

Dear friends,

Namaste! Which means “The Spirit in me bows to the spirit in you”. Two weeks in Nepal has certainly been the best holiday of my life and the most interesting. From our first sighting of the mighty Himalayas, to Trekking in the Annapurna region, to the jungles of Chitwan, to the fascinating chaos of Kathmandu and Pokhara, to the hair-raising trauma of so-called “roads” (I’ll never complain about potholes on our roads in Devon again), to seeing Rhinos up close, to encountering leeches on our Treks (they can burrow through shoes, socks and trousers and suck your blood) but are completely painless - and the views – the views!

We got back in the early hours of Monday morning, and I miss curry every morning noon and night already. And that’s another thing – the food was plentiful and very tasty. My aching limbs were stretched to the limit during six days of treks in the Annapurna so we’d thought we might lose a bit of weight but we were fed so well we didn’t lose anything but are very much fitter than we left.

Anyway, back to the day job!

Sunday 3rd November – All Saints Sunday

At St. Peter’s Chris Cant will take the 8am service and Ken Parry will take the 10am. I will take the All Souls service at 3pm in the afternoon. I will also take the service at All Saints for their patronal festival and John Archibald will preside at St. Michael’s.

Wisdom 3: 1-9. This is a Greek rather than a Hebrew text so introduces the Greek idea that a person HAS a soul rather than IS a soul which is the Hebrew notion. It comes after a passage which talks about the persecution and death of the righteous by people who have no fear of God but wisdom proclaims that God is more powerful than death and that their fellowship with God will survive their physical demise.

Revelation 21: 1-6a. An inspirational text often read at funerals. This comes at the end of John’s vision and sees the union of heaven and earth. All that separated God and humanity has been overcome – so there is no distance and no barriers between God and his children. The sea (which always represents chaos in the Bible right from the first story of creation in Genesis 1) is no more. There is no room for sorrow or pain or death. The presence of God amongst his people has already been announced by Jesus – Emmanuel – God is with us.

John 11: 32-44. That Jesus prayed aloud was to demonstrate that authority over life and death belonged to the Father – Not himself. This was to dispel the common misunderstanding that Jesus was just a fantastic miracle worker and to direct attention towards what God is capable of rather than himself. God is the author, sustainer and redeemer of all life. “Jesus wept” (in the original) is the shortest verse in the Bible and has been always understood as indicating his shared humanity but conceivable could also be showing some anger that people that purportedly believed in resurrection had so little faith.

Our annual All Souls service is on Sunday at 3pm where we remember all our departed loved ones and expresses our belief expressed in the creed that we believe in the communion of saints.

Thought for the Day

The Nepalese people in the mountains are the most open, friendly and hospitable people I have ever come across. Without guile, they have few needs, grow everything they need (Annapurna means literally “Grows everything”). They have no concept of private space and welcome people into their homes. As westerners we always felt that we were intruding and a bit embarrassed that we were invading their private space but on the first day of our Trek we were invited by a family to view their hives, offered honey and given honey tea. When we offered to pay they were highly offended. They live in traditional mud huts with mud floors and mud ovens. They grow everything themselves and operate a barter system with neighbours for things they produce. To be fit in the mountains is normal in Nepal and we were incredibly safe. The worst thing you had to deal with was being ambushed by children who offered marigolds and sang for a few sweets. They are mostly Buddhist and Hindu though amazingly our Trek guide had become a Christian, and our tour guide in Kathmandu whilst remaining a Buddhist confided that he had taught his wife to read and all she now read was the Bible and had also become a Christian. Faiths living and cooperating side by side without rancour and all of them celebrating Hindu festivals which are many and various, regardless of their supposed faith. I pray that their innocence and friendliness manages to survive the relentless onslaught of modern technology and social media that inevitably will impact their lives. I came away refreshed and more hopeful about humanity than when I entered Nepal.

The Prayer for Today. My prayer life on the Trek you could say was typically idiosyncratic, but I’ll share it with you anyway and give my reasons for doing so. My set prayers were three-fold. I always started with the Hail Mary, and this is why.

Christianity is an incarnational religion – God is here – and he was shown to be here amongst us through the childbearing of Mary. It is also a very important prayer for all catholic western Christians.

**Hail Mary full of Grace, the Lord is with thee
Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed in the fruit of thy womb Jesus
Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners
Now and at the hour of our death.**

Then I prayed the Jesus prayer. This is a gift to the worldwide church from Eastern Orthodox Christianity and is a prayer directly to Jesus, Emmanuel (God is with us)

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me a sinner.

Then I pray the Lord's prayer which is directly to the Father, the author of life and the person to which Jesus prayed.

**Our Father which art in heaven
Hallowed be thy name
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
On earth, as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us
And lead us not into temptation
And deliver us form evil
For thine is the kingdom
The power and the glory
For ever and ever
Amen.**

Love and peace,
Martin