

Dear friends,

It was the usual pleasure to preside at both services in the morning at All Saints and St. Michael's. Then as it was the second Sunday of the month it was choral evensong at St. Peter's. On these special days I get to be at all three churches in the RMC which is good. Of course, I hadn't presided at a choral Evensong for over five months, so a little nervous about remembering what to do and when but all passed off well and the choir sounded magnificent. We welcomed Andrew Downton as our organist who slotted in perfectly.

Sundays at Six

After the success of last year's programme, we will be repeating the practice of holding musical events at 6pm on a Sunday evening in St. Peter's church. The programme for the next four weeks is as follows.

18th May – St. David's singers

25th May – Stephen Tanner on the organ

1st June – Michael Dutton on the organ

8th June – Choral Evensong

Saturday 17th at 6pm. Sabbatical presentation

The response has been magnificent with now 113 signed up but with the possibility of others turning up as well. So just to say that the capacity of the Peter Hall is apparently only 80. What we may do is set up the food in the Lady chapel and the bar at the back of the church so we can all remain together. We will put out donation plates to contribute towards the cost of the buffet. Obviously the bar will be a pay bar.

Sunday 18th May – 5th of Easter

I will be presiding at both services at St. Peter's and Chris Cant will preside at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30am and 11am respectively. The APCM for St. Peter's will follow the service.

Acts 11: 1-18. The gap between Judaism and Christianity widens still further as Peter declares all foods clean, overturning the kosher food laws. This was before he visited the house of the Roman centurion Cornelius, another faux pas in the eyes of observant Jews. The Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and his family and so then they were baptised them into the faith.

Revelation 21: 1-6. A reading popular at funerals and it is tempting to just wallow in the rich imagery used. The old heaven and earth is replaced by new ones. However literally you wish to interpret this piece it remains true that a blessed future awaits us with no more tears, death, mourning or crying. The essential character of this vision is that God is with his people, with no barriers or distance between them.

John 13: 31-35. The command of Jesus to love one another is a command for the church members to love one another persistently and dramatically just as Jesus loved them. Love is revealed through Jesus as a self-less sacrificial practical reality not a comforting emotion or a philosophical notion. If we find it a rather burdensome thing to love one another, we must always remember that Jesus loved us like that first.

Thought for the Day.

I have greatly enjoyed (if that's the right word, but you know what I mean) and been moved by the funeral of Pope Francis and then by all the interest in the conclave of cardinals in the choosing eventually of Pope Leo 14th. What was palpable is that the interest went far beyond the walls of the Catholic church. People were genuinely interested in and drawn to both events. The Vatican excels in these things of course, having many centuries of experience, and showed itself in a very good light indeed. Quite a few times I have had people ask me "If the catholic church can choose a new Pope in a couple of weeks how come it takes the CofE so long to even begin to choose another Archbishop of Canterbury?". I have no answer to that of course but the events of the last few weeks have revealed to us all just how important the Papacy is, first to Catholics obviously, but to other Christians as well and how much influence the office of "Pope" has in this world to other faiths and secular leaders also. I have always liked the fact that the Orthodox church affords the Pope the honorific title "Primacy of honour" in the Christian world, even while they are not bound by anything he says. That is a lovely phrase, and it is a position I have chosen to take also, accepting that the Catholic church is the mother church of all Christian churches. It's good to remember that all the protestant churches in the world are derivative offshoots of the catholic church (us included) and I have never shied away from always describing myself as a "Catholic Anglican" (not an Anglo-Catholic which is a niche form of Anglicanism). Jesus praying that we may "all be one as we are one" may in reality have more to do with mystical union with the divine than with denominational unity of course because there were no denominations in Jesus' time but nevertheless unity is important. I self-identify (to borrow a modern phrase) as Catholic first and Anglican second, because Catholic means "Universal" and "Anglican" is very much a secondary product of relatively recent history. Of course, before either Catholic or Anglican I identify as a child of God.

The Prayer for Today is by a mystical 13th century nun! As a buttoned-up English man the overt sensuality of these kinds of prayers can make us nervous, sceptical or just plain embarrassed. This is by the Cistercian nun Mechtild of Magdeburg (1210 – 1285).

**Lord, you are my lover,
My longing,
My flowing stream,
My sun,
And I am your reflection.
Amen.**

Love and peace,
Martin