

Dear friends,

Well, last week certainly took a turn for the worse when Louise's brother Andrew had a massive stroke and was given a 10% chance of survival. He is a fighter however and he is still with us. Louise went to Lancaster hospital for a couple of days last week and is up there again this week. Andrew is only 55 years old and was very fit, which makes us all think very hard about life and its frailty.

### Come and see!

The RMC Lent course this year will be the Exeter Diocesan course called "Come and see" starting this evening. The dates will be on Wednesdays - Feb. 28th, March 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th in the Peter Hall at 5pm. (Not 7pm as I previously stated). While it is not strictly necessary to bring anything, a Bible will be good for reference, as well as an open, honest and enquiring mind.

**Note:** There will be no email next week because it is our 10th wedding anniversary, and we will be sunning ourselves in foreign climes!

### Break-in news!

What we thought was a break in at St. Peter's on Saturday night has been solved by examining our CCTV footage. It was a well dressed lady with a handbag who had entered St. Peter's to pray late in the afternoon and had fallen asleep and was distraught when she woke up to find herself locked in. The lady has been contacted and she is very apologetic.

### Sunday 3rd March – Lent 3.

I will preside at both services at St. Peter's and Reverend Chris Cant will preside at All saints and John Archibald will preside at St. Michael's at 9.30am and 11am respectively.

**Exodus 20: 1-17.** Recent research says that the ten commandments are a distillation of laws from several social settings. Verses 2-6 are in the first-person singular, verses 7-12 talk about God in the third person, verses 13-17 could be spoken by either. Christian tradition has used the commandments creatively by applying the Sabbath law (Friday night to Saturday night) to refer to Sundays for example.

**1 Corinthians 1: 18-25.** Twenty centuries removed from St. Paul and surrounded by images of the cross in churches and even Jewellery, the cross seems quite inoffensive but this piece written in the 1st century must have seemed like the ravings of a mad man. The cross must have been seen as the antithesis of power. Only the powerless died on the cross yet Paul insists that it reveals God's power. The cross is the point where God's ways and human ways are completely at odds with each other. To be able to "see" the cross in this way is reserved for the chosen ones "who are being saved".

**John 2: 13-22.** Chronologically, the other gospels place the "cleansing of the Temple" at the start of Holy week at the end of Jesus' ministry but John places this confrontation right at the start. They can't both be right of course but in the end it is what the incident means rather than when it happened that is most important. Jesus is cast in the role of an Old Testament prophet aggressively clearing out the Temple of the moneychangers. His allusion to his body being killed and being raised is (understandably) misunderstood and referring literally to the Temple complex.

### Thought for Today

The only thing worse than suffering yourself is watching as someone else suffers knowing that you are almost completely powerless to help in any practical way. But if that person is aware that you care, then your mere presence conveys something extremely important - that they are not alone in a cold uncaring universe but are loved. For a Christian believer, this role is also the one that God takes in our lives, or can do, but at times of crisis his presence is often rendered ethereal and abstract. The hand of a loved one holding theirs is the physical embodiment of the hand of God and is the epitome of the sacramental principle that underpins traditional Christianity. We can put flesh on the bones of God by being God for the other. We more usually call it being "Christ" for the other - Christ being the universal presence of God with us. Emmanuel means "God with us" and God being present in us we can bring Christ to the other, when pain and suffering may have squeezed all belief out of their system. We are fragile systems, we human beings and as well as "believing" that God is there for us, we want to feel his presence with us also in a concrete fashion. That is where we can really help our loved ones, by being Christ for them at the point of their direst need.

**The Prayer for Today** is well-known and well-worn but never loses its power. Written by Teresa of Avila in the 16th century.

**Christ has no body but yours, No hands, no feet on earth but yours, Yours are the eyes with which He looks Compassion on this world, Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good, Yours are the hands, with which He blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, Yours are the eyes, you are His body.**

Love and peace,  
Martin