

Dear friends,

It is always pleasing to break 100 people in a service, but on this occasion getting close to 120 people over the two services in the morning felt good on this very busy weekend. The APCM meeting followed that and then on our “Sundays at six” musical programme of events the St. David’s singers directed by our very own Stephen Tanner attracted a bumper audience for a very varied and high-quality performance, again I reckon over well over 100.

On the Saturday night, about 120 people came to listen to my presentation of my Sabbatical. That worked seamlessly (apart for the sun shining directly on the screen and a problem with the projection unit). My memory didn’t fail me, and I am told I appeared confident in my delivery, but it was like the proverbial duck looking serene by paddling like crazy under the water. We all enjoyed a wonderful curry after the service in the church courtesy of Mandy and her team. I really enjoyed the evening.

Sunday 25th May – 6th of Easter

Colin Randall will preside at both services at St. Peter’s, and I will preside at All Saints 9.30am Another priest is being confirmed for St. Michael’s so I can thus preside at both APCMs in the villages

Acts 16: 9-15. Paul and the Christian faith move away from Asia and into Europe for the first time. This is presented as a movement initiated by God, not man, and Philippi is their destination. His first convert is a “God-fearer” a gentile attracted by the Jewish idea of there being one almighty God. She was a dealer in luxury goods, particularly the purple dye much prized in the Roman world.

Revelation 21: 10, 22 – 22:5. John’s vision of the new Jerusalem is based on Ezekiel’s vision but with major differences. Ezekiel’s city was to be a physical place and John’s was to be “the bride of the lamb”. Ezekiel’s city was to be dominated by the Temple but in John’s city there is no need for a Temple because God is everywhere and no need for sacrifices in the presence of the slain lamb. In John’s new Jerusalem the gates are always open to everyone. All nations walk in the light of God.

John 14: 23-29. Though Jesus is “absent” physically he is “present” spiritually in the form of the Spirit. This is called “realized eschatology” and has no place for anxious wondering about a second coming – God is already here. It is about conserving the word of God in the community and not about novelty or innovation. We are guardians of a deposit of faith.

Thought for Today

All people are of equal worth in the eyes of God. We are all unique and quite extraordinary when you think about it. No-one exactly like you has ever existed before and no-one ever will again. This basically is how I preface my eulogy at every funeral. One of the most interesting definitions of a “soul” I have ever heard was delivered by the Anglican priest and world-renowned physicist John Polkinghorne. He described the human soul as an information bearing pattern that remained always alive in the mind of God. I know it is an amazing fact to contemplate but every atom in our bodies is replaced over seven years. So physically, at the atomic level we are all entirely

different people to ourselves who lived in 2018. But we look exactly the same give or take the natural aging process and wear and tear, we are recognizably the same people. Every atom we lose is replaced in the exact same pattern. Our brain or mind, our personality, our values, our hopes and dreams develop and change over time but they are all dependent on what came before and we build on that. How we change is dependent on our experiences essentially. What are we exposed to, whether that be a bereavement, disease, divorce or happy marriage, an abortion or still-birth or childlessness, a promotion or demotion, good luck or bad luck in our life opportunities. Being exposed to faith and the consequences of prayer will also play their part. It is sometimes said that the chief objective of prayer is to change the one who is doing the praying. To try and direct God's spirit towards every change and chance in our lives is to try and promote God's influence on these events in our lives for the better, to try and promote holiness within every aspect of our being – to perfect our "information bearing pattern" to be more Christ – like.

The prayer for Today is this lovely poem-cum-prayer written by George Herbert.

**Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed love, observing me grew slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lack'd anything.
"A guest" I answer'd "worthy to be here"
Love said, "You shall be he"
"I, the unkind, the ungrateful? Ah my dear
I cannot look on thee"
Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
"Who made the eyes but I?"
"Truth Lord, but I have marr'd them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve".
"And know you not" says Love, "who bore the blame?"
"My dear, then I will serve"
"You must sit down" says Love "and taste my meat"
"So I did and eat"**

Love and peace,
Martin