

Dear friends,

After presiding at the BCP service at 8am, it was a pleasure to attend the main service at St. Peter's as a member of the congregation. This is a very different experience, getting a different perspective on proceedings. The last service Louise and I had attended sitting together was in St. Anthony's cathedral in Kandy, Sri Lanka.

On Friday last week we visited St. Leonard's church, a very different affair from the cathedral. In the tiny hamlet of Sheepstor. We made a pilgrimage to the church there to fulfil a promise we'd made to our Orang Ulu guide in Sarawak – more of that later... On the walk around Burrator reservoir we walked through woods and the display of Bluebells there was magnificent.

Sabbatical presentation

Saturday 17th May at 6pm in St. Peter's church followed by a buffet provided by Mandy in the adjacent Peter Hall. For catering purposes, we need to have an idea of numbers of course. I have put a sign-up sheet at the back of all three churches. The event is free but we'll put out donation plates to go towards the cost of catering.

Sunday 11th May – 4th of Easter

Archdeacon Trevor Jones will be presiding at both services at St. Peter's and I will be presiding at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30am and 11.00am respectively. I will then preside at choral evensong at 6pm.

Acts 9: 36-43. Both Tabitha (Aramaic) and Dorcus (Greek) mean Gazelle. It is significant that this sign is displayed in Joppa, a very ethnically mixed port city. It follows a pattern of Jesus raising Jairus' daughter and further back similar raisings performed by Elijah and Elisha. Continuity between the old and new covenant was very important to Luke. That the disciples defer to Peter is significant. He is undoubtedly the leader of this Jesus movement.

Revelation 7: 9-17. The important thing about this multitude is that they are Martyrs – they died for their faith. It may be the writer of revelation who first applied the word "Martus" – Greek for Witness – to mean those who had died for their faith. They have a special position and place in heaven. Salvation belongs to both God and the lamb. God is on the throne, but the lamb is at the centre of the throne.

John 10: 22-30. "The Father and I are one". This earth-shattering phrase comes at the end of a piece where the Jews ask Jesus to state plainly who he is. Of course, the answer is not to their liking. To them it is blasphemy – to call yourself God. As I noted last week, Indian thought regards this as the highest form of enlightenment.

Thought for the Day.

James Brooke was the first "White Rajah" of Sarawak, Borneo. He was made so by the Sultan of Brunei in 1841. Relatively unknown in this country, he is a hugely important figure in Borneo's history and our guide in Borneo, Paul, had a great affection for him. James was an extraordinary man who commands great affection to this day. He quelled all the inter-tribal conflicts, fought slavery, was scrupulously fair, spoke Iban (the majority tribe of Sarawak) wore native clothes and retained their ways

and learned their culture while loosely adopting a British system of justice. Paul would always defend him if one of his fellow countrymen attacked his reputation. He succeeded in bringing peace and development without exploitation. He wrote this;

“Sarawak belongs to the Malays, the Sea Dayaks, the Land Dayaks, the Kayans and other tribes, not to us. It is for them that we labour, not ourselves”.

We promised to Paul that when we got back to England we would find his grave and send the photos back to him which we have done. In 1859, he bought Burrator in Dartmoor and after he retired in 1863, he was buried in Sheepstor church. It was unfinished business that we seek him out and thus completed, it feels good.

The Prayer for Today is written by St. Anthony of Padua after whom the cathedral in Kandy, Sri Lanka is named after.

**O God, send forth your Holy Spirit into my heart
That I may perceive,
Into my mind that I may remember
And into my soul that I may meditate.
Inspire me to speak with piety, holiness, tenderness and mercy.
Teach, guide and direct my thoughts and senses
From beginning to end.
May your grace ever help and correct me,
And may I be strengthened now with wisdom from on high,
For the sake of your infinite mercy.
Amen.**

Love and peace,
Martin