

Dear friends,

Whilst on one of our periodic trips to London we visited the Sir Grayson Perry exhibition in the basement of the Wallace collection. Some wag said that Grayson Perry was an exhibition all on his own and I wasn't sure what to expect. The premise of the exhibition was that the arts were not by Grayson at all but by his alter ego "Shirley Smith" an impoverished girl who ended up in a mental hospital and after her breakdown became convinced she was connected to a rich family who lived in Hertford house where the Wallace collection is housed. The exhibition is called "Delusions of Grandeur" and has been described by a reviewer as delightfully bonkers. I enjoyed it as it was genuinely interesting and Grayson Perry is undoubtedly very talented. This was followed by a fantastic rendition of Fiddler on the roof at the Barbican. Those wonderful tunes are still reverberating around my brain.

**Dominus Vobiscum.** By the time we'd walked to Westminster Cathedral we were like drowned rats, but I have to say this place is stupendous. A vision in marble and the exterior could be situated in Tuscany – a modern classic. All day, every day, reverberates to a constant round of prayer, Mass, confession, and adoration. When we arrived, a priest was singing what I assume was Morning prayer. After we'd looked around, we decided to stay for the Latin Mass as I thought that would be a great experience. For the uninitiated there is a great Hoo-hah in the catholic church as to whether this service should be allowed at all. Traditionalists and modernists clash. It's a bit like the people on both sides of the BCP/Common worship debate in the CofE. The problem for those who want to ban it is that it is proving very popular with the young and when we were there it was a very well attended service with old and young and young families present – one of three Masses they hold every day. A good experience but I think I'll stick to English.

**With** "Pax Vobiscum", and "Et conspíritum tuo" still in my mind I was privileged to preside at St. Peter's on Sunday morning where I preached on the "Mystery hidden for long ages but now revealed" which I interpret as the principle that all matter is imbued with God's Spirit – as modelled in Christ – and is the basis of all our sacraments.

### **Sunday 27th July – Trinity 6 – Proper 12**

Robert Charles will preside at both services at St. Peter's and I will preside at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30am and 11am respectively.

**Genesis 18: 20-32.** The trouble with moral absolutes is that they have to be applied to concrete situations, and here two moral absolutes collide. One is that the wicked must be punished clashes with the other absolute that the innocent should not be punished for the sins of others. God's morality is being questioned by Abraham. In this instance, justice for the innocent triumphs over punishment of the wicked. This is one of several instances of moral questions being decided by discussion and here it is God's morality that is being discussed. This comes from a deep desire that God should be better than us otherwise what is there to hope for?

**Colossians 2: 6-15 (16-19).** Faced with the harsh realities of life and its ups and downs it is easy to start to rely on superstition and philosophies and outside compliance to arbitrary rules to deal with them. But Paul stresses that all of life's chances and changes find their answer in Christ and being baptised into him is the way to secure our future. The early church was living in a culture of Greek philosophy and Jewish religious opponents so caught between the two, one couldn't avoid being influenced by both but Paul expects them to stay strong and not be swayed.

**Luke 11: 1-13.** Whichever version of the Lord's prayer is closer to the "original" (whatever that means), either Luke or Matthew is unknown. What is true is that Matthew's fuller version has won hands down but both versions are the same in their essentials. Luke follows this with a parable which seems strange to modern ears that appears to depict God as an unwilling responder to prayer but who responds to tenacity. The final message appears to be that God is no pushover but is wholly dependable. Our role is to stick with him in persistent love.

### Thought for the Day

I had a very interesting discussion with a scientist after my sermon on Sunday that agreed with my premise that the mystery being revealed to us in Christ is at least if not wholly that the world is not just material – it is imbued with a transcendent God. Materialism is the facet of Western culture that is most harmful to the message of all religions but is largely absent from the rest of the world where God is a taken-for-granted everyday reality. Materialism is a very reductive point of view where all things are just "things" without any connection to anything else – because there is nothing else. With man's intuitive belief that has always existed that there must be a God coupled with the belief that "In him we live and move and have our being" as Paul writes, quoting a pagan poet, the world becomes an enchanted place where the depth and connectedness of all things becomes apparent. I quoted William Blake in my sermon – To see a world in a grain of sand and a heaven in a wildflower. To hold infinity in the palm of your hand and an eternity in an hour to try and convey that change in perspective. I once read a book by a priest called Ronald Rolheiser who likened a belief in the Divine to being a mind expanding experience that broadened your horizons until you were conscious of living your life against an infinite horizon and that all material things carried the life of God within them. That point of view is the basis for all Christian sacraments – that ordinary physical things like bread, wine, water and oil can carry and convey spiritual reality. This view of life means that when a priest holds a piece of a wafer in his hands and proclaims "This is the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world" that view is transformed from being an utterly outrageous and untrue statement to a materialist, to conveying a deep sense of connection to the living God who is present and active to the believer.

**The Prayer for Today** is by an unknown author.

**Give me, Lord God, a vision of the world as your love would make it.  
A world where the weak are protected and none go hungry or poor.  
A world where the benefits of civilized life are shared  
And everyone can enjoy them.  
A world where different races, nations and cultures  
Live in tolerance and mutual respect.  
A world where peace is built with justice  
And justice is guided by love.  
A give me the inspiration and courage to share in the task of building it.  
Through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen**

Love and peace,  
Martin