

Dear friends,

I conducted the funeral of Jan Keliher at Otterton church last Thursday and it was an event that laid heavy on people's hearts. I can't remember when St. Michael's was so full as around 300 people gathered to say their final goodbye. A girl from Wales who fell in love with London and ended up in East Devon. As the treasurer of St. Michael's, I'd known Jan from the beginning of my tenure which are the hardest services to do without breaking down rest in peace Jan.

As I write this, I am anticipating presiding with Robert Charles at Jackie Clemo's funeral this afternoon. I have been taking home communion to Jackie for years, and over time, Jackie became a friend and Louise and I used to go round socially where Jackie always provided Champagne. I raise my glass to you in heaven Jackie – Cheers and may you too rest in peace.

Ash Wednesday is on the 18th February and the joint RMC service including marking with Ash (if desired) will be at 9.30am in the Lady chapel at St. Peter's.

Because I am away in March, it dawned on me that Sunday evening will be the very last time I shall preside at Evensong at St. Peter's, so it was apt that it was (as they say) a banger! Our choir was joined by Woodberry choir with their vicar Lewis Eden and 97 people in total were in attendance. The singing was gorgeous and one of my favourite pieces from Proverbs was our first reading and concerned Lady Wisdom being present with God at the dawn of creation.

Attendances have been strong for our two village churches just recently with the mid-thirties being the norm at All Saints and on Sunday we celebrated the 90th birthday of Tony Bennett at St. Michael's to a congregation of 42. That as well of course, because of Lent and me being away will be the last time I will sing the Peruvian Gloria!

Sunday 15th February – next before Lent

I will preside at both services at St. Peter's and Archdeacon Trevor Jones will preside at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30am and 11am respectively.

Exodus 24: 12-18. There are plenty of contextual difficulties with this passage, but I don't want to enter that minefield. The theological importance is that it emphasises the importance and divine origin of the commandments. All the elements are there, the high place, God speaking out of the cloud and Moses being on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

2 Peter 1: 16-21. Peter, many years later reflects on what he witnessed at the mount of the Transfiguration. Peter emphasises that he is a person witness to what happened, not someone reporting second hand. He heard the voice of God confirming that Jesus is God's beloved son, and with him he is well pleased.

Matthew 17: 1-9. The Transfiguration of Jesus is so important because his divinity and status (as being the fulfilment of the law and the prophets) is confirmed. As with Moses in the Hebrew scriptures, God speaks out of the cloud. Indeed Moses, long

since dead of course appears to talk to Jesus. Moses represents the Law. Elijah in traditional interpretation represents the prophetic tradition. Jesus is the fulfilling of the entire mission of Israel.

Thought for the Day

One of my favourite recollections of the holy Land is the incident at the mount of the Transfiguration which highlights the yawning gulf between God and humanity. Waiting at the bottom of the hill to be transported up the winding road up the hill by a fleet of designated vehicles, a fight nearly broke out between competing groups of American, Russian and English pilgrims, who were all accusing the others of queue jumping. Well, it certainly made me smile. That group pilgrimage in year 2000 was a parting gift to my church before I left for theological college. Planning and leading that tour is one of my proudest achievements. In the year 2000, in February there was a rare period of peace and hope in that region. Indeed, when we went there were lots of preparations for the visit by the Pope who was arriving in March. It didn't last long of course and that same year the first intifada broke out. In fact the difference between Holy aspiration and human frailty and sinfulness has played its part in convincing people that religion is such a destructive thing. They point to Jerusalem, the pinnacle of the Israeli people and a symbol of peace (Salem means peace in Hebrew) being in fact a cauldron of hate, competition and violence for two millennia. Of course that is not the intention. As I preached last Sunday, religion (re-ligare) literally means to re-connect. To bring people together with God and to all creation. The fact that we seem to be incapable of achieving that goal jsu again, points to the obvious truth that we all have feel of clay however well-intentioned and high minded we are. Happily, for Christians at least, we believe in a patient and forgiving God whose love extends to what essentially is a willing self-sacrifice on the cross. However many times we fall and fail, God in Christ is always there willing to pick us up, dust us down and set us back on the road again.

The Prayer for Today is written by Revd Dr. J.H. Jowett and prays that we may see the little things in our life as just as important as the big things.

**My Father in heaven,
Teach me the value of little things.
Show me how to consecrate what seems insignificant
And to recognise the light of your presence in every moment.
May I glorify the day by offering each minute
To be redeemed by your love.
I offer you all my moments.
Amen.**

Love and peace,
Martin