

Dear friends,

A hot, busy Sunday with two services in the morning, followed by St. Peter's deferred Patronal BBQ, followed by St. Michael's church fete, and rounded off nicely with Evensong. Then we sat down to watch the Wimbledon final on catch-up. Then Zebedee appeared and said "Time for bed".

Last Tuesday we hosted the Devon retired clergy retreat at All Saints East Budleigh. It has become a bit of a tradition as we've hosted it for about 4 years now but rev David Lewis, the coordinator said it may possibly be the last one as they have lost so many members who actively engage, which would be a real shame if that were to be the case.

We've started our new fitness and weight loss regime! Nothing too radical – cutting down on food and wine, more protein, daily exercise. We have let ourselves go a bit since the end of the pandemic, but the good news is that we know it works. I lost three stone during the lockdown, but I don't want to lose that much this time as people now say I was looking a bit skeletal.

Sunday 20th July – Trinity 5 – Proper 11

I will be presiding at both services at St. Peter's and Reverend Jean Burrows will preside at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30am and 11am respectively.

Genesis 18: 1 – 10a. The three visitors to Abraham has always been used as a picture of God and his triune nature particularly in Orthodoxy. Here, he is settled by the "oaks of Mamre" near Hebron which became his burial place. I visited this Mosque and synagogue built over this spot in the year 2000. In Arabic the mosque is known as the Haram El Khalil – the mosque of the friend of God.

Colossians 1: 15-28. A superb piece, that describes Jesus Christ as a mystery hidden throughout history but finally revealed to the world. Jesus is described as "the image of the invisible God". Something invisible can't have an image of course but we know what he means. Christ is God and the mystery revealed is that God is intrinsically deeply embedded in the physical reality of the world, is one with his creation and that this is the source of our sacraments that the physical and spiritual are one.

Luke 10: 38-42. I know a lot of women especially have a great deal of sympathy for Martha. But the overriding message that this acted parable is trying to convey is that worship of Jesus is the far better part than fussing with less important tasks. A parable for churchgoing if ever we have one. Worship of God is the best thing we can do with our time.

Thought for the Day.

I have one icon on my desk and that is the world-famous icon of the three visitors to Abraham by Andrei Rublev. The oaks of Mamre form the backdrop. The colours are rich with symbolic meaning, representing the persons of the Holy Trinity. The central figure, often interpreted as Christ, wears a blue robe (symbolizing divinity) over a reddish-brown garment (representing humanity and the crucifixion). The figure on the left, representing the Father, has a translucent robe over a blue garment, symbolizing

his immaterial nature and divine glory. The figure on the right, symbolizing the Holy Spirit, wears a blue robe under a green cloak, with green representing new life and the Spirit's role as the giver of life. They sit with the Father and son looking at each other in love and with the Christ figure with his hand blessing the Eucharistic cup. The Spirit appears to gaze at the chalice.

I have always been mesmerized by this depiction of God in Trinity and it sits next to the photograph of me on the day of my ordination by the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams outside Canterbury cathedral. I was ordained Deacon a year earlier by the outgoing Archbishop George Carey so you could say I was well and truly "Done". So much has happened in and to the church of England since those days that I often feel a lot of nostalgia. My encounter with Buddhism of course teaches me that change is a fundamental characteristic of the universe - that nothing lasts forever - but you don't necessarily have to think that all the changes have been positive.

The Prayer for Today. Soren Kierkegard is a famous theologian and philosopher who maintained that the role of prayer was not to influence God but to change the nature of the one who prays. This prayer examines the role of silence and the notion of "unanswered prayer"

Father in heaven

**You speak to us in many ways,
Even when you are silent, you still speak to us
In order to examine us,
To try us,
And so that the hour of understanding
May be more profound.
Oh, in the time of silence,
When I remain alone and abandoned
Because I do not hear your voice,
It seems that the separation must last forever,
But Father, it is only a moment of silence in the
Intimacy of a conversation.
Bless then this silence,
And let me not forget that you are silent through
Love,
And that you speak through love,
So that in your silence and in your word
You are still the same Father,
And that you guide and instruct even by your
Silence. Amen.**

Love and prayers,
Martin