

Dear friends,

We are entering that familiar phase of events, familiar to everyone that has to downsize and rationalize our possessions, of making copious trips to the tip and agonising over things that have sentimental value but which in reality we haven't looked at or even noticed for years. Books are a major headache and when our Geordie movers relocated us from Tynemouth nearly eight years ago, after the umpteenth box of books one of them said, "Ever heard of a kindle?". We didn't like to say that we also had a kindle as well. Still, we are making a start and what at first seemed like a daunting task is slowly looking very do-able.

Jan Kelliher, the treasurer of St. Michael's Otterton died on Monday morning. She received her cancer diagnosis on Christmas Eve and was the same age as me. Jan was a lovely lady and Fran Mill's best friend, so understandably I'd request a lot of kindness and understanding from everyone if everything doesn't just work like clockwork in the near future.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.
Amen.

Hearing and seeing yourself on the Telly is a strange experience. I gave a short interview to the BBC last Wednesday and almost forgot about it until I started to get messages saying "saw you on TV" and people mentioning it to me in church and at a party we attended on Saturday. When I looked the clip up online I honestly didn't recognise my own voice and thought "Do I really look like that?"

Sunday 18th January – 2nd of Epiphany

Chris Cant will preside at the 8am service at St. Peter's and Ken Parry will preside at the 10am. I will preside at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30am and 11am respectively.

Isaiah 49: 1-7. This second servant song can be confusing because is it an individual or the whole people of Israel that is being raised up as a beacon for the entire world? The language is in the first person but Israel is depicted as existing not for itself alone but as an agent of God to reach out to the nations of the world.

1 Corinthians 1: 1-9. "Calling" is a strong theme here. Paul was "called" by God and the Corinthians were "called" to be saints. So we are all "called" into the Christian family. Whether we are ordained or lay, we share a common calling but to different roles in the church. Whatever grievances Paul later in the letter has with their use and interpretation of spiritual gifts he is adamant that they nevertheless are given by God.

John 1: 29-42. We are all familiar with the start of John's gospel being a meditation on the "theological" nature of Jesus. The second half of that same opening chapter is a "historical narrative" with people starting to recognise the true nature of Jesus. The baptism of Jesus by John is omitted in John's gospel (unlike the synoptic gospels) probably to underline that John is subordinate to Jesus. Also in contrast to the other gospels Andrew and Peter are not called to follow Jesus whilst they were fishing –

here Andrew is a follower of John the Baptist who starts to follow Jesus instead at John's own prompting.

Thought for the Day

A year ago, we were on Sabbatical in Malaysia, India and Sri Lanka and in trying to gain an insight into the three dominant religions of those countries I read copious Buddhist Scriptures, the Bhagavad Gita and the Koran as an into to Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam respectively. A religion I encountered and didn't look at very closely was Sikhism. As I've noted before, my sister-in-law Rashpal is a practising Sikh and she took us to the Gurdwara in Chennai where I met the Granthi (priest) and meditated in front of their Holy Book, the Guru Granth Sahib. This book is treated as a person – an incarnation of God – and takes pride of place in the Gurdwara during the day and is put to bed at night. Well, next month we are going to India again and I suppose it could be thought of as an extension to that sabbatical because we will be visiting the Golden Temple of Amritsar, the most important Temple in Sikhism. Most people are aware that every Gurdwara provides a simple free meal every day to anyone that wants one. The Golden Temple provides over 100,000 meals a day, sometimes double that on festivals, to anyone, no matter what their religion, caste, or background making it the largest free kitchen in the world. This is all by way of saying that in preparation for our visit, I'll be attempting to read the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book which was compiled by the fifth Guru and which was first installed in the Golden Temple on the 1st September in 1604. Trying to source which is the best translation with the most helpful commentary will I'm sure be a project in itself. Sikhism is often characterised as being a bridge between Islam and Hinduism - religions they recognise and respect – whilst offering a third way. The book is seen as a living thing, an incarnation of God and afforded the utmost respect. It must never touch the floor and as I have said is woken and put to bed every day.

The Prayer for today is by St. Ignatius of Loyola. He often added it to the end of letters he had written.

**May it please the supreme and divine Goodness
to give us all abundant grace
ever to know his most holy will
and perfectly to fulfil it.**

Love and peace,

Martin