear friends,

I don't remember having so many people after a service be so emotional and saying that the service was charged with spiritual energy but that was the case on Sunday. Everything came together and included the Baptism of Ben Chinery who towered over me (Most young people do nowadays – what are they feeding them?). One lady was surprised that Ben took communion afterwards which gave me the opportunity to explain that Baptism is now recognised as the full and complete admission to the church which brings us into line with Orthodox and Catholic practise. Indeed, in the Orthodox church which cleaves strongest to original church practise, Baptism and Confirmation (Chrismation) are just one service. When a baby is baptised into the Orthodox church they are baptised, receive Chrismation and receive their first communion at a few weeks old (via a diffuser). In the West, because we insisted that only a Bishop could confirm (in the East, a priest does both) an unnatural gap started to emerge between Baptism and Confirmation and we made them two separate rites but in fact they were only one originally.

Note: There will be no email next week as I'll be in Cordoba in Andalusia.

Sundays at Six

Michael Dutton regaled us with a excellent organ recital on Sunday evening. Michael spent most of his career in the North East and knew my previous church, Holy Saviours in Tynemouth which was a surprise. Next week's "Sunday at Six" is Choral Evensong with Archdeacon Trevor Jones presiding.

Sunday 8th June – Pentecost

Archdeacon Trevor Jones will preside at the 8am BCP Holy Communion and also at Choral Evensong at 6pm. Trevor will also preside at St. Michael's at 11am. Reverend Ken Parry will preside at the 10am service. There will be no service at All Saints in the morning because of the Scarecrow festival and Reverend Margaret Scrivener will preside at the Scarecrow Songs of praise in the evening at 6pm.

Acts 2: 1-21. All the stops are pulled out to try and convey the fact of sudden, unmerited, irresistible new life - The rush of a mighty wind, tongues of fire alighting on people's heads and transformed speech. Pentecost is the Jewish feast of weeks which is both a harvest festival and also a time Jews celebrated the reviewing of the Covenant with God. Thus, Pentecost/weeks is a special pregnant moment in the relationship between people and God. No one is excluded and the message is new life for the church, new life for individuals through the Spirit of God.

Romans 8: 14-17. This poignant extract from St. Paul emphasises that underpinning the new Christian movement was a change in relationship to God as a Father/Son/Daughter relationship. To see God as "Abba" which means "Daddy" in Aramaic (The language of Jesus) is a profound spiritual step away from picturing God as a distant, wrathful, judgemental and partial tyrant. Subconsciously, I think many Christians still see (prefer to see?) God like that, maybe because it keeps God at a safe distance from their lives. The theology of "presence" looms large again.

John 14: 8-17 (25-27). Speaking of the theology of "presence", here we are back with John's gospel speaking of the mutual indwelling of God the Father and Jesus and that

they are essentially one thing in terms of word and action. Then Jesus promises that we will be drawn into that close relationship when the Spirit of truth, sent by the Father, will abide in all of us, drawing us all together into that same unity.

Thought for the Day

On Saturday night we went to the cinema in Sidmouth to see “The Salt path”. It all takes place on the South West coast path and is a beautiful story of love, perseverance, the battle against illness, and people finding out that losing their home which they (and we) thought was the worst thing that could ever happen was something in retrospect that they wouldn’t change because they found out what was even more important. They found out that love was more important than bricks and mortar and in a poignant moment Ray, the female character exclaims that she found her real home was her husband “Moth”. Finding God is often depicted as a homecoming where we find love and freedom. The parable of the prodigal son is the archetypal story that illustrates the loving care of God who accepts you back home no matter what you’ve done or how long you’ve been away. Until we find that God is our home we are struggling and homeless no matter whether we have a secure home made of bricks and mortar or not. Their walk along the South West coast path is redolent of the notion of pilgrimage which is a feature of all the religions that I can think of, and as in most pilgrimages the spiritual worth comes in the travelling rather than the destination. Spiritual and emotional truths become apparent when we are exposed to privation and have to exert ourselves physically, hence their worth which is recognised across all religious divides. All that, and glorious scenery too. If I wasn’t so scared of heights on those precipitous cliffs I’d have a go myself – I know that some of you already have. This true story is remarkable because the intense physical effort involved actually improved the condition of “Moth” who was/is suffering from a degenerative and incurable condition. I pray that each one of us discovers what is important in life before we shuffle off this mortal coil.

The Prayer for Today is this beautiful evening collect from the Book of Common Prayer.

**O God, from whom all holy desires,
all good counsels, and all just works do proceed:
Give unto thy servants that peace which the world cannot give;
that both our hearts may be set to obey thy commandments,
and also that by thee we being defended
from the fear of our enemies
may pass our time in rest and quietness
through the merits of Jesus Christ our saviour,
Amen.**

Love and peace,
Martin