

Dear friends,

Saturday's Garden party was washed out as expected so it morphed into an afternoon house party. Thank you to everyone that came and brought food and drink. Everybody enjoyed themselves I think. The food table in the dining room was absolutely laden with far more than anyone could eat. The winner was Otterton's fete on the Green the next day. Louise took three plates of cakes to donate to the church stalls (on a lovely balmy Sunday!). The fete at Otterton was absolutely packed. This year the church, the school and the parish council shared the fete drawing many more people than if they had each tried to do something singly, so I hope each organisation profited in a major way.

**I wasn't** at the fete because I was presiding at the annual Civic service at St. Peter's in Budleigh. This was very well attended and went down a storm as the comments all attested at the Tea and cakes afterwards.

**My day** was lifted on Sunday when just as I was going to distribute communion we were visited by a lady in dark glasses who announced to everybody "I'm sorry I'm late" into the silence. Simone is by her own assessment a bit eccentric. A former rough sleeper from Sidford, she used to busk with a friend who had recently died in Sidmouth and felt she wanted to "spread the word" about him. She sang a song she had written to me which was actually very good indeed (she had a lovely voice) and serenaded people playing tunes on her recorder during coffee. She left me with these words of wisdom, "Aspire to inspire before you expire". Simone, I'll do my best.

### **Sunday 28th July – Trinity 9 – Proper 12**

This Sunday Archdeacon Trevor Jones 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.

**2 Kings 4: 42-44.** An Old Testament story prefiguring the multiplication stories about Jesus feeding the 5000 and the 4000 (a lesser-known story) in the New Testament (Mark 6 and Mark 8 respectively). The meaning is the same in both. God's grace is more than sufficient to fulfil the needs of everybody both physically and spiritually. It is God that ultimately satisfies – "I am the bread of Life". Incidentally the difference between the two multiplication stories of Jesus is that the 5000 we presume were mostly Jewish but the feeding of the 4000 took place in the region of the Decapolis, which were Greek cities so the people would be mostly gentiles.

**Ephesians 3: 14-21.** A rousing prayer from Paul who prays that we should all know the extent and depth of God's love. The power of Christ working within us is able to produce much more spiritual fruit than any of us could possibly do than if we were "cut off from the vine". The "Glory" of God is to know his innate worth – to know what he means for you and the world, and this is made visible corporately through the church.

**John 6: 1-21.** The Johannine version of the feeding of the 5000. This, in classic Johannine fashion is described not as a miracle but as "a sign". A signpost to the fact that God's love and power is at work in Jesus. This leads directly into a walking on water incident – a further sign that God is present in Jesus because in Hebrew iconography, any large body of water represents the forces of chaos. God has authority over chaos and brings order, just as he did in the creation story "in the beginning".

### Thought for the Day

During the civic service the story of the little boy saving starfish was one of the readings. Faced with thousands of starfish washed up on a beach the little boy was throwing them back one by one. A man confronted the boy and said it was a pointless task that couldn't possibly help them all because there were so many of them. The boy took another starfish, threw it into the sea and said "Well, it made a difference to that one." Of course, I've heard the story before, but sometimes you don't really HEAR it. That is when it makes you think and consider how it relates to yourself. When faced with monumental and overriding tasks and problems it can be so easy to not do anything at all because it all seems too much – we can shrivel in the face of the task in front of us. But the simple message of the story which I know to be true is that doing a little piece of good is better than not doing any good at all. And if all of us did a little bit of good every day the cumulative effect of that would be very large indeed. It would be easy to be daunted by the size of the task that faces me in my role for example, with the odds stacked against me having any effect at all on most things but the little things are cumulative, and every little win is a major victory. Even saying something like "Good morning" to someone – an apparently trivial act, could be the only time that person had something said to them all day and might have lit up their day – you just don't know. Even with difficult strange or just eccentric people remember that you might be entertaining angels unawares.

### The Prayer for Today

**O Lord, Give me strength today to show kindness in all that I do. Help me to open my arms to those less fortunate and extend my hand to those who may need it, so that they may see You in my kind words and actions. Amen. Heavenly Father, Help us be appreciative and accepting of everyone's uniqueness.**

Love and peace,  
Martin