

Rev'd Martin Jacques' Soul Food 24 June 2020

Dear friends,

I've visited all three of our churches and it is lovely to have them all open and I understand that everything is going very well so we await further instructions!

Meanwhile...our garden is blossoming and we picked loads of raspberries yesterday, our two cherry trees are both laden (Thank you very much say the birds), the apples and plums are growing nicely, the greenhouse has tomatoes, peppers and aubergine doing very well indeed and we planted out runner beans, courgettes and gooseberries yesterday as well. The only tree that isn't showing any signs of fruit this year is the Quince tree, but I'm told that is to be expected after a bumper crop last year. It does the soul good to see and experience this everyday miracle.

I've never really paid much attention to things like Father's Day but it was good to speak to Dad yesterday and even better to receive a phone call from my daughter Claire. Life is good!

Sunday 28th June we would in normal circumstances have a joint RMC service at St. Peter's to celebrate her patronal festival so the readings for **St. Peter** are translated to this Sunday.

Acts 12: 1-11. During the period of unleavened bread (seven days following Passover) it was forbidden to hold a trial or execution so this is why, in trying to curry favour with the Jews, Herod had to simply arrest and detain Peter instead of swiftly despatching him. That Peter was imprisoned and then escaped is a "miracle" in common parlance anyhow, however one interprets the text. Whatever the exact details, God was involved.

1 Peter 2: 19 – 25. Peter uses the unjust suffering heroically borne by Jesus as an example to be followed by the persecuted Christian church. This is pertinent because those sufferings, Peter points out were borne for each one of us. "By his wounds we have been healed" and because we were going astray "we have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of our souls". In an echo of Paul saying we are now slaves of God and not of sin, Peter says we are to live for righteousness because we have been freed from sins.

Matthew 16: 13-19. Recognising the true significance of who Jesus is, is of the highest foundational importance for the church, and this recognition of Jesus as the Christ will be what binds us together. Peter is the spokesman for the disciples and declares Jesus to be the Christ, defining that title (in Matthew's version) as "Son of the living God". Jesus congratulates him and says that this revelation was given to them by his Father in heaven and that the keys to the kingdom would be given to him. This in my view almost certainly refers to the

church being able to unlock heaven for all people because Jesus accuses the scribes and pharisees in 13:1 of “shutting up the kingdom against men”. This controversial passage certainly at least means that Peter is the foundation stone of a church of living stones with Jesus as the corner stone and all Christian believers who followed become part of that structure.

Catholic social teaching

All “continuing Ministerial development” in our Diocese has now gone on-line so I spent two hours in a very interesting zoom presentation by Fr. Simon Cuff yesterday. All Christian social teaching is based on what comes out of Rome and our own Archbishop of Canterbury is a big fan so I spent the morning reading seven pages of preparatory notes on various Papal encyclicals but the basic question is what exactly is catholic social teaching and what is it based on? Basically it is gospel based and the principles on which it is based, which should inform our decision making, is the fundamental nature of human dignity (we are all made in the image of God), the common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, social sin and the preferential option for the poor.

They all needed unpacking but the last one needed unpacking especially because well-off people need God just as much as poor people and poverty can also be cultural and spiritual as well as economic. Suffice to say that equality of *opportunity* is something to be worked towards but you cannot legislate for equality of *outcomes*. As Jesus himself said “The poor you will always have with you.”

The universe inside us

Thought for the day

In the early 2000’s I read a little book by Rev. Dr. John Polkinghorne and attended a lecture by him in Canterbury cathedral education centre. One of the mind boggling facts that inspired me then was the realisation that all life on earth – us included – are carbon based life forms, and that every little bit of carbon in the entire universe was forged in the nuclear furnaces that are the stars. So, it is not just poetic licence – we are literally made of stardust! The interconnectedness of all things is made apparent. Put that little gem alongside the fact that every atom in our human bodies is replaced every seven years means that when I look at a ‘photo of myself as a 50 year old, not one atom of that person is the same as I am now and yet it is still me! Mind suitably boggled John advanced a concept of the “soul” as the totality of a person as an “information bearing pattern” (mind, body & Spirit) so that when all these atoms are replaced, the new ones automatically assume their role within that overall pattern. That pattern is “You” and this is the you that is remembered in

the heart of God, that lives, dies, and will be resurrected by God. Another favourite thing John was fond of saying is that the greatest miracle in all creation is human consciousness. That which was once a chemical soup, at some point becomes self-aware even to the point that we can investigate the origins of the universe and know that everything was once just a chemical soup – ourselves included. These mysteries I find inspiring and leads me to the mystical side of Christianity who in turn find common ground with mystics from all traditions.

The Prayer for Today is by the controversial Jesuit mystic Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and this is his best-known prayer.

Patient Trust

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.

We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.

We should like to skip the intermediate stages.

We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.

**And yet it is the law of all progress
that it is made by passing through some stages of instability—
and that it may take a very long time.**

**And so I think it is with you;
your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.
Don't try to force them on,
as though you could be today what time
(that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will)
will make of you tomorrow.**

**Only God could say what this new spirit
gradually forming within you will be.
Give Our Lord the benefit of believing
that his hand is leading you,
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself
in suspense and incomplete.**

Love and peace,

Martin

Please note my new email address is vicar@rmcommunity.co.uk