

Dear friends,

Our tour of the North was a week of copious driving but punctuated by refreshing pit-stops in former parishes, where we were welcomed very warmly (I can't have been too bad then I suppose) by my daughter in York, where we got sunburned (who knew you had to take suncream to Yorkshire!) and crossing the Pennines to visit Andrew in hospital in Lancaster before making the longest drive of all from Lancaster back to Devon on Saturday.

I was presiding in the villages on Sunday morning and sang Evensong at St. Peter's in the evening, which drew the week to a close and there was time to reflect on the fact that I have left footprints in many different locations and affected different people's lives in various ways and I just need to be grateful for having been given the opportunities in my life to interact with so many different and special people.

It was a pleasure and a privilege to preside at communion to open the annual Quiet day for the Devon retired clergy association yesterday at All Saints church East Budleigh. We have hosted them for at least three years as far as I can remember and All Saints has apparently now become their "home" because we are so open and accommodating.

Sunday 19th May – Pentecost

At St. Peter's, Chris Cant will preside at the 8am service and Ken Parry will preside at the 10am service. I will preside at All Saints at 9.30am and Jean Burrows will preside at St. Michael's at 11am. Both All Saints and St. Michael's have their APCM's after their respective services at which I will be chairing.

Acts 2: 1-21. In John's gospel, the Spirit came on Easter Sunday with the risen Christ breathing the Spirit on the disciples, but liturgically we celebrate the giving of the Spirit on Pentecost according to the Lukan version. By the time Luke was writing the book of Acts, Pentecost had become a festival for celebrating the giving of the law to the Jewish people, and the renewal of the covenant between them. So this was symbolically the giving of the law of love that would abide in our hearts from now on – a new covenant. A Spirit that didn't discriminate between races or ethnic groups and brought a commonality to the nascent Christian movement.

Romans 8: 22-27. Paul places the new life and exuberance of the Spirit filled life in a cosmic context. The whole creation is caught up in the excitement and new possibilities, looking forward in hope to the final consummation when "God will be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15: 28). When you find it hard to pray, note that the Spirit is always praying in us and intercedes for us with God.

John 15: 26-27, 16: 4b – 15. Only in John's gospel is the Spirit called the "Advocate" a kind of go-between that would plead your case to your accuser, someone that would speak up for you and vouch for your good nature and standing. The presence of the Spirit defends us when challenged, guides us when perplexed, and reveals God's truth to us. In the physical absence of the risen Jesus, the Spirit is "God with us".

Thought for the Day

Friendship is a very special thing, and I was blessed to meet with so many friends this past week in Newcastle, County Durham, and Yorkshire. Friends enrich any and every experience, you can rely on them, share truths with them, be yourself with them and laugh and cry with them. Theologically I think friendship can be under-rated, but it hasn't always been that way. Being a "friend of God" was one of the highest accolades a person could acquire. I first appreciated that fact when visiting the Tomb of Abraham in Hebron many years ago because his tomb is now a mosque, and it is called the Tomb of the friend of God (Haram El Khalil). In John 15:15 Jesus says that He calls us servants no longer, but He now calls us friends. To be a friend of Jesus is the highest of accolades that any person could wish for, because everything I started by saying about human friendship can be applied to our friendship with Jesus – because Jesus was a human being as well! Happily, for us He is also divine and has the ear of our Father, and it is always good to have friends in high places. As in ordinary life it is often a case of not what you know but who you know, and if you know Jesus and he is a friend of yours, well you know that ultimately nothing is going to defeat you, depress you or sink your boat. What a friend we have in Jesus indeed.

The Prayer for Today. No-one knows where this comes from but it is a good humoured, down to earth, from the heart, kind of prayer.

**Give us Lord a bit o' sun
A bit o' work and a bit o' fun.
Give us all in th' struggle and splutter
Our daily bread and a bit o' butter.
Give us health, our keep to make,
An' a bit to spare for poor folks' sake.
Give us sense, for we are some of us duffers,
An' a heart to feel for all that suffers.**

Love and peace,
Martin